

Products  
 Gameplay  
 Rules  
 Help  
 Learn to Play  
 Fun Stuff

## Good to the Core

### Selecting Old Favorites for *Eighth*



Mark Rosewater

**Daily Articles**

Welcome to Old Favorites Week! This week is dedicated to talking about some of our favorite cards of years gone by that have resurfaced in the Core Set (aka *Eighth Edition*). You see, Aaron asked each of the columnist to pick one of the older cards being reprinted in *Eighth* and talk about it. And I will but, as my faithful readers are aware, I plan on taking a long detour.

Mon, Jul 14

[Let's Start at the Very Beginning](#)  
 Defining Qualities of an Entry Level Product  
 by Mark Rosewater

Fri, Jul 11

[Something Old, Something Cool...](#)  
 The Evolution of the Eighth Wish List  
 by Randy Buehler

Thu, Jul 10

[The Skull Returns](#)  
 No, not that one, the other one  
 by Mark Gottlieb

Wed, Jul 9

[Ye Olde Merchant Scroll](#)  
 Hidden Treasures Unearthed in Homelands  
 by Brian David-Marshall

Tue, Jul 8

[How Many Arcanices Would You Vex](#)  
 An old favorite frustration spirit  
 by Anthony Alongi

Mon, Jul 7

[Good to the Core](#)  
 Selecting Old Favorites for Eighth  
 by Mark Rosewater

Search

### Hooked

Before I get to my card, I thought it would be fun to talk about how the "one new card from of every expansion" hook came into being. Let me begin by explaining that although I am primarily a designer, I do enjoy doing some development now and then. Of course, with the amount of design we have, that's not all that often. For example, the last **Magic** set I did development on was *Invasion*. So when Charlie Catino (my boss) asked if I was interested in being on the *Eighth Edition* development team, I leapt at the chance.

The team consisted of Robert Gutschera (the lead), Randy Buehler, Mike Donais and myself. Basic set development is a bit different from normal development as all the cards have already been "player tested". The role of a basic set development team is to create an interesting mix of cards and to think about the big picture of how the set will affect Standard. This isn't to say that it isn't a lot of work. It is. But the experience is quite different.

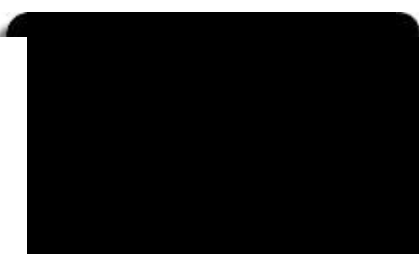
Flashback to about a year ago. I'm having lunch with Aaron Forsythe. Aaron mentioned that he liked the fact that we're tying *Eighth Edition* into the Tenth Anniversary celebration, but he felt that the set as it stood at the time didn't seem very, well, Tenth Anniversary-y. I agreed. So I left lunch with the goal of giving the set a little more history.

I started by looking back at what cards from the older sets were even available for reprint. While looking at *Arabian Nights*, I realized that the card **Rukh Egg** (being a common) was available for reprint. But it involved making a token and the basic set didn't use tokens. Then while I was looking through *Legends*, I stumbled upon **Underworld Dreams**. I was around when the card was first restricted, so I remember the terror it used to be. But times have changed and cards like **Timetwister** and **Wheel of Fortune** were no longer staples in every deck. Maybe, I thought, **Underworld Dreams** could come back. No one would expect it. It would be quite cool.

You know what would be even cooler, I thought. What if we brought back **Underworld Dreams** and **Rukh Egg**. Yeah, it made tokens, but it would probably be a rare card and maybe we could make an exception. It's not like tokens are all that complicated a concept. And then it dawned on me that I had found two cool cards from two different early sets. The early ones were the hardest. If I could get those out of the way, I could probably find a cool card from every set.

### The Search for Aven Fisher

I thought the idea was pretty cool, so I ran it by Randy. He agreed that **Underworld Dreams** was reprintable (although we would need to test it) and that we could probably make an exception for **Rukh Egg**. But what about the rest of the sets. I needed to do some homework and make a presentation to the team with a recommendation for every set.



