

Notes from *Legions'* lead designer The Name of the Beast

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We design **Magic** sets so far in advance these days that I have to dig through my notes from 2001 to come up with the story of what happened with *Legions* design, and even that is a challenge. First, I have to remember what the codename of the set was. After staring at a scrambled directory full of such odd names as Argon, Bacon, Beijing, and Bogavhati, I finally figured out that *Legions* was one of the "Pep Boys" block. Then I just had to figure out who the second "Pep Boy" was to figure out what the folder name was for the set. Eventually I figured out it was Moe. Someday I will come up with a file system that is better than a thousand monkeys randomly filing could come up with.



Slivers

First off, I was very happy that we were able to convince the group to bring back Slivers in this set. Slivers were very popular in the *Tempest* block and to this day remain one of the most popular creature races. Originally we were considering repeating several of the older common slivers such as [Muscle Sliver](#) and [Winged Sliver](#), but it was felt that these were at such a high power level that it

would restrict us from doing that many good new slivers and these eventually had to be left out so that the new ones could be pushed more aggressively.

The number of Slivers in *Legions* kept bouncing up and down. It started at 22 and at one point dropped to 11 before going back up to one in each color and commonality. Additionally, there was a huge back-and-forth debate over what kinds of abilities Slivers should get. I had done most of the basic ones the first time I did Slivers back in *Tempest*, so we had to come up with some more creative angles to make them exciting this time around. Saboteur abilities seemed like a good fit with the Sliver mechanic, since you could slap down a new sliver with the saboteur ability and all your existing slivers immediately gain the ability. A number of developers pushed for several comes-into-play abilities. I personally feel that there are two things that distinguish Slivers from other creature races: all Slivers give other Slivers in play abilities and, while in play, all Slivers are equal except for power and toughness. Comes-into-play effects on Slivers would mean that the Slivers already in play would be weaker than "new" Slivers, and that just didn't fit. We did end up pushing the envelope on both of what I consider Slivers' defining characteristics during set development, and the only Sliver I am unhappy with in the end is the [Ward Sliver](#). This one lets the person who plays it give all Slivers protection from a chosen color. I felt this violated my arbitrary rule that Sliver color never mattered, and now in a Sliver-on-Sliver match the person that plays Ward Sliver will probably have an advantage since he can choose a color that is more advantageous for him. But I gave in on [Ward Sliver](#) when the development team gave in on putting "tap" effects on Slivers, such as [Magma Sliver](#), which I thought was a nice extension of the Sliver mechanic that we had not done the first time around.



Amplify

Amplify was another mechanic that went up and down, and in fact at one point it was on the chopping block to be cut from the set. The mechanic was based on an old cycle we did back in *Urza's Destiny* of cards that had a variable effect based on the number of cards of a specific color you revealed when you played them, such as [Scent of Jasmine](#). I thought that given the creature-based theme of the block, it might be interesting to have a series of creatures that encouraged race theme decks by benefiting from having extra creatures of the same type in your deck. There were a number of

issues since this mechanic is by nature very swingy, which almost killed the mechanic, but the development team was eventually able to resolve all the issues and save what I think is a fairly interesting and fun casual mechanic.

All Creatures

It may surprise you to learn that the set was not originally all creatures. The set went through several iterations in design before ending up as the all creature set. The first version was creature heavy. Normally a standard **Magic** set has about 58% creatures if you look at sets over all time. The first design file had around 70% creatures, but a number of spells and enchantments that created creatures or were heavily creature-themed. At the time there was a huge pressure to try to have a "hook" on every set. *Torment* was "the black set." *Judgment* was "the green/white set." Several of the creative people were pushing for Moe to be the all creature set. I wasn't really sure how this would play out. People like their tricks, and most of the tricks are spells. My compromise proposal was to have all the commons be creatures, so the set would feel very creature heavy but would still have a few of the spell tricks I felt were important. Since the set ended up all creatures you can see where this battle went. We were still able to get a good amount of tricks into the set with the "morph reveal" effects and with judicious use of comes into play effects on creatures, but a number of cool spell effects ended up on the cutting room floor.

One of the interesting cycles that didn't make the cut was a cycle of enchant land cards that turned the land into a "Mishra" land. Here is an example:

[White Soulland]



Enchant Land

①: Enchanted land becomes a 1/4 creature until end of turn. Play this ability only once per turn. If CARDNAME would be put into a graveyard from play, return it to owner's hand instead.

Many of the spells actually got moved up into *Onslaught* during the implementation of the all creature set, but this was one of the ones I was sad to see miss the cut. Who knows, maybe you'll see it in a future set.

The spell effects based on the number of a specific creature type in play, which we referred to as the "Titania" spells after the popular [Priest of Titania](#), were originally in Moe and moved up to *Onslaught*. The original idea was to have the creatures with the tap effects (like [Sparksmith](#)) in *Onslaught* and the spell effects (like [Unified Strike](#)) in Moe, but we were able to shuffle it around fairly well.



The Rest

One of the keys of making the all creature set work was the "morph reveal" effects. We started out with all the basic spell effects you would normally see in a set, like [Terror](#), [Disenchant](#), and so on, and then we started to get a little wackier with effects like target redirection and +6/+6 and trample. We were also able to take a bunch of static effects that we normally would not put on creatures and create a group of creature enchantment cards, which is the Muse cycle. All and all, the set ended up with enough spell effects to create interesting play decisions, which I was afraid would be missing in this type of set. But the whole process to get to an all creature set was quite a revelation... 13:18 to be exact.

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