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July 31, 2003



Q: "Have you guys ever considered using photographs as card art? Obviously this isn't an option for cards like **Shivan Dragon**, but at least the basic lands could be done this way, maybe as a special promo item."

--Ron Bailey, Dover, DE

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

"We have talked about that, but **Magic** takes place within fantasy realms and I think part of the fun would be taken away if Dominaria ended up looking just like places here on Earth. In addition, I think the photos would clash with the painted art and take away from it visually. I'd say all photos or all paintings within a game are ok, but don't mix."

July 30, 2003



Q: "Why is there no one-mana **Shatter**? Like a red **Demystify** for artifacts? Isn't red supposed to be superior to green at artifact destruction? Yet **Shatter** is strictly worse than **Naturalize**."

--Michael Kusnetsov, UK

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

"While a 1 mana **Shatter** isn't ridiculous, we don't like printing cards that are strictly better than cards that are already in print. **Shatter** has a nice name and reasonable cost (meaning it's not ridiculously overcosted, although it's certainly not a great card), and so we've kept it in print and haven't obsoleted it yet."

July 29, 2003



Q: "Why are there no more 'boring' cards? Every creature seems to have a special ability of some sort. Why are there no more **Hurloon Minotaur** and **Scathe Zombies**? Granted that because they have no ability, it seems that players won't use them, which is potentially true, but they added much more to the world of **Magic**. Not everyone has to be a hero... bring back the nameless footslogger!"

--Kieran Sinclair, Queensland, Australia

A: From **Henry Stern**, Research & Development:

"No more boring cards? Au contraire, mon ami! We try to put a few "vanilla" and spells in every set. I am looking at the **Onslaught** block spoiler as I type this and I see **Glory Seeker**, **Elvish Warrior**, **Enormous Baloth**, and **Fugitive Wizard**, plus a number of cards with one simple keyword like 'flying' or 'trample.' Now, we tend to put more vanilla cards in the large sets, and fewer in the smaller expansions. Another thing to consider is that there is a limited amount of vanilla design space. Once you have made Grey Ogre, every other 2/2 for 2 is a repeat, and we don't like to do too many repeats in general."

July 28, 2003



Q: "All recent sets have reprinted a classic card like *Clone*. Why not *Scourge*?"
--Charles Mullaney, Baltimore, MD

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

"There really isn't a set policy for sets on what or how many cards go in as reprints. Many times the designers/developers choose them based on need, or want. In the case of *Scourge*, the design team (Bill Rose, Brian Tinsman, and myself) had long talks about which cards (if any) we wanted to include. Bill and I loved the idea of reprinting a few cards, but Brian is probably the person most vehemently opposed to reprints in the entire department. This makes for some fun exchanges in Multiverse (our card database where we keep records and comments on new sets). Take for example this excerpt from *Goblin War Strike*, a *Portal 2* card reprinted *Scourge*:

```
BT: A Portal 2 repeat.
BT: Isn't anyone gonna pull this?
WW: Not it.
Bill: I'll vote with you if you cry.
WW: Heck I'd switch my vote if I get to see you cry too.
BT: Team says FXX YAY I win!
BT: Back from the dead. Unbelievable.
WW 4/30: My plan comes to fruition...
RB 5/18: team prefers creature damage (aka playable in Lim)
to player damage (which might be an unhealthy con niche
card)
RB 5/23: hmm ... this ability is identical to a cycling
trigger from Legions right now
RB 6/10: changed back to player-only because of this ...
back to being a repeat, I believe
WW 6/6: HAH! Take THAT Tinsman!
```

And there you have it Charles. Instances like this are fairly common during design and development, which personally is one of the things that makes working here so much fun. For the record, FXX stands for 'Future X,' which is basically the place in the database where all card ideas that no one loves go to die. Hope this answers your question.

