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December 27, 2002



This question first appeared on March 22, 2002.

Q: "Do you folks at WotC foresee the day when you will have completely exhausted all the permutations and combinations possible in this game? I thought you were scraping the bottom of the barrel when *Homelands* came out, but ever since *Alliances* I have been repeatedly surprised by your creativity. Do you think the game has five more years, ten more years, infinite?"

-- Raymond Russell, Minneapolis, MN

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"This isn't something we like to talk about in R&D but according to our calculations, the game only has 7.4 years left before we completely exhaust the potential card ideas. Kidding! I'm kidding! Just having a little fun with you. The actual answer is that you needn't worry. One of the great strengths of **Magic** is its flexibility. I've been designing **Magic** cards for six years and I have as many cool ideas today as the day I walked into Wizards of the Coast. In addition to new ideas, we also have the ability to revisit old cards (with repeats) and mechanics (as we did with 'pitch cards' in *Mercadian Masques*) to find new ways to use old ideas. While not infinite, there are enough areas to explore for several centuries of new **Magic** expansions. All in all, no need to panic."

December 26, 2002



This question first appeared on May 3, 2002.

Q: "What was the thinking behind the 'Power 9' and other early power cards? I know that in the early days there were no deck construction rules, which means someone could conceivably have built a deck with multiple **Moxes**, **Ancestral Recalls**, **Time Walks**, etc., which must have shown up in testing as broken. Did you only ever expect them to be extremely rare, were they not tested extensively, or were the power levels simply underestimated?"

-- Glenn Hefler, Canberra, ACT, Australia

A: From **Richard Garfield**, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**:

"We knew that the original card set had very powerful cards and combinations of cards. I believed there were two factors controlling these cards and others like them -- local player rules and rarity.

"First, I believed that broken decks would be controlled by the play groups. All the board games I played had house rules associated with them and everywhere I went people played games by different rules. If I showed up with an all **Lightning Bolt** deck I just wouldn't find many opponents (except wise-asses with lots of **CoP Reds**).

"I also believed that the number of cards people would acquire would control this to some extent; if a player was part of a play group of 20 people each of whom bought five starter decks, the number of **Black Lotuses** in the environment wouldn't be that bad. That was the most broken I could picture it, and we felt that if people were buying more cards or the playgroups were way bigger, then we were a success -- we may have to deal with balance issues but we were a success anyway. The common cards in **Magic** were a lot better balanced -- not because I wanted them to be worse (I considered **Terror** and **Fireball** to be top notch, for example), but because they were going to be more widely used.

"What caught me by surprise on both accounts was how networked the game was -- with Monopoly you play with your pals and make whatever rules you like, but it wouldn't be surprising for your group not to touch any other groups. With **Magic** every group had many players who played in other groups and so the demand for consistent play and deck construction rules was very high. The access a player had to large numbers of broken cards via trade was much higher than expected also -- and to boot players were buying more cards than expected."

December 25, 2002



This question first appeared on March 21, 2002.

Q: "Rumor has it that **Rancor** was really a card that was supposed to cost 2 and ended up as 1. Misprint or not? Or just a last-minute change?"
-- Mark Anthony Cassar, Cospicua, Malta

A: From **Bill Rose**, head of Research & Development:
"The short answer is: I don't know. No one will ever know.

"As I recall, **Rancor** originally was 2, and it didn't have the 'deathback' mechanic, meaning it wouldn't return to your hand. In an effort to make some tournament-quality creature enchantments, **Rancor**'s cost was lowered to 1. Then the deathback mechanic was added. After that, the **Magic** developers disagree on what happened. There was a debate about **Rancor**'s cost. The group who wanted **Rancor** costed at 1 argued at it would be good, but not broken. The '2' group believes they won and **Rancor** was published as the development team wanted. The '2' group believes they won, but that the lead developer forgot to change the file sent to typesetting.

"Given the choice between 1 and 2, I would cost **Rancor** at 1. But given a time machine, I would cost it at 1."

December 24, 2002



This question first appeared on October 17, 2002.

