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Believe it or not, I've already taken on banding. I highly encourage you to take a gander at my groundbreaking, award-winning, trend-setting article about the "bands with other" ability (a subset of banding). Why, let's set up a link to it right here.

Deck Dares Never Die

There are more accessible topics for a casual deckbuilding column than a keyword ability hasn't been printed since *Weatherlight*. But I'm an old-timer. I played with Mesa Pegasus and Urza's Avenger back in the day. And I'm not going to tell you that banding is a bad ability. It's a rather good ability. It let old-old-old school casual white weenie decks control combat pretty effectively, and I was on the wrong end of a band of creatures more than once in my dorm lounge. No, the knock on banding wasn't that it was weak. The problem was that it was confusing. It worked differently on offense and defense. It gave rise to all sorts of bewildering scenarios. No one liked stopping the game to fetch the rulebook, which was the only alternative to arguing very loudly about what happened next. (Had I only known at the time that's how R&D solves their differences.)

Banding's "confusing" rep has slid down to second place on its list of problems, though. The biggest strike against it now is that it's obsolete. Would comparing the virtues of Helm of Chatzuk vs. Baton of Morale be scintillating reading for anyone? What about a deck that helps you get the most out of your Kjeldoran Phalanx? Thankfully, my new best friend in the whole world, Ryan from Tampa, stepped in to save the day. I've received a surprising number of acrostic decks *after* the last Deck Dare ended, and this is one of them. I owe you one, Ryan.

Bands with Others

Type 1 banding acrostic deck

Ryan said that he made it strictly for flavor, though sometimes it runs quite well. I love the Sandskin; on defense, you can block with a large band of creatures, knock off the attacker with damage from the non-Sandskinned creature, and direct all the combat damage to the immune defender. Why can't the rest of you be more like Ryan and do my work for me?

Music to My Ears

And with that out of the way, I'm going to choose to intentionally misinterpret the meaning of Banding Week. (Hey, wait'll you see what Randy does to the theme tomorrow.) Posting a deck from my second deck challenge has made me nostalgic for the decks from my first deck challenge—theme decks that were built around the song titles of rock bands. Yes, *Banding Week* just took a left turn.

In the first go-round, I posted decks based on two of my favorite bands, Radiohead and Pink Floyd. Next on that list would be U2.

"Until the End of the World"

Type 1 U2 deck by Diana Huang

According to Diana, the idea is to generate a whole lot of creatures and to stop anybody else's creatures from getting through. It also can copy or steal anything on the table that looks tasty. Ultimately, it wants to stall until Akroma shows up and smashes through.

Seattle Slew

So I heard that grunge is back. Well, it's back in this column. In deference to the gorgeous weather we're experiencing here in Point Barrow—whoops, sorry, Seattle—how about a couple of Seattle natives?

First up is Alice in Chains, which gave rise to Brooks Newhouse's Chainer, Dementia Master deck. Your main reanimation target is Deranged Hermit, which will make your Innocent Bloods hurt you a lot less than they hurt your opponent. Of course, if that's not interesting enough, you can shop through your opponent's graveyard—which should be nice and full thanks to both the Royal Assassin-Icy Manipulator combo and the Grindstones. Brooks notes that his favorite song-card connection is for Icy Manipulator; "Right Turn" refers to tapping things, of course!

"Them Bones"

Type 1 Alice in Chains deck by Brooks Newhouse

This was submitted as an Extended-legal deck way back before Entomb was banned. For casual purposes, it still works just fine.

One more? You got it. Edward L. McClellan II sent in a Nirvana tribute deck.

"All Apologies"

Type 1 Nirvana deck by Edward L. McClellan II

The main premise of the deck is to try to get a lock with Braids (who represents Courtney Love—I'm gonna get an earful about this the next time we go bowling!) and Nether Spirit. Stack tricks let you bring the Nether Spirit back into play at the beginning of your upkeep, then immediately sacrifice it to Braids. If that's not working for you, token creatures created via the Spike and the Sliver can minimize the grief Braids causes your board position. Creeping Mold reinforces Braids's destruction. Screams of the Damned does double duty: it's removal, and it's a way to empty your graveyard to set up Nether Spirit recursion. Killer Bees and Endless Scream take advantage of your extra mana, especially with a Vernal Bloom in play.

Whew! This signals my escape from Banding Week. Until next week, have fun with banding.

Mark

PS: This seems like a fine time to put out a call for decks and column ideas. I'm always interested in the weird combos and synergies you folks come up with. I'm sure there's a lot of interesting *Mirrodon* potential that I haven't tapped into yet. Write to me with your ideas, decks, and/or column suggestions—I'd love to hear them!

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