July 25, 2003



Q: "Has Wizards ever considered commissioning any popular comic book artists to do illustrations for **Magic** cards? It'd be awesome to see, for example, an Alex Ross *Serra Angel*, or a George Perez *Wrath of God*, or a Jim Lee *Shivan Dragon*!"
--Jon Daulton, Somerset, KY

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

"There are three things that need to happen for an artist to end up doing paintings for us. They have to be able to work with our schedules/deadlines, they have to paint in a style that would fit with the brand, and they have to be willing to work with our pay scale. The truth is most of the big comic book illustrators are very busy and work under very tight deadlines with in the comic industry, and don't have time for additional projects like **Magic** cards."

July 24, 2003



Q: "Why did you make four blue storm cards in *Scourge*, but only two of every other color?"
--Tyler Jones, MN

A: From **Mike Elliott**, R&D senior designer:

"I wasn't aware that we made any non-blue storm cards. Do people really play other colors than blue, or is this some sort of trick question? Seriously though, you have all heard wonderful rumors about the infamous R&D color pie for **Magic**. It turns out that one of the things that blue gets under this scheme is copy effects such as *Clone*. Given this, copying a spell on the stack also happens to be something that certainly seems very blue to me, and whenever we can give something to blue we attempt to do so. (I mean, who doesn't love 'draw-go'?) However, this seemed like such an interesting mechanic that we decided to let all five colors have access to it, but we

kept the extra blue cards out of respect for the fact that it really is a blue-centered ability."

July 23, 2003



Q: "How often does a card's playtest name stick all the way through development? Is it common, uncommon, or rare for a card to actually keep its original name?"
--Paul, St. Louis, MO

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, **Magic** creative coordinator:

"Thanks for the question, Paul. First off, let's assume by 'playtest name' you mean the first name a card gets. If that is true, it's rare that a 'playtest name' becomes a final name. To explain why, I'll take you through the life of a card name.

"Cards are initially named by their designers. Designers don't spend too much time on naming their cards. Their names tend to flavorlessly describe the mechanic (e.g. 'Bottomless Mana Pool' for **Upwelling**), or be over-the-top humor (e.g. 'Zombie Prescription Pills' for **Clutch of Undeath**). Occasionally a design name becomes a final name, but it's rare. After the designers hand off their set, the creative director, Brady Dommermuth, is next to take a crack at names. Brady writes art concepts for the cards, and chooses names to match those concepts in order to help illustrators get a better idea of the card. He spends more time on the names than the designers do, takes into account the flavor of the world he's working in, and his names more closely match the card's will final appearances. As such, Brady's names will commonly become final names. After Brady's done with the cards, the names and flavor text team gets hold of them. We do our best to create flavorful names that are evocative of the card's mechanic and flavor, and the flavor of the setting as a whole. Sometimes tweaking Brady's names, sometimes leaving them as is, and sometimes changing them outright. Then, after a brief stop in the editing department, the names make their way into the world.

"So, as you can see, between infancy and adulthood, card names go through quite a metamorphosis, and are rarely the same in the beginning as they are in the end."

July 22, 2003



Q: "What's up with **Magic Online** version 2.0?"
Theo Workman, Joliet, IL

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

"I'm glad you asked -- check out the full list of new features [here](#), and then you can read about our motivations for some of the changes [here](#). Finally, click [here](#) to see when all this cool new functionality will be available."

July 21, 2003



Q: "Are you going to make a sortable HTML mode spoiler also for older sets, like *Tempest* or *Mirage*, sometime in the future?"
-- Ari

A: From **Daniel Stahl**, Managing Web Producer:

HTML Sortable Spoiler Lists for all **Magic** sets is one of our current projects that we hope to have tackled by the end of this year. We have been coordinating directly with the R&D card database in order to create exact spoilers from the master file so that we easily export this data to the web. In addition, we are also hoping to expand the Oracle reference to all sets as well. While development time is never easy to prophecy, I'm hoping that this functionality will be done and on our site in the next 2-3 months.

