

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

Right Place, Wrong Time

Ben Bleiweiss
Uncommon Knowledge
Wednesday, March 27, 2002



Some weeks ago I polled you, the reader, about which cards you felt were the "best" in **Magic** history which never really saw much play. Considering that this question was posed right during the beginning of the site's start-up, I received a phenomenal number of suggestions! So this week, I'm opening up my e-mail bag, and exploring some of the cards which the audience shipped to me. So come join me while I take a look at some of the more powerful cards in **Magic** history which never got their due in their day. This week's theme is cards which have relevance to *Odyssey* block.

As a couple of side notes before I begin: My email has been down for at least 3 weeks now, and we've just discovered it. Luckily, I should be getting a mass-mailing of all the lost emails, so I can respond to everyone's comments and questions. So if you're been trying to reach me and haven't gotten an answer, you should be getting one soon! Also, if you enjoyed this column, please send in more suggestions or comments! I'd love to make this a semi-regular feature if enough players liked reading about this topic.

Scandalmonger

Who submitted it?: Mikko (no last name) wrote to me bemoaning that he had discovered the power of **Scandalmonger** too late in the *Mercadian Masques* Block Constructed season.

Why is it good?: **Scandalmonger** is capable of stripping your opponent's hand in one fell swoop. For every activation of 2 mana, you can force a discard (from either player's hand, we'll get to this later). Although it works both ways, you could easily build a deck that allowed you to play your entire hand in the first few turns, and then use the 'Monger to gain massive card advantage. Plus, it has a relatively large 3/3 body. If you **Dark Ritual** him out on turn 2, will your opponent play "discard" wars back and forth with you, or spend time looking for a way to kill the scandalous one while you use the discard ability in a one-sided fashion?



Why wasn't it played?: *Masques* Block -- Since **Scandalmonger** was printed in *Mercadian Masques* itself, it was available for block play through the entire cycle. Unfortunately, at Pro Tour - New York that year (the Block Constructed Pro Tour), the two main decks were centered on **Rising Waters** and **Rebels**. Both of those decks are horrific for mana-intense discard, since *Waters* usually would not leave a black deck mana for activation, and *Rebels* don't care so much about what they have in hand, as what they have on the board. Also, **Scandalmonger** can often degenerate the game into a top-decking war (once both players have no hands), and black relied on cards like **Snuff Out** and **Vendetta** during this block. Your opponent could easily strip removal from your hand and then drop their creatures when in top-deck mode.

Type 2 using *Urza's Saga* through *Prophecy* -- **Rebels** were popular during that time, along with Stompy (fast green with **Rancor**), **Tinker** decks with **Phyrexian Processor** and **Masticore**, and Accelerated Blue decks with **Morphling** and countermagic. Stompy could unload its hand before the 'Monger could even hit the board, **Tinker** could drop a 10/10 **Phyrexian Processor**, Accelerated Blue wouldn't ever let it hit the board, and as for **Rebels**, see above. Black certainly didn't have the early drops from *Tempest* block (all the one- and two-casting-cost **zombies** and **shadow creatures**) that would really make this guy shine. You couldn't race with creatures and use **Scandalmonger** to strip hands, since most other decks either didn't care, or could outrace your board position.

Type 2 using *Mercadian Masques* through *Apocalypse* -- One deck that this creature would have been right at home in was the **Ensnaring Bridge** deck used by David Bachmann at US Nationals last year. It utilized total board control mixed with land destruction to prevent the opponent from casting spells or attacking, all the while dumping his entire hand over and over to keep the Bridge at maximum efficiency. Playing in this fashion, **Scandalmonger** surely would have almost always given a lot of card advantage to the Bridge deck player, since they often had no hand at all. Otherwise, black really became a splash color for other decks during this time, due to the multi-colored nature of *Invasion* block. Since mana bases were a lot more precarious, and decks a lot slower than the previous two blocks, it was dangerous to drop the 'Monger, since you often took a crapshoot on which player would be able to best use him.

What if?: Imagine this guy in *Odyssey* block. There are so many great madness and flashback cards that you could build a deck to take full advantage of **Scandalmonger**. Wouldn't he have been great in a deck with **Arrogant Wurm**, **Call of the Herd**, **Basking Rootwalla**, and **Ichorid**? Or how about combining him with **Firebolt**, **Fiery Temper**, and **Violent Eruption**? Although your opponent would be able to take advantage of him as well, you could



easily have built a deck that maximized his usefulness. Would your opponent "monger" you knowing you could drop a 4/4 trampler on his head immediately?

