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Eon Hub



Adrian Sullivan · *Single-Card Strategies*
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At least, that's how the flavor text for **Eon Hub** begins. In a lot of ways, **Eon Hub** fits my mood for the week. **Eon Hub** really isn't about the power of time, it's about the power of being able to ignore the things good ol' Wizards of the Coast put on the cards to make them work the way they intended.

While the rest of the week you'll be seeing people celebrating the Myr, I'm going to take an opportunity to play with **Eon Hub** instead. As you might imagine, Theme Weeks cause a lot of infighting for the writers over here at [magicthegathering.com](#). We spend a lot of time working under the gaze of our taskmaster-in-chief Scott Johns, and usually there's not much to worry about when it comes to a theme. Take Red as a theme, for example. When we are all corralled into the **Great Furnace**, it's not hard for us to use our picks and axes to chop out 11 different articles. It isn't even that hard with things like Flying. Sometimes, we get all sneaky and sneak around the theme like some kind of snarky wish-granting fairy. (Brian David-Marshall's [Spider article](#) fit with Flying Week, right?). Other times, like this week, we come sauntering into our chief's office with his favorite breakfast snacks and his footstool, and he lets us ignore the work everyone else has to do. (Well, okay, perhaps it's just that under the new site we now have 11 writers and you probably only want about 4-6 on-theme articles.)



So without getting into why, while other writers talk about the Myr, I'll talk about how we can ignore something key that Wizards of the Coast wants us to do when we play **Magic**: play by the rules.



One of the cardinal ideas in building decks that are good is figuring out ways to get away with something. The [Angry Hermit II deck](#) from Pro Tour Houston '02 (called "Angry Ghoul" in that article) a few years back provides a great example. **Hermit Druid** is supposed to find you a basic land. If you use it for that, it does a great job at a great price. He only costs 2 mana, and for a single Green mana you can start getting card advantage by finding basic land. But, if you never run a single basic land, for a Green mana you get your entire library in the graveyard. For a single Black mana, you can **Reanimate** a **Sutured Ghoul** after your library is in the graveyard. And that **Sutured Ghoul** can be about 100/100 once you have it eat all of the huge creatures that cost about a thousand mana to cost. But, you never **did** intend to cast them anyway.

We've already had cards break the rules in the past. **Stasis** is the most classic example. Wizards stopped reprinting **Stasis** after they realized that there are two types of players: players who hated playing against **Stasis**, and players who loved making their opponents

miserable with **Stasis**. Other rule-breaking cards weren't so scary. When **Spellbook** was first printed, it read, "Skip your discard step." This was actually pretty awesome, if you ask me, but not incredibly dramatic.

Eon Hub, on the other hand, *is* dramatic. Only time will tell if the big thing potentially holding it back, that 5 casting cost, will prove too much of a drawback. During the upkeep, a lot of stuff happens to both power cards up and hold them down, especially with a lot of the older cards. The question is "what kind of game are we playing in such a scenario?" So, let's pretend we get that Hub out there. What can we do?

Stasis and Friends!

We have to mention **Stasis**. We have to. We have to.

Back in the day, everyone had a friend with a **Stasis** deck. One of my friends opened up a **Stasis** and a **Winter Orb** in his first Unlimited starter deck, and that was the end for him. For the rest of his days, he liked to lock down people's mana. At first, none of us knew how to use **Stasis**, and we tried to do things like use **Serra Angel**, but it really wasn't all that hot (even if it was a lot of fun). Finally, somebody figured out you could deck people with **Stasis** if you could just keep it going forever. There was Turbo-Stasis (**Howling Mine** and **Tutors with tons of mana**), and then Squandered Stasis (**Squandered Resources** to fuel **Stasis**), and then mono-blue Free Stasis (using cards like **Gush** and **Thwart** to get your tapped Islands back). With all approaches to **Stasis**, the question is how to get that untap phase back when you need it, so you can use that mana for other things.

It's not a surprise, then, that everybody and their brother (and their brother's friend, and *his* friend) mentioned **Stasis** when they saw this card. The cards combo together very well. There is just the little problem that unless you're just having fun with your friends, the combo is only legal in Type 1. (And if you are just having fun with your friends, **Stasis** is a great way to lose those friends.)



