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The Ultimate Octopus

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 House of Cards
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Giant Octopus is not a terribly exciting card. A vanilla 3/3 Octopus for 3 costs fits poorly into most deck strategies—other colors have beefier creatures for lower costs, and blue rarely wants its own Hill Giant.

If Giant Octopus happened to be a Merfolk, that would be something. Merfolk decks could definitely use a Giant Octopus, especially when it could be a 4/4 islandwalker with Lord of Atlantis on the table.

Or maybe if Giant Octopus were a blue 3/3 Elf that you could search onto the table with Skysroud Poacher . . . now that would be pretty interesting.

Or wouldn't it be funny if Giant Octopus fit into your Ooze theme deck? Ooze decks definitely need a 3/3 for 3.

I imagine an Octopus Minion would come in handy with Balthor the Defiled. Or a beefy Octopus Sliver could see use in Extended. An Octopus Kobold would be hilarious and would see play in lots of casual decks.

You probably think I'm going to tell you now that R&D threw a Giant-Octopus-like Illusion creature into the Legions set, much like Mistform Shrieker. You would be right, and you would be very, very wrong.

Meet Mistform Ultimus, a decidedly new twist on Illusions.



Your first reaction is probably along the lines of "Ha! Cool!" followed by a lot of squinting and maybe a few "Uhhh . . . hmmm . . ."s. At least that was my initial reaction. (And if rule issues surrounding the card confuse you, read "How It Works" farther down in this article.) Mistform Ultimus obviously seems wacky enough to build decks around, but how exactly do you use a creature that is at once a Gypsy, an Island-Fish, Sand, a Mosquito, a Shyft, a Phelddagrif, a Yeti, and The-Biggest-Baddest-Nastiest-Scariest-Creature-You'll-Ever-See?

Below are five initial ideas I had about how to use this new fun-loving . . . thing. As you might expect, most of my initial thoughts involved interactions with Onslaught cards. Mistform Ultimus is such a freaky creature, however, that I imagine many more uses will pop up if you put your mind to the task. I hope my own thinking will get you started.

1. Tribal . . . Ho!

As I have tried to point out already, probably the coolest thing about Mistform Ultimus is that it fits into every single "tribal" deck. The reason it always fits is that Mistform Ultimus is a Zombie, a Bird, and an Angel whether it's in your library, in your hand, in your graveyard, or in play. You can't alter it with Artificial Evolution (except to change "Wall" in its text box to something else so the Ultimus can't attack) because its text will override any

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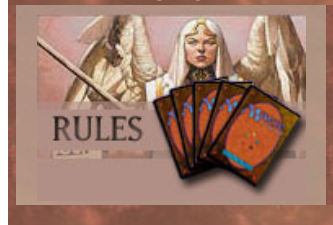
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changes you make. **Mistform Ultimus** will always be every single legal creature type, ready for every single deck based around a creature type.

So, provided you have access to blue mana, if you're building a Soldier deck, an Orc deck, a thematic Sheep deck . . . you can always drop **Mistform Ultimus** into it. Always. Every time. **Giant Octopus** might rarely get used as an Octopus, but plenty of other creature themes can celebrate a 3/3 for $\{3\}$.

In particular, this means that creature types without much beef have access to a 3/3 (like Kobolds, Squirrels, and Saprolings). It also means that creature types that normally have few reasonably costed creatures (Dragons, Giants, Beasts, and so on) gain a four-mana option. In addition, **Mistform Ultimus** makes some creature theme decks (Starfish, Rabbits, Ferrets, and so on) possible where they weren't possible before.

I know Saprolings aren't currently en vogue, but I love those little guys, so here is a modest example. Note that **Mistform Ultimus** is 4/4 with **Verdeloth the Ancient** in play, not 5/5. Verdeloth's effect looks for all Treefolk and all Saprolings in play and gives each of those creatures +1/+1; the effect can't apply twice to the same creature. (If you have **Aven Brigadier** in play, on the other hand, **Mistform Ultimus** is 5/5 because the Brigadier's bonuses are two separate abilities.)"

