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# Investigating Your Suggestions

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Learning Curve  
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Thank you to everyone that wrote in over the last week in response to my [Grid Marks](#) article. As promised I am going to share some of the letters and suggestions I received with you this week and offer some additional comments of my own.

## Vaults vs. Swamps

The most common theme in reader correspondence over the last week was regarding my inclusion of four [Vault](#) of [Whispers](#) over four more Swamps with no visible means of exploiting the controversial artifact lands.

### Robert Babis writes:

*My only real question regarding the deck is the use of the Vault of Whispers. I mean, artifact hate WILL be maindecked and I really don't feel that those lands should be played unless they actually serve some purpose, and I don't find Wrench Mind to be enough of a purpose. Plus, with 4 more Swamps, it more justifies the use of Extraplanar Lenses. I also feel that Stalking Stones is a bit on the slow side and that Swamps are generally going to be better. I have this deck built for Type 2 right now and the Lenses are amazingly good. There is just something rewarding about turn 6 having a 10/10 flyer and an extra 5 cards in hand.*

Robert anticipated one of my reasons in his letter when he scoffed at [Wrench Mind](#). The artifact lands are there as a precautionary measure against what I feel is going to be a powerful discard spell in constructed formats. I agree with Robert that there will be substantially more maindeck artifact hate in this constructed environment than in almost any previous one. That is one of the reasons why I only used a single copy of [Extraplanar Lens](#). I view the card as a mid to late game spell in this deck-used almost like a [Dark Ritual](#) - to power up a game ending [Consume Spirit](#).

I can certainly appreciate the potential of playing it early and making the nine mana necessary to entwine a [Promise of Power](#) but I am also wary of having my opponent set my mana back with an artifact removal spell, taking out both my Lens and the land I imprinted. Also, remember I am relying on [Oblivion Stone](#) to clear the way for me. I don't expect to have a lot of time to be protecting my permanents with fate counters and I am going to be popping that Stone at the first possible opportunity. I think the interaction with the Lens is too problematic to run multiples.

All of that said, getting back to the artifact lands... Originally I was going to splash either red for [Shrapnel Blast](#) or blue for [Thirst for Knowledge](#) and the artifact lands interacted nicely with either of those cards. When I decided to keep the deck mono-colored I should have at least presented some reason for the Vaults continued inclusion in the deck.

I can certainly see dumping them if [Wrench Mind](#) does not become as prevalent as [Hymn to Tourach](#) and [Gerard's Verdict](#) - the two closest spells in mana cost and number of cards discarded - became in their respective heydays. If you are going to be dedicated to playing with multiple Lenses I would also recommend losing the Vaults. I do not recommend losing the [Stalking Stones](#) as Robert suggests in the next paragraph.

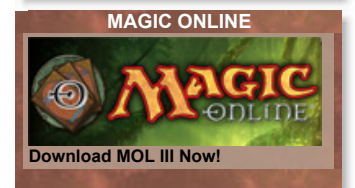
[Stalking Stones](#) come with built in protection from [Oblivion Stone](#) - the Stone only destroys non-land permanents - and it gives you four more warm bodies that can be played without any interaction problems with the [Grid Monitor](#).

## Turning It Around

A number of reader's wrote in with ways to turn the [Grid Monitor](#)'s drawback around onto their opponent.

### Luke Paloutzian writes:

*I wanted to tell you what first came to my mind when I saw the Monitor. Obviously I said to myself that things a hunk-o-junk then I thought, "Hey, why not stick it to your opponent and pawn the Monitor off on him with a Chromeshell Crab?"*



**Squarf1 writes:**

*I would have never thought **Grid Monitor** and **Confusion in the Ranks** would be printed together... dare we say... red creature lockdown? It takes care of the problems counter burn has with creatures... ::shrugs:: All you need is a **Fleeting Image** to block every turn and 'bam', that thing is taken care of, and they can't do anything :-)*

In the first letter Luke went on the describe playing with **Puppeteer** to cope with the sturdy 4/6 body he was giving to his opponent. He was also concerned about his opponent having a way to deal with creatures. I think the combo itself sounds like a lot of fun - take your opponent's best creature and give them a **Grid Monitor** that prevents them from playing any more creatures until they have dispatched it somehow.