Q: "On all the new cards, when referring to a player, it says 'he or she.' I've never heard of any girls playing **Magic**. Can you clarify me on this? Do you know of any girls that play **Magic: The Gathering**?"
-- Jarrid Legere, Milwaukee, WI

A: From **Elaine Chase**, Research & Development:
"I don't know of any girls who play **Magic** either. We just write 'he or she' to mess with you.

"I'm just kidding. I'm actually the only girl who plays **Magic**. Besides being a **Magic** developer and a level 3 judge, I'm also on the **Magic** rules team, so I make sure to tell the templating team to use 'she' a lot. Every time you see a 'she' on a card, it's talking about me.

"Oh, alright. One of the members of the templating team is a girl, too. She's the one who makes sure the cards say 'she' on them. That's two.

"Let me keep thinking. When I played on the Pro Tour, there was always one or two other girls playing in the event. Hold on, I'll go check the DCI database to find them.... Wow! There's over 95,000 women with DCI memberships! That can't be right. I'll go check with market research to see if they can shed any light on the issue....Will you believe it turns out that 10-15% of all **Magic** players are actually females?"

"Seriously, we're out there. In general, women tend to like the social aspect of **Magic** more than the competitive angle, so you'll find a smaller number at tournaments and many more laying the smack down around the living room coffee table. But I don't think I've ever been to a prerelease or Pro Tour qualifier where there wasn't at least one other girl besides me in attendance. And I could tell you some good stories about guys who couldn't seem to take the blow to their ego caused by losing to one of us. So don't think the next girl you play won't kick your butt. She'll just do it with a smile."

December 23, 2002



This question first appeared on August 2, 2002.

Q: "Will you ever bring Demons back to **Magic**? There is a fine line between Horror and Beast... but they are no Demons. I do remember an *Unglued* card made a joke about **Demon crossed out as Beast**. But a Beast is no Demon, and neither is a Horror."
-- Lancer, cyberspace

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:
"Here at Wizards of the Coast, we believe in gentleness and love and smiles. That's why when our creatures 'fight,' they hug each other and make friends! We try to avoid icky, scary things like spiders, snakes, and demons. But be on the lookout for the following cards: Basket Full of Kittens, Lollipop Elemental, Bracers of Sparkliness, Circle of Protection: Cooties, and My Pink Unicorn Friend.

"So in short, we would never, ever, ever print anything gross like a Demon in a million million years. Unless it was a fun, happy demon. Like a Grinning Demon, for example. That would be super fun!"

December 20, 2002



Q: "Why is it that Barrin was shown an old man with a white beard throughout the art of the *Urza's Saga* block, but suddenly becomes a younger man with black hair and bushy mutton chop sideburns? None of this was explained (or mentioned) in the backstory novels. What gives?"
--Christopher Hickman, Richmond, VA

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, **Magic** creative coordinator:
"Barrin was drinking 'slow time water' from the time rifts on Tolaria. There was an accident on Tolaria years before, when Urza was experimenting with time travel, that split the island into fast, slow, and normal time areas. Drinking water from those areas had an affect on aging. Water from the slow time areas slowed the speed a which one aged, while water from the fast time areas sped it up. Barrin used the water early on to give himself an unnaturally long life, to keep up with his immortal companion, Urza. Then when the invasion became more imminent, he used even more of it, and in combination with some powerful magic, the water not only slowed his aging, but reversed it. Barrin knew that in the coming battle against the Phyrexians, he couldn't let his age be a factor."

December 19, 2002

Q: "I have always heard the rumors of the tournament when a person ripped up the card **Chaos Orb** and sprinkled it all over the playing field. You have even made a card after it from *Unglued* (**Chaos Confetti**). I was wondering if this actually happened or if this is a rumor."
--Nathaniel Slany, Strongsville, OH

A: From **Jeff Donais**, DCI Manager:
"There are a few stories about people ripping up **Chaos Orbs** in the first couple of years after **Magic** was released. The story is that someone ripped up a **Chaos Orb** and dropped the pieces onto the playing area in order to hit as many permanents as possible. The player ended up clearing most of the opponent's lands and creatures and won the game shortly afterward. The story says that the player didn't care about the value of the Orb since people didn't realize how valuable cards were going to be, especially the Beta rares. This story might be an urban legend or it might be real. It doesn't really matter since it's a fun story and it led to the creation of **Chaos Confetti**. I would guess that there is indeed an element of truth to the story.