Very Sappy		
Casual Saproling deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
13 Forest	4 Elvish Farmer	2 AEther Mutation
2 Island	4 Mistform Dreamer	4 Harrow
4 Tropical Island	3 Mistform Ultimus	3 Naturalize
4 Yavimaya Coast	1 Nemata, Grove Guardian	3 Night Soil
23 lands	4 Thallid	2 Saproling Symbiosis
	3 Verdeloth the Ancient	4 Spontaneous Generation
	19 creatures	18 other spells

A final corollary on **Mistform Ultimus**'s fit in tribal decks is that now any creature-themed deck has an excellent excuse to splash blue. Counter-Goblin sounds more plausible now that you have a monoblock Goblin to go along with your counterspells and card drawing. Counter-Elf? Counter-Cleric? Counter-Bear? Come on . . . you know you want to try it.

The Flying Blue Barbarians		
Standard-legal Barbarian deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
8 Island	4 Balthor the Stout	3 Circular Logic
14 Mountain	4 Barbarian Bully	3 Deep Analysis
22 lands	4 Hell-Bent Raider	3 Fiery Temper
	1 Jeska, Warrior Adept	4 Firebolt
	1 Kamahl, Pit Fighter	4 Obsessive Search
	3 Mistform Ultimus	17 other spells
	4 Wonder	
	21 creatures	

2. Endemic Plague

Here's a neat trick: When you sacrifice **Mistform Ultimus** as part of **Endemic Plague**'s cost, you automatically wipe the board clean of creatures (except for creatures like **Phyrexian Colossus** that don't have a creature type). It's easy to imagine the beginnings of a deck that uses this duo, other **Mistform** creatures, and some blue "bounce" to save your own critters.

Patriarch's Bidding works well with **Mistform Ultimus**—so does **Harsh Mercy**. It makes no difference what your opponent chooses, **Mistform Ultimus** will live to do battle with opposing critters. I imagine there's a deck here, although I can't visualize it quite yet.

Along similar lines, I can think of no better target for **Crown of Suspicion**—or any of the **Onslaught** Crowns—than **Mistform Ultimus**.

3. Tribal Golem

Tribal Golem on the table + **Mistform Ultimus** on the table = good times.



Even if your 3/3 Legend does nothing else to influence the game, it can single-handedly make your Golem a 4/4 flying, trampling, first-striking, regenerator with haste. In a world no longer populated by Flametongue Kavu, feel free to get excited about the possibilities here.

Voodoo		
Standard-legal Zombie deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
16 Swamp	2 Boneknitter	4 Cruel Revival
4 Tainted Isle	4 Crypt Creeper	2 Diabolic Tutor
4 Underground River	4 Festering Goblin	6 other spells
3 Unholy Grotto	4 Mistform Dreamer	
27 lands	3 Mistform Ultimus	
	4 Mistform Wall	
	1 Shepherd of Rot	
	2 Tribal Golem	
	3 Undead Gladiator	
	27 creatures	

4. Riptide Shapeshifter

Interestingly enough, when you sacrifice Riptide Shapeshifter you can *always* put Mistform Ultimus into play. As long as your deck contains no other Nameless-Race, Wolverine-Pack, or Marid creatures, your Shapeshifter will find your Ultimus. This is a luxury if you can put your Ultimus to good use. Hold this idea because I will return to it momentarily.

5. Living Wish

Of course, like me, you may be overwhelmed by the possibilities that Mistform Ultimus presents. In that case, I say why not use Living Wish to ensure that Mistform Ultimus will be the best creature for the best tribal theme at the best time? If you're playing by casual rules, you can conceivably Wish any creature—Lord of the Undead to fish your Ultimus out of the graveyard, Aven Brigadier to give it +2/+2, Ravenous Baloth to gain life, or Goblin Wizard to gain protection from white. If you're limiting yourself to Wishing into a sideboard, there is still great opportunity for fun . . .

