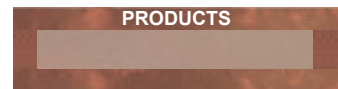


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# Extending Urza

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 House of Cards  
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Here's a secret: I *hated* the Urza sets while they were legal in Standard. In fact, I can barely stand them now. Oh sure, *Urza's Saga*, *Urza's Legacy*, and *Urza's Destiny* introduced cards I use often, such as Exploration, Iron Maiden, Smokestack, Mother of Runes, the "man-lands," Argothian Enchantress, Plow Under, Chimeric Staff, and even Imaginary Pet. The list is quite long, actually. The three sets also brought casual-player staples like Lifeline; Multani, Maro-Sorcerer; Show and Tell; Radiant, Archangel; Pattern of Rebirth; Phyrexian Processor; and Serra Avatar. In addition, I routinely play almost every reprint (and there are many) from Urza block now in *Seventh Edition*.

But I still hate them.



See, I was the same kind of player then as I am now. I liked turning weird cards into weird decks. Yet I routinely found my quirky ideas overwhelmed by the über-powerful Urza cards. I sighed every time a *Morphling*, *Masticore*, *Tolarian Academy*, *Memory Jar*, *Academy Rector*, or *Yawgmoth's Bargain* hit the table to steal victory from my otherwise superior board position. I cringed when my opponent played *Tinker*, *Yawgmoth's Will*, *Stroke of Genius*, or *Replenish*. I later learned to fear *Donate*. Losing to these cards was quick, painful, and frustrating.

You may be someone who yearns for the glory days of Urza block. I can say only that in the Urza days, I almost quit **Magic** because the game had become too fast for me to feel creative. Moreover, it always seemed that only my opponent or me was having fun at any given time. I never laughed when losing to a *Morphling*. Losses to *Soulcatcher's Aerie*, on the other hand, make me giggle.

Anyway, I've become a less-whiny person since then. Now I can look back on the Urza block and see a number of cards with great potential. Today I continue my "New Extended" [series](#) with a look at my most hated of blocks and that blasted artificer, Urza.

Below are several odd cards from the Urza days that make for fun new decks, especially when combined with spells from more current sets. The decks themselves will be legal in Extended in [November](#). But because we don't know what the *Onslaught* set will bring, consider these decks more as interesting--and a little bizarre--thought experiments. Over the next few months, you can expect similarly wacky looks at the *Masques*, *Invasion*, and *Odyssey* blocks. For now, though, let us do a little *Taunting Elf* tango into the past . . .

## Titania's Boon

Just so you can be sure I'm talking crazy here, I start with *Titania's Boon*. Who starts a look at cards from Urza block with *Titania's Boon*? Oh, sorry . . . I did that last time. (Booby!)

*Titania's Boon* has shown up in a few of my decks as a way to pump up untargetable creatures like *Blastoderm*, *Citanul Centaurs*, and *Blurred Mongoose*. In fact, an "untargetables" deck is almost always fun to try out, usually with either red or blue to remove potential blockers. *Titania's Boon* isn't necessary in a deck like this, but it's a neat trick.

More recently, after seeing "*Mr. Babycakes*" take shape, I have a new appreciation for +1/+1 counters. The pieces began forming in *Judgment*, which brought with it *Forcemage Advocate* (see Bennie Smith's great [Forcemage contemplation](#)) and the Phantom creatures, which added spice to the Spikes from *Tempest* block. Suddenly, anything that can add +1/+1 counters en masse looks like it might be the basis for a tasty deck. In fact, you can push the idea without using a single rare.

**1-2-3 Lite!**

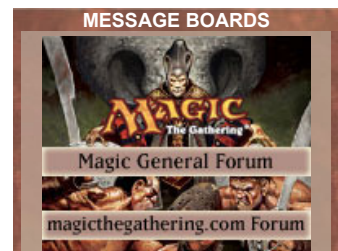
Extended +1/+1 Counter Deck

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**Main Deck**  
60 cards

20 Forest	4 Druid Lyrist	4 Overrun
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Final Wrap-up  
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4 Treetop Village	4 Forcemage Advocate	1 Thrive
24 lands	4 Hunting Moa	4 Titania's Boon
	4 Ironshell Beetle	9 other spells
	4 Phantom Centaur	
	4 Spike Feeder	
	3 Spike Rogue	
	27 creatures	

Of course, if you are using rares, creatures like **Spike Weaver**, **Mindless Automaton**, **Phantom Nantuko**, **Magmasaur**, **Phantom Nishoba**, **Thopter Squadron**, and **Molten Hydra** are sure to add to the fun. However you build your deck, just be sure to bring lots of pennies, six-sided dice, glass beads, corn chips, or whatever else you use for counters.

## Gamble


Poor **Gamble**. Red's silly little tutor just never seemed as good as **Vampiric Tutor**, **Enlightened Tutor**, or even **Eladamri's Call**. The fact that you might lose what you searched for always seemed like too much of a . . . a . . . gamble to take seriously. The only decks that could previously find a use for **Gamble** were combo decks like **Sneak Attack**, which could afford the risk if it meant instant victory.