- Daniel

July 18, 2003



Q: "Is that a new tap-symbol on the *Eighth Edition Elfhame Palace*?"
-- Jan Boelens, Netherlands

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:

Good eye. Yes, there will be a new "simplified" tap symbol on **Magic** cards release along with the new card frames. What we did was remove the black diamond shape

from the middle and left the TAP-Arrow and circle in the background.
-- Jeremy

July 17, 2003



Q: "On the Goblin King card for 8th Edition under its creature type it says lord. Why isn't it a Goblin or Goblin Lord?" -- Jared Gordon, Southington, Connecticut

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, Research & Development:

The answer to this question goes back to the beginning of **Magic**. When Richard Garfield first created the lords (*Alpha* included **Lord of Atlantis** and **Zombie Master** in addition to **Goblin King**), he didn't want them to affect themselves as he thought it would be confusing. By making them lords, he mechanically avoided the problem. Since then, R&D has come to realize that it's confusing to have a creature that appears to be of a race in the art, not be of that race. In addition, we have come up with a template that explains this clearly: "All other ____'s get +1/+1."

If we have the templating technology, why didn't we change **Goblin King** in *Eighth Edition*? Because we don't like functionally changing older cards. Perhaps someday we'll make a new lord of the goblins that is himself a goblin (with a new name), but the card **Goblin King** will always remain a lord.

-- Mark

July 16, 2003



Q: "When can you tell us what the name of the expansion will be after Mirrodin and Darksteel? (The Tomato of your BLT.)"

-- Joel Whitford, Boston, MA

A: From **Elena Moye**, Associate Brand Manager:

To answer your question, we can now officially announce that the name of the last expansion in the *Mirrodin* block will be **Fifth Dawn**.

-- Elena

July 15, 2003



Q: "Why do the cards that start with an "h" have a lower case "h" and the rest of the cards have upper case letters?" -- Adam Reuven
Los Angeles, CA

A: From **Daniel Stahl**, Managing Web Producer:

Yet another question that I first asked when I started at Wizards only to find out that capital "H" in the **Magic** font looks a lot like the lowercase "h" in the same font.

As proof that they are in fact different, here is a visual example:

h - H

They look similar, but the lowercase is indeed smaller. This happens to be one case where the new card font launching in *Eighth Edition* will make things a lot clearer.

- Daniel Stahl

July 14, 2003



Q: "**Hundroog** and **Titanic Bulvox**. **Undead Warchief** and **Clutch of Undeath**. These cards (illustrated by the same artists) have almost identical illustrations. I don't mean to be impolite, but what happened to the Art Department? I can't recall such blatant unoriginality of art in the history of **Magic**. Surely this trend is detrimental to the game. As members of R&D often mention, a card's art serves an important function; players recognize cards most of the time by glancing at the art from a distance of a few feet. I don't think anyone could distinguish **Undead Warchief** from **Clutch of Undeath**. How does the Art Department answer this criticism? Do they plan to continue the use of redundant artwork in sets to come?"

--Jeremy Hoffman
Bethesda, MD

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:

"This is a complicated question which has a short and a long answer. I'll give you a medium answer. First of all, the art department is trying to create worlds where there are identifiable creature types and where things make some sense. In the old days it was: 'paint what ever you want' more or less. Now it's 'paint a creature from this world, and in fact paint this certain creature from the style guide.' The second part is that most illustrators have a very unique style that is recognizable. So if you give two similar creatures to one artist, the odds are that they'll look similar. If you ask an artist to paint a deer sitting and then ask him to paint a deer standing, odds are the deer will look very similar as they do in real life. So my job is to try and not give similar assignments to same artist unless I want things to look similar. As much as I'd like to be perfect this sometimes works out better than others. Sometimes I don't realize how close things are looking until the painting has arrived other times artist are asked to make changes but not all the changes get made. Living in a world of schedules and deadlines affects these decisions.