Thankfully, there are a couple of things we can do to "replace" **Stasis**. **Embargo** is one of the first places we can stop our wagon. Unfortunately, **Embargo** only keeps nonland from untapping, so we can do better. At 5 mana, we have two great options: **Mist of Stagnation** and **Temporal Distortion**. They both have a different way to go about their sneakiness, but it all amounts to nearly the same thing in the end.

Mist of Stagnation reads "Permanents don't untap during their controllers' untap steps. (Then do stuff during the upkeep)" **Temporal Distortion** reads, "Whenever a creature or land becomes tapped, put an hourglass counter on it. Permanents with an hourglass counter on them don't untap during their controllers' untap steps. (Then do stuff during the upkeep)."

It's a good thing **Eon Hub** lets us get away with ignoring instructions. All of these cards still cost a whopping 5 mana, but with a bit of effort, we can swing that.

Big Mean Things™! (They bite! They demand expensive gifts!)

I mentioned my friend opening a **Stasis** back in the day. I had another friend, Molly, who opened up a **Demonic Hordes** and a **Lord of the Pit** in her first few **Magic** packs. There are a whole slew of cards that just are aching to hurt you or run off during the upkeep, unless you keep them happy. One guy I know nicknamed **Serendib Djinn** "the needy girlfriend" because he loved having it around, but it demanded so much from him.

There is a laundry list of cards that can become so much easier to manage if you don't have to keep paying their expensive upkeep costs every turn. One of the cheapest, **Masticore**, is already pretty ridiculous even at the cost of losing a card to him every turn. These are just a few of the cards that are much easier to deal with when you can ignore their upkeep cost:

- **Minion of Leshrac**
- **Grinning Demon**

- Lord of the Pit
- Force of Nature
- Draco
- Nicol Bolas
- Endless Wurm
- Cosmic Larva

It doesn't take long to find huge creatures that suddenly become a heck of a lot better when you don't have to keep paying for them. Black especially seems to be chock full of them. Some of the cheapest, like **Grinning Demon** and **Cosmic Larva**, are the most exciting ones, simply because they are usually paired with a hideous upkeep cost to keep them in check.

Being a Spoilsport!

There are good things that can happen during the upkeep too. People often put a lot of effort into making sure that their deck runs like a smoothly oiled machine, and it's quite impressive, really, how many of the cards that people use which make use of the upkeep. These can often be broken down into the **Black Vise** Effect and the **Ivory Tower** Effect.

The **Black Vise** Effect is simple. During your upkeep, hurt your opponent somehow. There are any number of cards that people can use to do this. There is, of course, the classic **Black Vise**, but since then there are plenty of other examples. **Lavaborn Muse** and **Mask of Intolerance** both punish the opponent during the upkeep. **Braids**, **Tangle Wire**, and **Smokestack** also wreak their havoc on the upkeep.

The **Ivory Tower** Effect is basically the same but for benefits. During your upkeep, you gain something. **Phyrexian Arena** is a great example of a simple upkeep effect that would be worth turning off, but there are plenty more. Without an upkeep, a control card like **Powder Keg** can't gain counters to help blow up the world. Without an upkeep, your opponent can't return **Hammer of Bogardan** or **Eternal Dragon** to their hand, and they can't bring back **Nether Spirit**. Every single one of the Oath cards (but most especially **Oath of Druids**) gets a day off of work when the **Eon Hub** is out. For some decks, a card like **The Abyss** or **Call to the Grave** is a big part of how they expect to handle the opposition, and when these tools no longer work, they generally have on a big frown.

Calling on Mechanics

Wizards has been giving us all manner of good effects and costs to cards throughout the ages. They brought us Fading. They brought us Echo. It's less exciting, but it's true, they also brought us Cumulative Upkeep. And none of these fine mechanics work with an **Eon Hub** out. Or rather, they just don't have to happen. All three of those mechanics have the same thing in common: they are there to hinder the card. Well, no longer.