This seemed like an interesting challenge, so I sat down set by set and figured out what my options were. At that time I decided that my search was for a card from each expansion that had never appeared before in a basic set. Here is a recreation of my search: (for sake of brevity I have condensed a number of things; some of these cards came later in the process and a few were suggested by other people)

### Arabian Nights

This was easy as I'd already chosen **Rukh Egg**. Just for fun I looked at my other options. Remember that all the uncommon and rare cards from the set were on the reserved list and thus unusable for my purposes. Once you eliminated all the commons that we had either already reprinted, had judged to be too good, or had abilities that we don't support with the basic set, there was nothing left that would excite anyone if we reprinted it. (Maybe Desert, but I would have expected a big fight about it.) **Rukh Egg** it was.



### Antiquities

Like *Arabian Nights*, *Antiquities* has all its uncommons and rares on the reserved list. This meant that I had to look at commons. *Antiquities* has had a good number of cards reprinted in the basic set making my search quite challenging. Here are the commons available to reprint that hadn't even been reprinted:

- Argivian Blacksmith
- Argothian Treefolk
- Artifact Blast
- Artifact Possession
- Artifact Ward
- Drafna's Restoration
- Orcish Mechanics
- Phyrexian Gremlins
- Priest of Yagmoth
- Sage of Lat-nam
- Staff of Zegon
- Tablet of Epityr
- Urza's Chalice

Once we remove cards that are out of flavor, use mechanics or templates we don't want in the basic set, or are more powerful than we want to reprint, we get:

- Argivian Blacksmith
- Artifact Possession
- Artifact Ward
- Orcish Mechanics
- Sage of Lat-nam
- Staff of Zegon

In the end, I felt **Sage of Lat-nam** was the most exciting card remaining. In the right environment, it might even be good.

### Legends

Although I had the card I wanted, I searched through the set for something as a back-up. Slim Pickings. (I was looking at cards like **Blazing Effigy**.) I just hoped that **Underworld Dreams** would prove less scary than it had in the past.

### The Dark

As I looked through the commons and uncommons, one card stood out: **Skull of Orm**. Now I'm a Johnny through and through and I have great memories of playing **Skull of Orm**. This card wasn't as powerful as some of the others but it was a fun card from **Magic's** past.

### Fallen Empires

My first choice was **Goblin Grenade**. But I was told that it had already been put into *Onslaught* and then removed for power reasons. Next I chose **Seasinger**. But it was a merfolk and we were

clearing *Eighth Edition* of merfolk. Things were looking dim until I came across **Orcish Spy**. While not a powerhouse, it was a fun card that brought a smile to older player's faces. Not the strongest of repeats but the best that *Fallen Empires* had to offer.

## Ice Age

I first toyed with *Orcish Lumberjack*. We've moved fast mana (at card disadvantage) to red from black, so this card fit the current color wheel. Unfortunately, R&D thought it was at too high a power level. Things were looking dim. And then I looked at the reserve list. When the reserved list was created, it allowed us a certain amount of rare cards to reprint (Twenty percent if my memory serves me). When we rotated cards into the basic set, sometimes we didn't max out the twenty percent. When that happened, R&D would pick out cards that it wanted to save for later reprint. These cards wouldn't be put on the Reserved list. **Vexing Arcanix** was one such card.

I have a fond memory of **Vexing Arcanix**. I actually used it to make top thirty two at the *Ice Age* pre-release in Toronto. I was then asked to drop out as I was freelancing for the company (writing an article about the event no less) and everyone felt it would look bad if I did too well. (Current pro player Dave Humpherys went on to win the event.) My entire plan was to use **Zuran Orb** to stay alive long enough to cast **Vexing Arcanix**. The card is especially good when the opponent doesn't know the names of the cards in his deck.



**Vexing Arcanix** felt a lot like **Skull of Orm**. It wasn't a super powerful fun but it was a quirky card from **Magic's** past that I thought many would be happy to see return.