"As for **Undead Warchief** and **Clutch of the Undeath**: Greg was asked to paint a 'pit-fighter' zombie from the style guide. These guys are sewn and stapled together from all the scraps after the battle. We wanted to show the zombie on **Clutch of the Undeath** being energized by having this oversized hand made of energy grasping the zombie's chest. As for the zombie in **Undead Warchief**, he was part of cycle of warchiefs. All of the warchiefs would have medallions around their necks to signify them as leaders. The first sketch had a little head on the zombie's right elbow which looked too much like the head on the other one's stomach, so I had Greg remove it. Overall I thought the art descriptions were different enough that I didn't think they'd be confused. See this [image](#) of the original styleguide reference.

"As for **Hundroog** and **Titanic Bulvox**: They were both forest beast and both were painted by Wayne England. Wayne had already painted **Hundroog** so I when I got the sketch for **Titanic Bulvox** and ask him to make sure it looked very different from **Hundroog**. I was surprised to see how similar it was when the final art arrived. Wayne explained over the phone that he thought that since **Titanic Bulvox** was springing out of the morph shell, had much larger horns and in a different composition then **Hundroog** he thought it would be fine. After the phone call he promised more variety and I decided it wasn't worth holding up the production schedule.

"So that's my answer to your criticism. By the way: I think I ended up giving you the long answer."

July 11, 2003



Q: I know certain artists are chosen to illustrate certain types of cards based on their styles and strengths. For instance John Avon and Rob Alexander are excellent at doing landscapes and therefore illustrate a lot of land cards. What are some of the other artists niches that you tend to have them fill?

-- Richie Procopio, North Brunswick, NJ

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, Art Director:

Artist are just like Doctors. There are "general practitioners" and then there are "specialist" who excel with certain subject matter.

Pete Venters loves painting "Red" and "black" cards and really prefers not painting fiddy/intricate architecture. Where John Avon loves to paint architecture. Adam Rex and Carl Critchlow are great when you want something "dark" and "creepy", Donato, David Martin and Ben Thompson are great with artifacts, Terese Nielsen & Ed Beard are great with animals, Doug Chafee and Arnie Swekel are really great at painting metal and if you want something strange and out there then RK post and Mark Tedin are always there with idea that will blow your mind! I always try to match the right job with the best illustrator but sometimes I like to mix it up and challenge an artist also.

-- Jeremy Cranford

July 10, 2003



Q: Has there been instances where designers, developers or artists or any other person who's worked on **Magic** actually got a chance to be in the art of the card? And if not, has it ever crossed anyone's mind just for an evil joke to go 'Look! I'm playing me!' - Eric Leybourne, Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada

A: From **Daniel Stahl**, Managing Web Producer:
I rarely poke my head in here to answer questions, but this one really struck a funny chord with me because I've wondered this same thing!

You see, prior to coming to work for Wizards (back in 98) I was just a run-of-the-mill **Magic** player (like most everyone else that works closely with the game) and one of the first things I noticed when I got here was how many times I'd be walking around the company and think... "Hey! That guy looks just like **Prodigal Sorcerer!**"

While I can neither confirm nor deny that the artists take some creative license when deciding a creative concept for a card portrait, one can say that because we've published literally thousands of images featuring faces, there is an unsettling *deja-vu* feeling you get when looking around the office. I'm willing to bet that if you looked around where you work/live/play you'll notice that some people bear striking resemblances to cards.

In fact I have found several cards that (in my mind) can be visual proxies for R&D members past and present. So to protect myself from political harm, I'll decline from coughing up my answers in this public forum, but I challenge you to come to the same conclusions I have about the following faces: **Aerathi Berserker** - **Agent of Stromgald** - **Robber Fly** - **Yavimaya Gnats** - **Ana Disciple** - and **Ertai, Wizard Adept**.

Furthermore, if you're dying to see some *real* employee faces, just look at ANY old **Magic** ad in InQuest, Sideboard, or various other related magazines. I guarantee you, if there's a face in the ad, you've got a 99.9% chance you're looking at an employee.

Trust me on this one. I should know.