The Elf-Wall-Rebel-Whatever-Thing		
Extended-legal Mistform Ultimus deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 City of Brass	4 Artificial Evolution	1 Cabal Archon
9 Forest	4 Living Wish	1 Elvish Champion
2 Island	8 other spells	1 Elvish Lyrist
1 Polluted Delta		1 Elvish Scrapper
1 Swamp		1 Eladamri, Lord of Leaves
2 Treva's Ruins		1 Goblin King
4 Yavimaya Coast		1 Lin Sivvi, Defiant Hero
23 lands		1 Lord of Atlantis
4 Birds of Paradise		1 Ravenous Baloth
2 Deranged Hermit		1 Sliver Queen
3 Mistform Ultimus		1 Rebel Informer
4 Mistform Wall		1 Tribal Golem
1 Quirion Explorer		1 Voidmage Prodigy
4 Riptide Shapeshifter		1 Volrath's Stronghold
1 Skyshroud Poacher		1 Zombie Master
2 Urborg Elf		15 sideboard cards
4 Wall of Blossoms		
4 Wall of Mulch		
29 creatures		

Remember, too, that Mistform Ultimus is a Flagbearer, a Rebel, a Mercenary, and a Sliver. Fun tricks abound, eh?

In my brainstorming decks around Mistform Ultimus, I continue to be frustrated by only one fact: Because Mistform Ultimus is a Legend, you can have only one in play at a time. This is a particular bummer because using four in a deck can mean having multiple Mistform Ultimuses uselessly stuck in your hand. This sort of

deckbuilding quirk usually doesn't stop me if I love the card and want to draw it reliably, but it may dim your enthusiasm a bit.

Still, Wombat-, Vampire-, and Clamfolk-lovers unite! You all have a new creature to welcome into the fold. Have fun!

Next week: There is dark, and then there is Dark.

-j

How It Works

(From the forthcoming Legions FAQ)

The types "Illusion" and "Legend" are printed on the card's type line purely for flavor. The Ultimus has every other creature type as well.

It's a Legend, so the Legend rule applies to it. It's also a Wall, so the Wall rule applies to it (although it has an ability that allows it to ignore this rule). It's also a Sliver, and so will gain all Sliver abilities.

Artificial Evolution doesn't affect this creature's types at all, although changing the word "Wall" in the second ability to another type will prevent the Ultimus from attacking because it will still be a Wall.

Like any creature, if the Ultimus "becomes" another type as the result of a spell or ability, it will lose all its other creature types. For example, if your opponent uses *Imagecrafter* to turn your Ultimus into a Soldier, your Ultimus will be only a Soldier. All its other types will be lost for the rest of the turn.