## Homelands

I approached this set with great fear. How was I supposed to find a great reprint in *Homelands*? No one was all that fond of the set the first time around. But then I stumbled upon **Merchant Scroll**. Wait a minute, I thought, a *Homelands* card that's seen play in more than one format. I quickly jotted it down and moved on.

## Alliances

I approached *Alliances* with the opposite attitude of *Homelands*. *Alliances* is one of the greatest **Magic** sets of all time. It has to be filled with goodies. As it turned out, not as many as you would think. Many *Alliances* cards are simply too complicated for the basic set while others are too powerful to reprint. At first my eye was on **Gorilla Shaman**, but I was told that an XX activation was simply too much for the basic set.

*A quick aside. Customer Service keeps records of what cards cause the most confusion. And for many years, the number one card was Meteor Shower (from Ice Age).*

Next my eye went to **Guerilla Tactics**. The card has a colorful history in tournament play. (Remind me someday to tell the story about the Scott Johns/Tom Guevin Type I semi-final game at PT Dallas.) If Johnny and Timmy get old favorites, why not Spike?

## Mirage

When I sat down with *Mirage*, I would never have guessed that this set would prove to be my biggest hurdle. It was a large set with lots of cool cards. How could I not find something? What I quickly realized is that most of the cooler cards had either already been repeated or were on the reserved list. In the end, I found two cards with potential, **Foratog** and **Mind Bend**. Neither were a top tier repeat, but I felt each would have a few fans. To compensate I put both on the list.

## Visions

This one had already been provided for me as all of you had voted **Nekrataal** into the set.

## Weatherlight

This was another set where the most attractive card was a spike repeat, **Lava Hounds**. Like *Guerilla Tactics*, **Lava Hounds** have a colorful constructed past.

## Tempest

In my original pass, I didn't consider **Furnace of Rath** because I thought we wouldn't want to do doubling in the basic set. Instead I had my eye on **Orim's Prayer**. It had seen some tournament play and I thought it would be a neat reprint. But then something happened. You all voted for **Noble Purpose** instead of **Orim's Prayer** in the on-line vote. That meant I couldn't use **Orim's Prayer**.

But during development, as I saw the hook slowly coming together, I realized that we were a little more willing to push the envelope. So one day during the meeting I said, "You know, what might be cool as the *Tempest* repeat? **Furnace of Rath**?"

I had expected some resistance but got none. The whole team had fond memories of the card and thought it would be a fun repeat.

## Stronghold

The original card I pitched for this slot was **Wall of Blossoms**. I brought it up with the developers and the general consensus was that it was a little strong to repeat. Not that we'd never repeat it but we didn't want to use up so many power points (the set as a whole has to keep an even keel on the power level from *Seventh* to avoid power creep) on a single card in *Eighth*. Then I stumbled upon our list of saved rares. Both **Grave Pact** and **Intruder Alarm** were available. Done and done.

## Exodus

*Exodus* was another set that proved more difficult than I would have expected. Too many of the interesting cards dipped into mechanics we didn't want in the basic set. In the end, I went with **Curiosity** as its one of a handful of creature enchantments to ever see tournament play.

## Urza's Saga

For *Seventh Edition*, we grabbed a number of cool cards from *Urza's Saga* (**Pariah**, **Worship**, etc.). This time around I wanted to look for something a little more offbeat. That's when I stumbled upon **Fecundity**. The Johnny in me has always loved **Fecundity**. I think it enjoys any card that converts one resource into another. **Fecundity** has never really been a tournament card but it enables a cool style of deck, so I included it.

## Urza's Legacy

I was having trouble with this set until Aaron said, "You do know that **Phyrexian Plaguelord** isn't on the reserve list."

In addition, in R&D's current quest to knock blue down a peg (and once again, I swear that blue's going to rebound just like every other color in the history of the game), I stumbled across **Defense Grid**.