Luckily, *Odyssey* block has made discarding fun for the whole family. Now **Gamble** can retrieve cards playable from the graveyard via flashback (**Firebolt** and **Volley of Boulders**) or even from a discard via madness (**Fiery Temper** and **Violent Eruption**). A particularly funny trick is to **Gamble** for a **Recoup** in a sorcery-heavy deck, allowing you to smile away the random discard—or even to flashback **Gamble** itself.



One tenet of using **Gamble** has always been to try to keep your hand as full as possible to minimize your chances of tossing away important spells. In the aforementioned sorcery-heavy deck, both **Overmaster** and **Browbeat** seem ideal.

In addition, *Odyssey* block provides both the perfect creature for a sorcery deck and the perfect red threshold creature if you happen to be filling your graveyard.

<b>Ace of Diamonds</b>			
Extended Gamble-Sorcery Deck			
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards			
21 Mountain	4 Fledgling Dragon	4 Browbeat	
4 Wasteland	4 Magnivore	4 Fire Diamond	
25 lands	8 creatures	4 Gamble	
		4 Overmaster	
		4 Recoup	
		1 Seize the Day	
		2 Volley of Boulders	
		4 Wildfire	
		27 other spells	

## Iridescent Drake

Lost amidst the ridiculous power level of the *Urza* block is an interesting thematic cycle of cards that includes **Academy Researchers**; **Iridescent Drake**; **Metathran Elite**; **Rayne**, **Academy Chancellor**; and **Thran Golem**. The idea behind these creatures was to make creature enchantments more playable and less ripe for card disadvantage. Yet even the power of **Rancor** (also in *Urza* block, sigh) could not persuade most people to use them.

**Armadillo Cloak** aside, **Elephant Guide** is probably the most playable creature enchantment to come along since **Rancor**. As an added bonus, **Elephant Guide** just loves being used twice (or three times, or four . . .) to create a herd of Elephant tokens. In Standard, **Nomad Mythmaker** allows for recursive **Elephant Guide** tricks, but in Extended, I might as well dip into blue. **Rancor** still being legal in Extended makes for at least eight legitimate creature enchantments for such a deck—something that might look something of like this . . .

<b>Suit 'Em Up</b>			
Extended Creature Enchantment Deck			
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards			

8 Forest	4 Academy Researchers	1 Ancestral Mask
8 Island	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Careful Study
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Iridescent Drake	2 Compulsion
20 lands	3 Werebear	4 Elephant Guide
	2 Yavimaya Enchantress	4 Frantic Search
	17 creatures	4 Rancor
		4 Wild Growth
		23 other spells

With the plethora of multicolor lands available from *Invasion* block, I also can see adding white for the benefits of *Armadillo Cloak*, *Nomad Mythmaker*, and tricks like a *Monk Idealist - Auramancer* combo to further push the creature enchantment idea.

## Flicker



Finally, who doesn't love *Flicker*? Take a card out of play and then immediately plop it right back into play. My only consternation is that it isn't an instant, which would allow you to give opposing creatures "summoning sickness" at opportune times. Besides, doesn't "flicker" just *sound* like an instant? Ah well, it's still loads of fun with any "comes into play" or "leaves play" permanents.

Besides, now we have *Liberate*, which is faster, although it misses the immediate payoff of *Flicker* and can target only creatures. Just like *Flicker*, *Liberate* suggests hordes of activations and re-activations on any creature you play. But which to put in a deck? I say use them both and go crazy.

Liber-Licker?		
Extended Liberate-Flicker Deck		
<b>Main Deck</b>		
56 cards		
4 Caves of Koilos	3 Faceless Butcher	4 Flicker
7 Plains	2 Gravedigger	4 Liberate
9 Swamp	4 Phyrexian Rager	4 Vindicate
1 Tainted Field	4 Ravenous Rats	12 other spells
21 lands	4 Soul Warden	
	4 Spectral Lynx	
	2 Voice of All	
	23 creatures	

Just as with *Tempest* block, many more cards deserve mention than I have space. Very briefly, reconsider the following oft-overlooked pieces of Urza block cardboard.

- *About Face* provides an all-commons combo with *Tireless Tribe*.
- *Attunement* is simply crazy with the flashback, threshold, and madness mechanics.
- *Defense of the Heart*, meet *Questing Phelddagrif* and/or *Nantuko Shrine*.
- *Sleeper Agent* might not do anything with newer cards, but I've always liked it with things like *Ensnaring Bridge*, *Wheel of Torture*, and *Scalding Tongues*.
- *Brand* has been worth playing ever since *Thieves' Auction* joined *Gilded Drake* in the world.
- *Angel's Trumpet* in a creatureless deck with *Orim's Chant*, *Teferi's Moat*, and the like is pretty funny.
- *Angelic Chorus* makes *Test of Endurance* look better and better.
- A *Second Chance - Soulgorger Orgg* pairing sounds scary, fun, and in need of a little *Worship*.
- *Body Snatcher*, *Gamekeeper*, and *Karmic Guide* still make for terrific fattie reanimation decks, either separately or together.

Actually, all sorts of possibilities exist within Urza block if you allow your imagination to roam. Many, many creative cards from the block are still waiting in the bleachers, looking bewildered after so many of their counterparts were invited to the *Seventh Edition* party. Who knows what could happen if you ask them to dance?

And if you do, be sure to step on **Morphling's** toes for me as you waltz by.

Next week: I'm a Djinni in a bottle, baby!

-j

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