Zur's Weirding

Who submitted it?: Anthony Sculimbrene had the following to say about the Weirding. "While it did get used once, [quite famously](#), last year around Regionals, [Zur's Weirding](#) has got to be one of the most powerful cards never used (extensively). The ability to edit an opponent's draw was really quite powerful when used the right way."



Main Deck		Sideboard
2 Adarkar Wastes	2 Teferi's Moat	3 Lobotomy
4 Plains	2 Story Circle	1 Wrath of God
2 Swamp	2 Seal of Cleansing	1 Teferi's Moat
5 Island	1 Yawgmoth's Agenda	3 Gainsay
3 City of Brass	3 Wrath of God	1 Perish
4 Coastal Tower	4 Counterspell	1 Seal of Cleansing
1 Underground River	4 Dromar's Charm	4 Dread of Night
4 Dromar's Cavern	3 Probe	1 Dismantling Blow
	3 Fact or Fiction	
1 Nether Spirit	3 Enlightened Tutor	
	3 Vampiric Tutor	
	1 Aladdin's Ring	
	1 Elfhome Sanctuary	
	1 Zur's Weirding	
	1 Tsabo's Web	

Why is it good?: Anthony hits the nail right on the head on this powerful enchantment: you can basically deny your opponent his draw for the rest of the game. Much like [Scandalmonger](#), it works both ways. But unlike that creature, enchantments are much harder to remove. Plus, it's the only card in **Magic** that can effectively deny your opponent the ability to draw a card the rest of the game! There are lots of weird combos that can achieve this as well ([Fatigue](#) + [Anarchist](#) + [Obelisk of Undoing](#) + a lot of mana), but the Weirding simply requires being in play and paying two life. The Weirding, combined with consistent life gain, constitutes a hard lock on the game (a hard lock is a situation where your opponent simply cannot win, although it will take a long time to get there). The Weirding by itself makes for a soft lock (a board position in which you aren't assured of victory as you are with a hard lock, but where you basically have control of how things fall, and leave the rest up to luck) without any support cards. Lastly, it's an enormous skill tester for both players, since you have to whether cards drawn are potential threats versus immediate threats, and whether you should pay 2 life to deny the card. Suppose your opponent had one island in play, and draws [Control Magic](#) during his draw step. Do you make him discard the [Control Magic](#), and let him draw future Islands? Do you let him keep the Control, and prevent his Islands from reaching his hand, also preventing [Counterspell](#) mana from being achieved? Do you let him have both, in a bid to win without playing creatures?

Why wasn't it played?: The Weirding was the most reprinted card that no one really used, appearing in *Ice Age*, *5th Edition*, and *6th Edition*. It could have been played literally for years, and no one ever really used it. Sometimes with the Weirding in play during a parity situation, it could backfire. It all depended on how well your draw went compared to your opponent's. Also, that first time you played the Weirding, you never knew exactly what your opponent had in their hand. You might have had out a horde of Merfolk, only to play the Weirding on turn 4 and see your opponent have their 4th and 5th lands, [Wrath of God](#), and [Morphling](#) in hand. Suddenly they've got the lock down on you, and you've lost the game with almost no recourse. There also hasn't been a great life gain card to use with this enchantment. [Braidwood Cup](#) and [Fountain of Youth](#) (at certain times in its life cycle) just didn't cut it, since you needed two of each to have a full lock.

What if?: This card is just insane with flashback, even more so than the 'Monger. (But not madness, as the Oracle wording removes them term "discard.") It could have seen play in [Tinker](#) decks back in the day, but didn't. Could this be a card to be revived in upcoming Extended tournaments, in order to take full advantage of these new mechanics?

Bösium Strip

Who submitted it?: Brian Dewar, with the following comment: "I'm not sure if it was used (in tournament) play (I didn't play any tournaments in that time period due to moving, sigh), but [Bösium Strip](#) is a really powerful card, in that it gives every card you play a flashback cost of 3 + the card's (original) casting cost. If playing a blue counter deck, or red burn, it effectively doubles the deck size, making even a mediocre deck pretty fearsome. If it was used in tourneys, forgive me :-)"

Why is it good?: Essentially it's [Mirari](#) in reverse. For 3 mana, you are able to play any instant or sorcery card on top of your graveyard. Although there are enough differences between the two to make them distinct (for



instance, the Strip removes cards from the game, while *Mirari* does not), *Bosium Strip* gives you the potential for huge card advantage when you need it. Have a *Brainstorm* on top of your graveyard? Use *Bosium Strip* to draw a free card. Got a *Lightning Bolt*? Use it twice! The same goes for countermagic, life gain, creature removal, or practically any spell in the game! Add in the fact that if your graveyard was set up correctly, you could cast more than one card in a single Strip activation (not unlike *Yawgmoth's Will*), and the potential for card advantage was truly insane.