"When Mark Rosewater was working on the *Unglued* set, he called a bunch of people and asked them if they had ideas for cards. My idea was to recreate the story of a

person ripping up their **Chaos Orb**. I submitted my idea for a card I called, 'The Real Chaos Orb'. It was exactly how you see the card **Chaos Confetti**, including the flavor text, 'And you thought that was just an urban legend.' Mark even got Mark Tedin, the original artist for **Chaos Orb**, to do the art for **Chaos Confetti**. I have the original Confetti artwork at home to celebrate my first **Magic** card officially designed."

December 18, 2002



Q: "I am sometimes compelled to build decks around certain cards simply because I like the artwork so much; **Graxiplon** being one of the latest. He's expensive, but it seemed to me his ability could be somewhat useful especially in the casual multi-player environment. I've gotten to wondering about the 'why' of his ability to be blocked only when three of the same thing are in his path and was hoping to get some insight from those who came up with the idea and drove it through development."

--David Lasater, California

A: From **Randy Buehler**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

"Those of us on the *Onslaught* development team knew we wanted players to care about the various tribes that we built into the block. In order to accomplish that, we needed to have cards that reward you for having a bunch of creatures from the same tribe. Well, the obvious way is to have cards like **Wirewood Pride** that get better when you have more of the relevant creature type (and we have a bunch of those in the set), but that's not the only thing we did. Another strategy is to have cards that get worse whenever the opponent is playing a tribally themed deck. That way the tribal player is rewarded for being tribal. That's the kind of thinking that led us to **Graxiplon** -- he's okay unless your opponent is playing a tribal deck, in which case he's not very good at all."

December 17, 2002



Q: "On the card **Time Warp**, the flavor text reads, 'Let's do it again!' Is that any reference to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*?"

--Alex Mandarino, Montana

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"Having done some research, I've learned that the movie *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* has a song called 'The Time Warp' and the main chorus of the song is 'Let's do the time warp again.' Hmm, very interesting. So I went to our Creative Text people and they told me that not only does *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* not exist on Dominaria, but the entire invention of film has yet to be discovered. I guess you could hypothesize that Squee (the 'person' making the quote) managed to travel to a dimension where film existed and perhaps in that dimension they had some version of the movie. But I'm not sure we'll ever know."

December 16, 2002



Q: "Is there an unwritten rule that each large expansion must contain a **Wrath of God** effect? (The last ones were **Rout for Invasion**, **Kirtar's Wrath** for *Odyssey* and **Akroma's Vengeance** for *Onslaught*.) If so, why?"

--Matthias Ludewig, Bremen, Germany

A: From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:

"In the past few years, R&D has indeed adopted the policy you listed above. There are a couple reasons, the first of which is that it's an effect we like to have available to players in Block Constructed. As you can see by the power level of the cards, it's hard to call any of them better than Wrath itself, but the option is there should players want it in a block format. Secondly, it's kinda white's schtick, yaknow? White tends to get rare, powerful, board clearing effects like that. So, in the future, I would probably expect more of the same."

December 13, 2002



Q: "My friends and I noticed a weird thing on Bob Flaminio's **Magic website** regarding *Torment's Organ Grinder* (<http://www.flaminio.com/temp/organ-grinder.htm>). Some pictures used on the web and in magazines were different than the actual card. One has cool hanging skeletons, the other doesn't. Reminds me of the old **Unholy Strength** with and without the pentagram. Care to explain?"

--Seb, Holland

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** art director:

"We decided to alter the **Organ Grinder** art in 'post' for two reasons. The main reason is that we sell our product in China and they have requested that we do not show skeletons in our art. It is considered very disrespectful to show human skeletons in their culture. The second reason is that the Brand team has made a decision to keep **Magic: The Gathering** at a PG-13 gore level and some thought that all the hanging skeletons crossed the line. The art team really tries it's best to keep the card art as close to the originals as possible but sometimes things have to be altered when the Brand team feels that artist has crossed a line.

"The change was made so late that some media (including our own web team) had received the unaltered art already, and it showed up in various places."