Fading

Let's think big. **Blastoderm** big. With **Eon Hub** out, **Blastoderm** won't fade. Four mana for a 5/5 untargettable Beast seems like a pretty good deal to me. Many of the other cards, while less exciting, are also powered up. **Rejuvenation Chamber** turns into 2 life every turn. **Tangle Wire** all but nullifies a bunch of permanents on both sides.

Things get really exciting again when we look at all of the Parallax cards. **Parallax Wave** and **Parallax Tide** are the big winners here. Without an upkeep, these cards will just hold out land and creatures indefinitely. Even as a two-card combo, **Parallax Nexus** becomes really intense card advantage, keeping cards out of their hand until it gets broken up.

Echo and Cumulative Upkeep

In a lot of ways, these are two ends of the same wand. On one end, we have a slowly increasing cost (Cumulative Upkeep), and on the other, we have a single large upkeep payment (Echo). Ultimately it all amounts to the same thing: we don't have to actually worry about paying what we should be paying. Think of it as a giant tax loophole.



With Echo, this turns some cards into absolute powerhouses. **Lightning Dragon** becomes an incredibly cheap and consistent monster of a beatdown creature. **Urza's Blueprints** suddenly doesn't seem like quite such a huge investment. **Ring of Gix** becomes a strictly superior **Icy Manipulator**.

Cumulative Upkeep gives you a bunch of interesting options as well. **Reality Twist** and **Naked Singularity** will never stop hassling your opponents (though it might make them gang up on you just so that the pain stops). **Yavimaya Ants** becomes an almost improved version of **Ball Lightning**. My favorite, though, is **Glacial Chasm**. Suddenly, you take no damage. Sure you can't attack, but you weren't planning on doing that anyway...



Other Special Features!

There are a ton of other tricks that could be talked about. Here are a few of my favorites:

- **Elkin Bottle**, **Grinning Totem**, and **Three Wishes**; with each of these cards, you set aside cards to use “as though they were in your hand” until later. Later is, of course, your next upkeep, which will never happen. Maybe **Three Wishes** should just read “**Ancestral Recall**, take 2!”
- **Dimensional Breach**; Another fun one. If you have the **Eon Hub** out and use **Dimensional Breach**, it (along with everything else) is removed from the game. Slowly these cards come back, but during any one of your upkeeps, if you think you have the edge, back comes the Hub, and everything else is stuck out of the game.
- **Solitary Confinement**; A ton of people have made Solitary Confinement decks. The idea of these decks is that even if you don't get to draw cards and even if you have to discard a card every upkeep, the effect is so powerful that it is worth it. In addition, these decks usually have ways to get around not being able to draw cards. By kicking out one of the drawbacks when you skip the upkeep, you're halving the pain it takes to keep out the Confinement, and you probably have what it takes to make the rest of the deck run anyway.
- **Soul Echo**; My personal favorite. **Soul Echo** keeps you from losing the game from life. In a sense, your **Soul Echo** has a separate life total that needs to be killed. The problem for your opponent is that they have to choose if they are going to hurt you or your echo-self during the upkeep. Without an Upkeep, they never have a chance to switch which one they are hurting. In the end, either you'll be 'dead' but your **Soul Echo** won't, or your **Soul Echo** will be dead, and they won't be able to hurt you. Great!

Wrapping Up

There are a ton of ways to apply the card. If you think that you'd like to avoid an upkeep cost to yourself, that is the most obvious. To illustrate things this week I'm going to show you a new “Stasis” deck I built, just because I miss the card so much. A million, trillion years ago, I gave some Stasis decks to some friends for the Masters event in New York, and they did okay with them. Here's my new take on the deck with these newer cards, legal for Extended.

New "Stasis"		
60 cards		
18 Island	2 Morphing	4 Temporal Distortion
18 land	2 creatures	3 Eon Hub
		3 Boomerang
		4 Condescend
		2 Mist of Stagnation
		4 Thwart
		2 Daze
		4 Gush
		4 Serum Visions
		4 Propaganda
		2 Spellbook
		4 Chrome Mox

Hope you like it!

- Adrian Sullivan



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