Why wasn't it played?: The *Bosium Strip* has a few inherent weaknesses that caused it to fall from being a tier one card. During both *Ice Age/Mirage* Type 2 and *Mirage/Tempest* Type 2 eras, *Strip Mine* and *Wasteland* were heavily played. This limited the Bosium player to a single color of mana, since a single *Wasteland* would keep the artifact from having

any effectiveness should its controller have even a single non-basic land in play. (If your opponent could destroy one of your lands at any time, he could prevent the top card of your graveyard from being an instant or sorcery.) As well, the controller of this artifact couldn't very well play a lot of creatures, since any time one of their creatures went to the graveyard it would shut down which cards were available to be replayed.

Also, the very rules of **Magic** conspired against this card. A long time ago, the stack concept wasn't as well-defined as it is today. Spells would be played, and then resolved without any chance to be responded to. To demonstrate the difference: Imagine you have a *Bosium Strip* in play, and *Counterspell* is the top card of your graveyard. You are at 3 life, and I cast *Lightning Bolt* at you. Under the new rules, you could activate the Strip, let it resolve, and then play the *Counterspell* to stop the Bolt and keep yourself alive. Under the old rules, you could activate the Strip, but once you let the Strip resolve, you couldn't do anything until the *Lightning Bolt* resolved, meaning you couldn't use the *Counterspell* until the Bolt had already done 3 damage to you. You'd need to activate your Strip during your opponent's upkeep to avoid dying to the old rules, since it couldn't be used to respond to spells and effects your opponents played, limiting its usefulness.

What if?: This is just one of those cards that is capable of giving massive advantage to its controller, but is situational (upon which cards are in your graveyard) and never really had a great deck to go around it. The potential was there, but the build wasn't. All the current flashback cards smack of *Bosium Strip*, and it's clear how good those are.

Lesser Gargadon / Fault Riders

Who submitted it: Joshua Rosenberg offered up a lot of great creatures, and I chose these two underrated creatures from *Prophecy*. He described *Lesser Gargadon* as "a red fatty with a minor drawback... those who play this beast would surely agree." About the *Fault Riders*, he had this to say: "Grey Ogres (meaning 2/2 for three mana) aren't horrible, and the fact that he gets first strike and +2/+0 makes all the difference."



Why are they good?: First, the Gargadon weighs in at a hefty 6/4 for 2 mana. That's definitely ahead of the mana curve. The Riders pump to 4/2 first strikers for 2. Each of these creatures are large for their costs in their own rights. Neither of them have insurmountable drawbacks (both involve sacrificing a single land).

Why weren't they played?: *Rebels, Rebels, Rebels*. If you were playing creatures, *Rebels* were the deck to beat. If you weren't playing evasion creatures, it was hard to get through the wall of recurring white weenies, backed often by *Mother of Runes*. Since neither the *Lesser Gargadon* or the *Fault Riders* creatures fly or trample, they really weren't effective in their time, which was a shame considering how beefy they are for their mana costs.

What if?: Wow, how great would these guys be for getting threshold? Red presently had problems getting itself to threshold, much less Red/Green decks featuring *Werebear*, *Seton's Scout*, and *Barbarian Ring*. Imagine swinging with your 4/2 first striker, which had the added benefit of getting you that one card closer to the magical seven you need for threshold effects? How about beating down with your 6/4 *LESSER Gargadon* (geez, what would a *GREATER Gargadon* look like, if this is the smaller of the two?), ending the game in practically three short swings? These two creatures would have been much more suited for the current environment, but since they were in *Prophecy*, they never were able to be used properly with threshold cards.

Next week: Land Destruction and you.

Ben may be reached at uncommonknowledge@wizards.com.

Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with Magic: The Gathering for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of Magic, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing Magic, writing about

Magic, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Ben Bleiweiss](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