A number of reader's wrote in and they all had rather convoluted ways of dealing with the fact that they were giving their opponent a rather formidable creature. There are a number of problems with this combo starting with the difficulty of playing creatures in a deck with **Grid Monitor**. If you draw your creatures out of sequence you might as well have mulliganed.

Obviously this problem exists in a deck with multiple **Grid Monitors** as well such as the deck I posted last week but once you add even more creatures to the deck it becomes more likely that you will experience dead draws with a creature in hand and a **Grid Monitor** on the table. The original deck that I had constructed was less likely to experience those types of draws and could even get eight other creatures into play to flank a **Grid Monitor**.

*(Editor's Note: we asked Brian to edit the article to clear up the confusion \*ehem\*. The following few paragraphs have been edited from their original content.)*

Squarf1 mentioned a red creature lockdown with **Confusion in the Ranks**. Originally I misunderstood how the enchantment works, thinking it allowed you to select a permanent that shared a type with the card that comes into play that you controlled and your opponent controlled. I was - obviously - wrong and the permanent you exchange has to be the one that comes into play. It is indeed a soft lock and potentially a hard one (a soft lock is a popular term for a game situation that will win you the game unless your opponent draws an card they have in their deck to shake free of the situation. A hard lock is a game state where your opponent has automatically lost the game even though they still have life points and cards to draw - only that they have no conceivable card remaining in their that will get them out of the situation) if your opponent does not have a way to rid himself of the Monitor and needs to play out creatures in order to win.

You will still run into problems with drawing your permanents out of order. You cannot play your **Grid Monitor** without having the **Confusion in the Ranks** in play, which means - barring mana acceleration - no sooner than turn six. While **Confusion in the Ranks** seems like a fun card to play with I am not certain it is something I feel comfortable playing with in a competitive decks. It is certainly the most aptly named card I have stumbled across as it gave me mental gas in the earlier version of this article.

Both players' two card combos quickly became three card combos when they started looking for ways to negate the beefy Monitor. Squarf1's solution was to play it with **Fleeting Image**. I assume he intended to block and bounce it each turn. the only problem with that is when you play the **Fleeting Image** it will trigger the **Confusion in the Ranks** and - assuming for the moment that only the **Grid Monitor** is in play - one of two things will happen.

- 1. Assuming that your opponent has only the **Grid Monitor** in play, you will have to target the **Grid Monitor** with the enchantment's triggered ability. If you respond by activating the **Fleeting Image** to return it to your hand, when the Image returns to your hand, **Confusion in the Ranks** checks to make sure both sides of the exchange are still valid and when it can't find both creatures the exchange fizzles and your opponent would maintain control of the **Grid Monitor**.
- 2. You don't activate the **Fleeting Image** and you get the **Grid Monitor** back and your opponent gets a flier and the ability to play creatures again. Then he could play another creature and give you - Aaaargh! It is definitely a confusing card! I think I have illustrated my point is that **Confusion in the Ranks** is a problematic and unpredictable card to deal with. Let's not even get into the idea of what happens when other types of permanents come into play such as an artifact land.

## The Replacements

While I find these combos intriguing I still think that the **Grid Monitor** best place is on your side of the table with ample creature removal and additional creatures that are not the product of creature spells. My favorite suggestion came from two different people and went directly to my request for a card to insert into the **Necrogen Spellbomb** slot. If one **Grid Monitor** in play is good, how could two or more be bad?

**Dan Drapeau writes:**

*I would add **Sculpting Steel** to the deck as it would allow to get around the **Grid Monitor**'s drawback*



while still netting you another 4/6 monster. And the gravy is that *Sculpting Steel* only costs 3 colorless!

