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Echoing Truth



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
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Wizards has always enjoyed supplying us with little cycles of cards that all of the colors have access to. During *Odyssey*, they gave us both the Rites and the Dreams, a set of cards, at least one of each color, that required discards to power their effect. In *Darksteel*, Wizards continues this tradition with the Echoes. All of the Echoes have the same basic effect: you target something appropriate with your Echo spell, and then the Echo happens to everything else that has the same name.

It's a clever idea, and I definitely take my hats off to whoever came up with the concept. I like cards like the Echoes; they are simple and elegant, but have a little special something that makes them interesting. To my mind, that is good card design. Of course, depending on what you are doing, the Echoes were not all created equal. When it comes to sheer power, **Echoing Ruin** is the only card that is really seeing widespread play right now (because the Mirrodin Block makes us all want to play artifacts). Poor little **Echoing Calm** is like the runt of the litter, sitting off to the side, barely having anyone that wants to play with him. But, where the rest of the Echoes either blow something up or can be used as a combat trick, **Echoing Truth** gets a chance to be really creative.

The Basics (and then a little more)

When we look at **Echoing Truth's** ability, it starts out as quite straightforward: return a non-land to the owner's hand, and then return all permanents with that name as well. For the most part, since it can't return a land, it starts out as a weaker **Boomerang**. To make the most of the card, you really have to be making the most of the "return them all" feature.

Still, just starting at the basics, it's obvious you can use the card to save something that is going to be destroyed. If your opponent is going to take something of yours out, you can make it not happen (ho hum). At least a little bit more exciting is when you get to use a creature in combat to kill another creature, but save your own by bouncing it out of harm's way. Of course, that leads me to quickly imagine a dream block: my 3 **Frogmites** block a pair of **Goblin Piledrivers** and a **Goblin Warchief**, and with damage on the stack I save all of my little froggies.

Another thought that comes to mind pretty quickly are all of the decks that have used **Boomerang** just to get ready to counterspell something again. Many times, poor hapless Blue players have failed to stop an important card from coming down so they just want another shot at it. This is where **Echoing Truth** starts to shine.



Some cards bring out their effect and really make life difficult on a player. **Damping Matrix** is one of those cards that is seeing a lot of play. Bane to **Arcbound Ravagers** and **Skullclamps** (not to mention big boys like **Arcanis**), one **Damping Matrix** in play can cause a lot of frustration for a mostly Blue deck. Even for a deck that has a color that can handle them, when a second one drops, it almost begins to seem like the work it would take to clear it out (like finding and casting two **Naturalizes**) makes it almost not worth doing. In the same sense, when you are playing against Goblins and suddenly something like a **Living Death** or a **Patriarch's Bidding** brings back

a ton of little red men, those two or three **Goblin Warchiefs** all need to be gone, or else. **Echoing Truth** is one of the only cards that can do the job in *both* cases. You'll certainly have to deal with them when they come back the second time, but that's what the rest of a Blue deck is for.

Of course, sometimes bouncing a creature is like killing it. When it comes to tokens, there are a lot of good ways to make token creatures. Call of the Herd makes lots of Elephants. **Beast Attack** and **Pulse of the Tangle** make Beasts. **Decree of Justice** makes Soldiers or Angels. And **Echoing Truth** will bounce every single copy in play.

The nice thing about all of these tokens (at least as far as **Echoing Truth** is concerned) is that they all have the same name. You can call each token Frank the Beast and then Jeff the Beast, or what have you, but **Echoing Truth** sees them all the same: their name is Beast and they all have to go. It can be scary for a Blue deck to deal with a bunch of token Soldiers, but with **Echoing Truth** all it takes is a single card.

187

For years now, **Magic** slang has come up with some doozies, but one of my personal favorites has always been 187. The first time I heard the term was back in *Mirage-Block* ("MirvLite", as it was called at the time) after the printing of **Nekrataal**. As any avid fan of gangster rap might know, the police code "187" was the code for murder. At some point, this slipped into the **Magic** lexicon, with cries of "my **Nekrataal** 187s your **River Boa**" and other such fun stuff. Soon the **Magic** 187 came to mean any creature that came into play to blow stuff up, from **Uktabi Orangutan** to **Cloudchaser Eagle**.

These effects are incredibly powerful. **Flametongue Kavu**, for example, was so powerful that he wiped out an entire class of creatures from competitive play. (For those not in the know, that class of creatures was anything that cost 5 or more mana that he could kill. He was such a widespread creature that old-time favorites like **Serra Angel** and new-fangled cards like **Tahngarth** just didn't get to see play.) By bouncing these cards for reuse, you're already doing something pretty exciting, but if you manage to be able to return two or three of them, it's incredibly exciting (especially if they managed to get damage on another creature to kill it).