December 12, 2002



Q: "Why did you stop printing **Swords to Plowshares**? All of the direct white creature control nowadays is too expensive, and that fact seems to have a big impact on the decline of white (along with the loss of **Armageddon**, which I think was a good choice to discontinue)."

--Jim Douglas, Philadelphia, PA

A: From **Robert Gutschera**, Research & Development:

"Swords was good, but it was too good. Since it only cost 1 mana, it shut down all the large expensive creatures. That's a lot of cool cards all being hurt by 1 card.

"Also, we like having good reasons to play every color. But for every color to have strengths, every color has to have weaknesses (if a color had no weaknesses, you'd just play that one color). We want creature removal to be a strength of black and red, but not a strength of white. If you want a deck with good creature removal, put black or red cards in it; if you want (for example) good weenies, go to white.

"You're right that recently white has been weak. But we want to make white better in some way other than giving it good point creature destruction. Keep an eye out for the next few sets... I think you'll find that white sees more play."

December 11, 2002

Q: "There is **Cursed Totem** for creatures and **Null Rod** for artifacts, why isn't there a way to deal with activated abilities of enchantments?" --Jamin F. Shanti, Richmond, VA

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"The reason we haven't made that card yet (and I'm not saying we never will) is that we don't want to make it too easy to shut down defensive enchantments like **Circles of Protection**. That said, we have made narrower versions like **Hand to Hand** and **Abeyance** that allowed players to shut down enchantment activation for short periods of time. Have faith, we will make more cards that help you with problematic enchantment activations."

December 10, 2002

Q: "Is it true that Pat Chapin was hired by R&D? Does that mean we'll see more Type 1 cards in the future?"

--Dennis Plucinski, Bend, OR

A: From **Randy Buehler**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

"Yes, Pro Tour player and Type 1 aficionado Patrick Chapin has moved to Renton and will be working in R&D for at least 6 months. We needed another top-notch playtester and Chapin has long been known both for breaking new cards and also for making up his own cards so we're excited to see what he's capable of. Meanwhile, there aren't any plans to change our approach to Type 1, but I'm sure Pat will be championing the format's cause in the coming months, making sure it's in our minds and we're doing what we can."

December 9, 2002



Q: "I really don't get why you put a flying Goblin in the **Onslaught** set. It's a 1/2 flyer for 3 that's waaaaay too expensive. The card should be in **Unglued 2**, I think. Why does it exist?"

--Michiel Cornille, Belgium

A: From Elaine Chase, Research & Development:
"The **Goblin Sky Raider** is actually a reprint of a card from one of the most powerful **Magic** sets, *Arabian Nights*. It was called **Bird Maiden** (with creature type Bird Maiden), and back in the day it was a powerhouse. OK, so that's a bit of an exaggeration. But for small fliers in red, this is about as good as you're going to get. As **Goblin Sky Raider's** flavor text says, the goblin word for flying is more accurately translated as "falling slowly." While red gets good big fliers in the form of Dragons, the rest of the sky belongs to other colors. Blue gets the most fliers of any size, and white gets the best small ones along with some bigger ones like Angels. Black gets a handful of varying size and power, and red slips in at 4th place. At least its a better deal than what you'll find in green."

December 6, 2002



Q: "I heard a rumor that Richard Garfield tears up **Black Lotuses** on sight to make his worth more money, then gives the owner \$300. How true can that be?"
--James King, Memphis, TN

A: From **Richard Garfield**, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**:
"Hmmm. It seems like if the Black Loti's owners are happy with the \$300 I would be better off just buying them and hoarding them. No, I have never torn up any card without the owner's permission and no one has ever given me permission to rip up his or her **Black Lotus**. And I haven't asked for permission. I don't even have many of them - I probably have two, and I wouldn't know where to start looking for them - so driving up their price isn't a major concern of mine."