## Urza's Destiny

I have fond memories of this set as it's the one set in the history of the game that I designed by myself. At first I thought I was limited to the commons and uncommons, but once again I discovered that R&D had thought ahead and saved a few rares. I was wary about **Plow Under** at first as I've been dubious about green's ability to bounce things on the color chart. But after discussing it over with R&D, I realized that it's an established ability in green (done at a pretty low frequency).

## Mercadian Masques - Apocalypse

These sets were essentially a gimme as these were the sets that were officially marked to rotate into *Eighth Edition*. And they all were gimmes, well, except *Apocalypse*. While we found cool cards from each of the other expansions, *Apocalypse* proved very hard. For starters, most of the set was enemy related cards. None of those would work in the basic set as enemy affiliation is the "exception to the rule" and the basic set represents "the rule".

We were at wits end when Randy suggested **Phyrexian Arena**. But it had an upkeep effect and we had avoided putting cards that referenced upkeep in the basic set. We went back and forth and finally decided that making a few small exceptions to help the hook were okay.

## Odyssey - Scourge

As these sets are officially marked for *Ninth Edition*, we decided we would use the hook to pluck simple common and uncommon cards that helped redefine the adjusted color wheel. This is why none of these cards are particularly exciting cards.

## What Do You Think?

So with a proposal in hand, I went to the *Eighth Edition* development team. The team took to the idea right away. In fact, they thought I hadn't gone far enough. Why stop at the tournament legal sets?

### Portal

The team decided that the promotion would be cooler if every expansion was represented, so we started looking at the non-tournament legal sets. *Portal* had a number of interesting choices. I had always thought **Balance of Power** was an interesting spell, so I suggested it. We later also added in **Primeval Force** as we were having a really hard time finding big green creatures without trample.

### Portal: Second Age

Most players have no knowledge of the *Portal* sets. This is what makes doing repeats of them so much fun. **Vampiric Spirit**, for example, is a pretty neat card (with some funky art) that few players have ever played with. We also put **Angel of Mercy** in as who doesn't love having an extra angel?

### Portal: Three Kingdoms

This is one of the more interesting experiments we've ever tried. To sell *Portal* in the Asian market, R&D (and by R&D I mean Henry Stern) adapted *Portal* to a popular Asian legend. The set was printed primarily in Asian languages (although there was a small amount of English printed). The team felt it was important to take a card from the set that pushed the flavor of the set. We started by changing *Portal: Second Age's* **Ancient Craving** to **Ambition's Cost**. But we didn't feel like that card was flavorful enough. So we chose **Peach Garden Oath**, a card that refers to a crucial plot point of the legend.

### Unglued

The original plan was to have a card from every expansion. And we meant every expansion. So we searched for an *Unglued* card. After some discussion, we settled on **The Cheese Stands Alone**. While the ability was weird, it was the kind of effect we might do in normal **Magic**. And that's when the trouble began.

First, there was some concern that the card leaned too far away from **Magic's** image. (Remember the card is a picture of a superhero humanoid piece of cheese.) But Brady Dommermuth came up with a new visual take on the card that would keep the silly flavor but in a more mainstream approach. His idea would be of a room filled with treasures from across the land. In the center of this room of riches would sit a wedge of cheese atop a pedestal. A light from above would shine on the cheese giving it the sense of an item of great power.

So what happened? We were done in by something we had never thought about. The grey border. Here's the problem. We have two important rules in Organized Play: (we actually have more than two important rules but these are the ones that matter for this discussion)

**Rule #1:** You may play with any version of a card with the same name.

This rule is crucial as we don't want to have to make players by a new set ever time a card is repeated.

**Rule #2:** Grey bordered cards are not allowed in sanctioned tournaments.

This rule is important as it's the thing that allows us to do expansions like *Unglued*.

You see the problem. If we reprinted **The Cheese Stands Alone** in *Eighth*, we would have to put a white border on it (black border in foil) and make it tournament legal. According to rule #1, this means you could now play the *Unglued* version in a sanctioned tournament. But this contradicts rule #2. The only way to avoid this contradiction would be to change one of the two rules and no one wanted either to change. This meant that *Unglued* would have to sit out this promotion.