There is a whole range of creatures that are especially potent, but I'm going to take my primary inspiration from Canada's own Ben Raymond. Ben wasn't qualified when he took [an amazingly fun deck](#) full of **Ravenous Rats**, **Gravediggers** and a few other 187s to Canadian Nationals back in 2001. By the end of the weekend he had gone undefeated in a qualifying tournament, undefeated in the Standard portion of Nationals, and was in the Top 8. He didn't do well there, but some time later he updated his deck for Grand Prix Milwaukee, and slammed opponents left and right to make Top 4 in the Trial and then knocked me out of contention for Day 2 in the main event. The **Nightscape Familiar** is a nice touch and worth stealing for what I'm going to get into here:



GP Milwaukee Trial Top 4: Psychatog

Ben Raymond
60 cards

3 Darkwater Catacombs	4 Flametongue Kavu	4 AEther Burst
4 Island	4 Gravedigger	4 Chainer's Edict
3 Mountain	4 Nightscape Familiar	4 Fact or Fiction
4 Salt Marsh	4 Psychatog	4 Fire/Ice
1 Shadowblood Ridge		4 Repulse
3 Shivan Reef	16 creatures	
3 Swamp		20 other spells
3 Urborg Volcano		
24 land		

Here's a skeleton for my take on it:

"I Stole This Idea From Ben Raymond"

- 4 Echoing Truth
- 4 Nightscape Familiar
- 4 Flametongue Kavu
- 4 Gravedigger
- 4 Scrivener
- 4 Fact or Fiction

36 Other cards to fill in the blanks.

There is just a lot of fun stuff going on here. **Echoing Truth** really shines here for a lot of reasons. Flametongue is the odd duck out in the 187 department; he is really powerful and can kill creatures quite well, but he doesn't bring anything back. On the other hand, it shouldn't take too long for the **Scriveners** and the **Gravediggers** to really get going. **Fact or Fiction** can not only get you some fine card quality, but it can also give you more creatures for the **Gravedigger** to fetch and more instants for the **Scrivener**. With **Echoing Truth**, it won't be too long before you'll be able to pop back 2 **Gravediggers** or 2 **Scriveners**. Soon, the only thing that will stop you from casting them infinitely is that you run out of mana.

Shaking a Stick



Imprinting **Echoing Truth** is also a really great use for the card. Imprint is probably *Mirrodin* Block's most interesting addition to the game, and an obvious fit for **Echoing Truth**. Probably the most powerful Imprint card to use is **Isochron Scepter**. **Panoptic Mirror** and **Spellbinder** are other options, but these are so much less powerful than the Scepter.

With the help of a **Chrome Mox**, Isochron can come out on Turn 2. With an **Echoing Truth**, it suddenly has the annoying ability to protect itself. If your opponent wants to smack your **Isochron Scepter** around with a **Deconstruct** or a **Viridian Shaman**, the stick can pop itself back to your hand in response. That's a neat trick.

Just by using it offensively, an Isochron with **Echoing Truth** causes all manner of problems. Most people build their decks with 4 copies of all of their best cards. Suddenly, keeping something on the table becomes very hard. If the **Echoing Truth** was a **Boomerang** instead, people could eventually get enough mana to just drop several copies of a threat down on the table, but now

they are going to find themselves needing to find *different* threats. About the only time that someone is going to have 2 of the same permanent on the table against you is if you don't really care much about that card. For most decks, Truth on a Stick is a pretty tough thing to deal with.

Some Last Words

What I really like about **Echoing Truth** is that it is versatile. This is not the kind of card that you need to build a deck around, but if you want to it isn't that hard. By including **Echoing Truth** in a deck, you have access to a card that can answer (even if only temporarily) almost any threat. These kinds of cards tend to find their way into *everyone's* decks at some point.

Last week I asked everyone what they thought of my story investigating **Talon of Pain** for Kobe. Here's the results:

How did you like my story of investigating Talon of Pain for Pro Tour Kobe?		
It was great. Just right.	1635	29.2%
I could take it or leave it.	1144	20.5%
You didn't tell me enough! I wanted more details!	958	17.1%
I prefer seeing more ideas for how to use the card.	934	16.7%

Somewhat boring.	479	8.6%
Please, don't do that to me again...	440	7.9%
Total	5590	100.0%

Unlike a lot of previous polls, this one was much more spread out. With such an even split I expect that I might occasionally do something like this as a change of pace. As always, thanks for the feedback. It is greatly appreciated. I am still considering which card to cover for next week's article. If you want to help decide what it is, send me an e-mail with the Subject Line "Next Week's Card" and let me know what you'd like to see.

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