December 5, 2002



Q: "I noticed that the creature type for the four most recent Invitationalist cards were all Wizard. (**Meddling Mage**, **Shadowmage Infiltrator**, **Sylvan Safekeeper**, and **Voidmage Prodigy**.) Is this a conscious effort on the part of Wizards to sort of make the in-game embodiment of the cards' creators more realistic, or just some sort of happy coincidence?"
--Brian Winterlin, South Sioux City, NE

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:
"The reason the cards are Wizards is quite simple. The Invitational winners like the idea of the being the creature on the card. (Winners get their images put on their cards.) In order for this to happen, the creature type needs to be something human. **Meddling Mage** and **Shadowmage Infiltrator** were turned in as Wizards. Olle Rade's card was turned in as an Elf, but *Judgment* didn't have any Elves, so we changed it to a Wizard. Part of the reason we did this was that we knew Kai's card was going to work well with Wizards and we liked the idea of some of the Invitational cards having synergy with one another. Jens Thoren, the latest Invitational winner, turned in his card as an Elf Wizard. As we try to stay as close to the player's card as we can, there is a good chance that this card will also be a Wizard."

December 4, 2002



Q: "Red looks to be the 'new' color of fast mana. So why does every colour except red have a land that produces a large amount of mana, for little or no cost? Blue has **Tolarian Academy**, white has **Serra's Sanctum**, green has **Gaea's Cradle**, and black has **Cabal Coffers** and **Lake of the Dead**. Why and how has this come about?"
--Oliver Mayes, Middlesbrough, England

A: From **Brian Schneider**, Research & Development:
"You're right about red being the 'new color of fast mana.' The flavor seems appropriate with red wanting to be aggressive (often at any cost). As for red not having a land like those above... it's possible that we'll see a red-themed mana-producing land some day... though I doubt that it'll be as good as those lands you've mentioned. Many of those are now considered too-good-to-see-print."

December 3, 2002

Q: "Split cards (like **Assault/Battery**) are one of the most well-loved mechanics in Magic. Are there any plans for more of them?"
-- Matthew Watkins, Moapa, NV

A: From **Brian Tinsman**, R&D game designer:

"Up until the design of *Onslaught* it wasn't clear how or even if we were going to start bringing back high-profile mechanics that had debuted in past sets. Some people in R&D (myself included) thought there might be a negative reaction to resurrecting themes everyone had seen before. With the return of cycling in *Onslaught* it became obvious that players really like to see new versions of favorite mechanics after they've been out of print for a while. Of course you're right that split cards were very popular. Plus, there were relatively few of them printed in their day, so it's pretty clear that players would love to see split cards come back in new and interesting ways. So although I can't say when, it's a good bet that split cards will show up in a future set."

December 2, 2002



Q: "Why do some older cards not use their full names when referring to themselves? For example, **Mirri, Cat Warrior** says, 'Mirri, Cat Warrior counts as a Cat Warrior / First strike; forestwalk / Attacking does not cause Mirri to tap.' Note how it says 'Attacking does not cause Mirri to tap.'"

--Conor McKergow, Amherstview, Ontario, Canada

A: From **Del Laugel, Magic** technical editor:

"**Mirri, Cat Warrior** is a Legend. Legends are unique entities, and we think that their names should tell you something about who they are. And since Legends are special, R&D usually gives them lots of complicated abilities. Throw in the fact that creature cards didn't have multiple creature types printed on their type lines until mid-1999, and you can see that space is at a premium on Legend cards.

"Back when the Legend creature type was introduced (in the *Legends* set, of course), many Legends' rules text used only a partial name to refer to its card. Why say '**Sol'kanar the Swamp King**' when there's only one Sol'kanar in the multiverse? Unfortunately, this system was fairly subjective. **Hazeron Tamar** was just Hazeron in its rules text, but **Vaevictis Asmadi** used its full name. Where do you draw the line?

"Since the *Ice Age* set, a Legend's full card name appears in its rules text on the first reference, but any epithets are left off the later references.

"The Legends that follow this rule are **Jareth, Leonine Titan**; **Tahngarth, Talruum Hero**; **Darigaaz, the Igniter**; **Squee, Goblin Nabob**; **Radiant, Archangel**; **Multani, Maro-Sorcerer**; **Mirri, Cat Warrior**; **Crovax the Cursed**; **Commander Greven il-Vec**; **Selenia, Dark Angel**; **Shauku, Endbringer**; **Hakim, Loreweaver**; **Hivis of the Scale**; and **Marton Stromgald**. (The only exception in recent years is **Kangee, Aerie Keeper**. I have no idea why.)"



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