## Promotional Cards

R&D is anything if not thorough. If every expansion was represented, why not the promotional cards? The biggest problem was that we only had six cards to choose from.

- **Arena** - not an ability we wanted to reprint on a land
- **Mana Crypt** - bah-roken
- **Nalathni Dragon** - we don't support banding any more and even if we did, we wouldn't in red
- **Sewers of Estark** - we do fear in black and completely unblockable in blue
- **Windseeker Centaur** - we do "doesn't tap to attack" in white not red

This left us with **Giant Badger**. And that is why there is no a very large badger in *Eighth Edition*.

## Alpha

And then we turned our eye to *Alpha*. Now technically, we couldn't reprint a card from *Alpha* that hasn't been in the basic set, but we felt we could reprint one that hadn't seen the light of day since *Unlimited* (remember that *Alpha*, *Beta*, and *Unlimited* are identical - barring some COP: Black and **Volcanic Island** madness). After looking at the short list, we settled on *Invisibility*. We later put in **Dwarven Demolition Team** when a slot opened up.

The reason **Savannah Lions** doesn't technically count by the way was that it appeared in *Revised* (Third) and *Fourth Edition*.

## But Wait...

Now we should get to the point where I wrap up my column and say I hope you learned something. But, remember my assignment from Aaron. I'm supposed to talk about a card that's returning. And so I will. I've waited for this part of the article because it ties into *Alpha*. You see, while looking through *Alpha* I stumbled across a card that I used to love playing that I hadn't seen since the days of *Unlimited*: **Fungusaur**.

Huh, you might be saying. Wasn't Fungusaur in *Revised* and *Fourth Edition*? I would argue no. Sure, there was a Fungusaur in those two sets, but not the Fungusaur. You see, when the card was reprinted in *Revised*, it was decided that the card was too good as printed (as it was obviously devastating in tournament play - sarcasm alert) and changed the functionality of the card. The *Alpha* Fungusaur got a +1/+1 counter whenever it was damaged. The *Revised* version got a +1/+1 counter at the end of any turn it was damaged. What this meant was that the new Fungusaur could only grow by one +1/+1 counter a turn.

This had always annoyed me. When this change was made I was just another player and could only sit back and frown. But then it hit me. Maybe it wasn't too late. "What if...," I asked, "We brought back **Fungusaur**? Not the lame Fungusaur from *Revised* and *Fourth*. The *real* Fungusaur."

The team was a little hesitant as there are more copies of the changed version than the original version. But I argued that there weren't all that many out there of either and the original Fungusaur was a perfect creature to reflect the properties of green. Then the team brought up the +1/+1 counter issue. The basic set didn't have +1/+1 counters. If we could have a card with tokens and one with upkeep, why couldn't we have one rare green card with +1/+1 counters?

The old timers, by which I mean the oooooold timers, would appreciate it. And the newer players would find why the Fungusaur was fun in the first place. After much deliberating the development team agreed and Fungusaur (the real Fungusaur) returned.

And that is my old card of the day. Stay tuned this week as each columnist picks their favorite repeat from *Eighth*.

Join me next week as I talk about another favorite repeat from *Eighth Edition* (although one not quite as old as *Fungusaur*).

Until then, may you know the joy of affecting the game you love.




Mark Rosewater

---

Mark may be reached at [makingmagic@wizards.com](mailto:makingmagic@wizards.com).

---

Discuss this article on the [message boards](#). 

**MagicTheGathering.com Recent Content**

- Let's Start at the Very Beginning *Mon, Jul 14*
- Something Old, Something Cool... *Fri, Jul 11*
- The Skull Returns *Thu, Jul 10*
- Ye Olde Merchant Scroll *Wed, Jul 9*
- Arcana: The Littlest Forsythe *Wed, Jul 9*
- An old favorite frustration spirit *Tue, Jul 8*

**Full Archive**



[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITEMAP](#) [PRODUCT LIBRARY](#)

© 1995-2003 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.](#)  
[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)