The Ultimus is currently a "Creature — Abomination Aboroth Advisor Aladdin Albatross Alchemist Ali-Baba Ali-from-Cairo Alligator Ambush-Party Ancestor Angel Ant Antelope Ape Archaeologist Asp Assassin Assembly-Worker Atog Aurochs Avatar Avenger Avizoa Badger Ball-Lightning Bandit Banshee Barbarian Barishi Basilisk Bat Bear Beast Bee Beeble Behemoth Being Berserker Bird Boar Bodyguard Brother Brownie Brushwagg Bull Bureaucrat Butterfly Camarid Camel Caravan Caribou Carnivore Carriage Carrier Cat Cavalry Cave-People Centaur Cephalid Cheetah Chicken Chimera Citizen Clamfolk Cleric Clone Cobra Cockatrice Constable Cow Crab Crocodile Crusader Dandan Demon Dervish Deserter Devil Devouring-Deep Dinosaur Djinn Dog Doppelganger Dragon Dragonfly Drake Drill-Sergeant Druid Dryad Dwarf Eater Eel Effigy Efreet Egg Elder Elemental Elephant Elf El-Hajjaj Enchantress Entity Erne Essence Exorcist Faerie Fallen Farmer Ferret Fiend Fish Flagbearer Flying-Men Force Fox Frog Frostbeast Fungus Fungusaur Gaea's-Avenger Gaea's-Liege Gargoyle Gatekeeper General Ghost Ghoul Giant Gnome Goat Goblin Golem Gorgon Graveborn Gremlin Griffin Guardian Gus Gypsy Hag Harlequin Hell's-Caretaker Heretic Hero Hipparian Hippo Homarid Hornet Horror Horse Horseman Hound Hunter Hydra Hyena Illusion Imp Incarnation Infernal-Denizen Inquisitor Insect Island-Fish Jackal Jellyfish Kavu Keeper Kelp King Kithkin Knight Kobold Kraken Lady-of-Proper-Etiquette Leech Legend Legionnaire Lemure Leper Leviathan Lhurgoyf Lichenthrope Ligid Lion Lizard Lord Lurker Lycanthrope Mage Maggot Maiden Mammoth Manticore Mantis Marid Martyr Master Medusa Meerkat Mercenary Merchant Merfolk Mindsucker Minion Minor Minotaur Miracle-Worker Mist Mistfolk Mob Mold-Demon Monger Mongoose Monkey Monster Mosquito Mummy Murk-Dwellers Mutant Mystic Nameless-Race Narwhal Necrosavant Nekrataal Niall-Silvain Nightmare Nightstalker Noble Nomad Octopus Ogre Ooze Orb Orc Orgg Ouphe Ox Oyster Paladin Peacekeeper Pegasus People-of-the-Woods Phantasm Phelddagrif Phoenix Pig Pikemen Pirate Pixie-Queen Plant Poison-Snake Poltergeist Pony Preacher Priest Prism Pyknite Rabbit Raider Ranger Rat Rebel Reflection Rhino Robber Roc Rock-Sled Rooster Rukh Sage Salamander Sand Saproling Satyr Scavenger Scorpion Scout Serf Serpent Shade Shapeshifter Shark Sheep Ship Shyft Sindbad Singing-Tree Sister Skeleton Sliver Slug Smith Snake Soldier Sorceress Spawn Speaker Specter Spellshaper Sphinx Spider Spike Spirit Sponge Sprite Spuzzem Spy Squire Squirrel Stangg-Twin Starfish Stone Strider Survivor Swarm Tactician Tarpan Taskmaster Tetraivite The-Biggest-Baddest-Nastiest-Scariest-Creature-You'll-Ever-See Thofter Thrull Thundermare Tiger Titan Toad Tombspawn Tortoise Townsfolk Tracker Treefolk Troll Turtle Uncle-Istvan Undead Unicorn Vampire Viashino Villain Viper Volver Vulture Walking-Dead Wall War-Rider Warrior Warthog Wasp Wave Whale Whippoorwill Wight Witiigo Wildebeest Will-o'-the-Wisp Witch Wizard Wolf Wolverine Wolverine-Pack Wolves-of-the-Hunt Wombat Wood Worm Wraith Wretched Wurm Yeti Zombie"



"A Card for doctorjay": The Not-Quites

Last week, I explained why my "A Card for doctorjay" experiment is being delayed. I also listed the cards that received relatively few of the nearly 21,000 individual card votes.

Today's update includes the cards that received a fair number of votes but couldn't quite muster the support for a Top 10 finish. (See "Let Loose the Sounds of War" for the fifty-five cards that received the least amount of votes.) Next week I'll round out the finalists, with the winner (and deck ideas) unveiled on January 30.

The Not-Quites:	
14. Okk	346
15. Spelljack	341
16. Radiate	331
17. Cephalid Constable	323
18. Dawn of the Dead	315
19. Zoologist	295
20. Gurzigost	282
21. Skirk Fire Marshal	277
22. Sengir Vampire	276
23. Kamahl, Pit Fighter	273
24. Cultural Exchange	269
24. Sigil of the New Dawn	269
26. Voice of the Woods	268
27. Tephroderm	263

28. Broodhatch Nantuko	255
29. Rorix Bladewing	254
30. Serra Angel	251
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32. Mythic Proportions	242
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36. Aven Brigadier	229
37. Equilibrium	226
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39. Erhnam Djinn	223
39. Terravore	223
41. Rolling Stones	216
42. Cabal Patriarch	213
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44. Erratic Explosion	208
45. Masked Gorgon	204

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