**Jason Newcomb writes:**

*I'm writing in response to your Grid Marks article. I am sure you will be flooded with similar responses, but who knows? Did you consider the option of including Soul Foundry in the build? This would allow for multiple copies of Grid Monitor. It might even play nicely with Leveler, although if I understand the rules correctly, you would still have to remove your library from the game when the token came into play.*

*The last thought I have, which may or may not work, is the card *Sculpting Steel*. It is just an artifact, however I am unsure if it would be considered a creature when it comes into play. If it comes into play as a creature, but was not played as a creature, I would believe you could use it.*

At three mana the new **Copy Artifact** makes a nice addition the deck. It also gives us another use for the artifact lands-you can copy an artifact land to pull out of a tight mana situation. The Steel can serve as additional copies of **Grid Monitor** or animated **Stalking Stones**. It can also be an additional **Oblivion Stone** under the right circumstances. You could copy a Stone in play and put a fate counter on the copy and when you finally pop the Stone you will have another ready an waiting to go.

In answer to Jason's question about playing *Sculpting Steel* with a **Grid Monitor** in play; the **Grid Monitor** only prevents you from playing creature spells. When you cast *Sculpting Steel* it is not a creature spell. Once it resolves and comes into play it can copy the Monitor and becomes a creature.

You can copy your opponent's artifacts as well should they have any tasty targets. One thing to remember when copying an imprint artifact (**Soul Foundry**, **Isochron Scepter**, **Chrome Mox**, **Duplicant**, etc.) is that you will not be copying the imprinted card and if you wish to take advantage of the artifact you had better be prepared to imprint something from your hand.

A number of people besides Jason wrote in to suggest Soul Foundry. Yes, Jason you would have to remove your library if you used the Foundry to make a **Leveler** token. It is an exact copy of the creature. The problem with playing **Soul Foundry** in a deck with **Grid Monitor** is that you have an imprint card that will only combo with **Grid Monitor** in your deck - only four cards. If you are play additional creatures you create the possibility of dead draws again. I am anxious to try **Soul Foundry** but my creature of choice is **Ravenous Rats**. I have always loved the idea of instant speed discard and I look forward to at least testing the idea out.



I was surprised by how many people wrote in about the **Leveler**. Apparently this is a card that the magicthegathering.com community has given a fair amount of consideration. There were numerous e-mails concerning the **Leveler** and **Shared Fate** combo. For those of you unfamiliar with it - although judging from the number of e-mails I received there can't be many of you - the combo means that your opponent will never draw another card while you have a 10/10 creature in play. A couple of people thought that this would make your opponent lose immediately but the **Shared Fate**'s effect is a replacement ability for drawing a card. While your opponent does not get a card to play off of your deck they do not lose the game because the normal card draw is being replaced.

At first I dismissed the idea as silly but it could be a devastating combo if it is executed at the right time. I have a feeling that it is too difficult to get the combo down at the right time with any regularity but I am going to consider the possibility in upcoming playtest sessions - I did play with **Griffin Canyon** after all so I'll try almost anything.

I would probably try and add some card drawing to the following *Mirrodon* only deck. Maybe take out the **Steel Walls** and the **Crystal Shards** for **Thirst for Knowledge** and **Thoughtcast**. If you are looking for a fun deck to play with friends this might be up you alley. Fun for you anyway- if you actually manage to pull it off your friends might drag you down the aforementioned alley and show you how much fun they actually had.

<b>Daan Eggen Writes:</b>		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		
20 <b>Island</b>	4 <b>Leveler</b>	4 <b>Crystal Shard</b>
4 <b>Seat of the Synod</b>	4 <b>Silver Myr</b>	4 <b>Fabricate</b>

24 lands	4 <b>Steel Wall</b>	4 <b>Fireshrieker</b>
	12 creatures	4 <b>Lightning Greaves</b>
		4 <b>Neurok Hoversail</b>
		4 <b>Parallel Thoughts</b>
		24 other spells

Next week I am going to start sorting through the different archetypes that might be viable in the rapidly approaching post-*Mirrodin* Standard environment. North America has [States and Provincial Championships](#) rapidly approaching and we will look at the different decks that you might want to consider playing if you are going to be attending one of those events - or any Standard event for that matter.

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Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is [Top8Magic.com](http://Top8Magic.com), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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