-- The Arena Poster Child

July 9, 2003



Q: Has **Magic** "jumped the shark?"
-- Jon Barnett, Purcellville, VA

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, Research & Development:
Before I answer this question, I guess I should start by filling everyone in on what "jumping the shark" means. The pop expression refers to a Happy Days episode where Fonzie jumps over a shark (while on vacation in sunny California where he is auditioning for a role in a movie). A web site (called jumptheshark.com) made the hypothesis that this was the exact moment when Happy Days went from going up in quality to going down. The web site coined the term "jump the shark" to represent the exact moment when an item (be it a television show, a rock band, or even a trading card game) begins its decline in quality.

So has **Magic** "jumped the shark?" No. A big emphatic no. In Happy Days terms, Fonzie hasn't even traded in his blue jacket for his trademark leather version yet. You see, in the lifetime of **Magic**, I believe we are still in the early stages of the game. We have been making major technological advances in design and development every year. This can be seen in the quality of the blocks of the last few years. And we haven't even gotten to *Mirrodin* yet. **Magic's** quality is definitely on the rise.

-- Mark Rosewater

July 8, 2003



Q: "Have you ever pined for a chance to redo **Magic's** card back?" I know why it's not really doable, but I can imagine the old card back (with it's out of date Deckmasters logo) sticks out like a sore thumb with the designers. Even more so after getting the chance to redesign the layout of the card fronts". -- Johan Sonck, Antwerp, Belgium

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:
Oh you know I have. Especially since we've updated the **Magic** Logo to yellow and updated the card fronts but some things must never change. So I guess the graphics on the back from 1993 will be a moment frozen in time that will live forever.

-- Jeremy Cranford

July 7, 2003



Q: When a new block is being designed is any thought given to making a new block compatible, with other older blocks? And are the blocks designed to be competitive with one another? Or are they simply designed to stand alone, but generally play the same game? -- Mark McMahon, Decatur, IL

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, Research & Development:

One of the interesting things to watch from our side of the wall is to see how **Magic** design has evolved over the years. In the beginning, everything was sort of created in its own little world. Each expansion lived in sort of a vacuum. Then as time has evolved, we began connecting sets. Each year's three expansions became a block. Blocks began being designed with the different pieces more closely interconnecting.

In the last few years, we've begun to take the next step. We're starting to look at how blocks fit together. We realized this after *Odyssey* block cut back on creature types (no goblins, elves, merfolk, etc.) only to realize months after it was too late that *Onslaught* block was going to have a tribal theme. We are much more conscious these days of what block leads into and out of each block.

As for whether the blocks are made to be competitive with one another, yes and no. We do have a base level power level we revolve around, so blocks are normally within stretching distance from one another. That said, the power level fluctuates. *Odyssey* block for example is a little higher in overall power than *Onslaught* block. As there are no supported formats (although we do play Bring Your Own Block at the occasional Invitational) that care about the power differential between two blocks, it doesn't really come up much.

July 4, 2003



Q: "Did you ever toy with the idea of having the morph ability use the stack?"
--Robb Davis Toronto, Ontario

A: From **Elaine Chase**, Research & Development:

"When we developed the morph mechanic, we explored many different ways for it to work. It was a very hotly debated topic, and it took a lot of time to play with different versions and discuss the implications. Here are some of the choices we looked at:

"To morph a creature, announce the ability, pay the cost, and put it on the stack. When it resolves, flip the card over and it takes the form of the face-up card. The big minus to this approach is that the opponent wouldn't be able to verify that the cost was paid correctly until the morphing resolved. Besides a few old cards, no costs in **Magic** are hidden. What if they tap 5 mana, one of each color? What was the cost they just paid? Do they need to tell you? What if they made a mistake and you spent cards in your hand responding to their illegal play? In the end, we thought the problems this would cause were too great.

"To morph a creature, flip up the creature, announce the ability, pay the cost, and put it on the stack. The creature remains a 2/2 colorless creature until resolution when it becomes the face-up card. This way the opponent can verify the cost. The negative is the confusion that would result if players had cards on the table that weren't what they appeared to be. Why have something physically face-up while it is still a 2/2 colorless creature?

"To morph a creature, show the face-up creature to your opponent, announce the ability, pay the cost, put it on the stack, and physically turn the card back face down (and it remains a 2/2 colorless creature). Either player may look at the face-down card while the ability is on the stack. When it resolves, flip the card over and it takes the form of the face-up card. This solves both of the above problems but made morph lose its 'surprise' feeling when played, and it is a little wordy.

"In addition to the above issues, we found that the way you played morph cards changed when the ability used the stack. If you can respond to my activating morph, then the correct play for me is to morph only when I can pay the cost multiple times or when you are tapped out so you can't stop me. Your correct play is to hold onto your removal until I spend my resources trying to flip it. This play style slowed down games and took out most of the 'gotcha' moments that playing morph without the stack created. Because of this, we ended up with the morph rules as you know (and hopefully love) them."

July 3, 2003



Q: "How thin of a link will you make through a cycle? I mean are all the cycles you make obvious, or are some just little jokes you in R&D put into the cards for fun?"
--Chris Domes

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:
"There are many types of cycles. Some are blatant and some are subtle. Some have a very strong link that runs through the flavor of the cards (including name and flavor text) while others have only a tenuous mechanical link. So, the answer to your question is that no, not all the cycles are obvious. As far as them being R&D in-jokes, that's not really where we put that kind of thing."

July 2, 2003



Q: "I noticed that a lot of the text in the new *Eighth Edition* cards is left justified. For example, the *Eighth Edition* card [Naturalize](#) has flavor text where the name that comes after the quote (in this case, William Shakespeare) is left justified. In the past, cards with flavor text followed by a name of the person from who the quote came from is usually justified to the right. In my opinion, that looks less cluttered. You also left justified the card info on the very bottom of every card now. Why the change?"
--Gordon Lamm, Sacramento, California

A: From **Del Laugel**, **Magic** editor:
"That's really two questions, but the answer to both is the same: The changes were caused by the new power/toughness box in the lower right corner of creature cards. It's great for game play, but it did make us rethink the alignment of the 'fine print' and flavor text attributions.

"Consider what would have happened if the legal text had stayed in the same place it was on the old frames. Half of the collector number would be hiding under the power/toughness box! Rather than have the artist credit and legal text 'centered' differently on creature and noncreature cards, we decided to move that text to the left on all cards.

"The flavor text attributions, like the one on *Naturalize*, were moved to the left because the new power/toughness box covers part of the lower right corner of the text box. On a card with many, many lines of text, the overlap prevents us from using the last half-inch or so of the bottom line. The new text box is wider than the old one, so we're not really losing any space. But how do you right-justify an attribution in that situation? (And who was going to tell a certain Phyrexian noble that he couldn't have his flavor text? Not me!) Even on creature cards without that much text, the combination of the power/toughness box and a right-justified attribution would make the cards look unnecessarily cluttered.

"As an historical note, the artist credit and legal text were printed flush left on **Magic** cards until the *Stronghold* set (January 1998), and flavor text attributions were printed flush left until the *Mirage* set (October 1996). Check out *Gorilla Shaman* from the *Alliances* set, for example."

July 1, 2003



Q: "Why is it that the Core Set never includes any legendary permanents? The 'Legend rule' is as worth knowing as the 'Wall rule,' or rules about keyword abilities, but it's totally overlooked in the Core Set. Why is that?"
--Chris

A: From **Brian Schneider**, Research & Development:
"With the Core Set, from a developer perspective, you really have to be careful not to include too many things for new players to learn. That said, the Legend rule is important but it's not as central to the game as understanding the keyword abilities and the Wall rule particularly because the latter two are more likely to occur in a game, as keywords and walls are found at lower commonalities (common and uncommon) than Legends (typically). Plus, we are now using reminder text on all Core Set keywords (including Walls), and there is no good, simple reminder text you can use on Legends, especially those with lots of other abilities.

"Plus, Legends typically are included in expansion sets as part of a story or world, and they would be a little out of place in a Core Set."

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