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Hanging with Roy G. Biv

Mark Rosewater
Making Magic
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Welcome to Rainbow Week! Either the title gave that away or you never learned this particular mnemonic to remember the color order of the rainbow (Red – Orange – Yellow – Green – Blue – Indigo – Violet). Join me next week when I explain why my Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas. But back to the topic of the week. Rainbows. As I explained two weeks ago, magicthegathering.com's illustrious editor Scott Johns found a clever way to avoid coming up with themes for a few months by letting external writers pick them. JMS chose Arcane Week two weeks back and today Scott Wills brings us Rainbow Week.



Now I've always made it a point to stay on theme during theme weeks. And I'll be honest, I was a little thrown by Rainbow Week. I think Scott was trying to do something a little less focused that would allow each author their ability to interpret what the topic meant to them. In general I applaud this strategy, but I'll be honest that I've been a bit puzzled by the rainbow theme. Let me run you through my thought process as I tried to figure out my topic.

Idea #1 – Rainbows are all about color. Lots of colors mixed together no less. Perhaps I should dedicate the week to talking about multi-color design. It's a wide-open topic that I have a lot to say about. But then it struck me. What if, hypothetically mind you, there was a block around the corner that had a multi-color theme that would force me to hit the issue again and again for a whole year? I don't know the chances of such a thing occurring, but I decided it best not to risk it.



Idea #2 – What if I focused on a very thin area of multi-color design. Five color cards. What's more rainbow in **Magic** than cards that have all the colors? The problem was that this led to one of my "here's a bunch of cards that fit a theme, let me tell stories about them one by one" columns. Which would be great if my last column wasn't one of them! Moving on.

Idea #3 – What if I explored other aspects of rainbows? Illusions, for example. Or unfinished things. Or pots of gold (darn, I'm back to multi-color). Maybe leprechauns? But then I realized that none of these topics really warranted a full column. I mean, how many words can one write about the **Aisling Leprechaun**? (And don't get me started on the pose.)

Idea #4 – What if I turned my column into a rainbow? What does that mean? Well, I'd have seven sections, one of each color. In order, of course. About what exactly? I don't know. I'd just free associate about each color. Would that actually work? I honestly didn't know. But the idea intrigued me. So that's what I'm doing. It's a bit experimental, but then if you don't like experimental, "**Making Magic**" is not the column for you. [Choose Your Own Adventure](#), [comparing Magic design to my love life](#), ["Elegance"](#), [my goblin column](#) (I don't want to ruin it for you if you've never seen it). I've never been afraid to go where no column has gone before.

So with that can do spirit, I present my rainbow column. I honestly as I'm writing this don't know what to expect. And if you can quit this column after that sentence, you really shouldn't be reading my column (and obviously you aren't – you "mid-column" quitter you; don't tell them I called them that; oh what the hey, you can tell them).

Oh, one more thing. You should refresh this page before reading further. I can't tell you why. But this will make more sense if you just trust me and hit refresh.

Red

At least I get to start easy. Red actually means something in **Magic**. I've decided for this section, I'm going to talk about a personal discovery that came through my learning about the color pie. (For those that don't know what I mean when I say "color pie", I'm referring to the philosophy that governs what flavors, and thus what mechanics, are dictated by each color. If the topic interests you, I wrote five columns about the philosophy about each color. (["It's Not Easy Being Green"](#), ["The Great White Way"](#), ["True Blue"](#), ["In the Black"](#) and ["Seeing Red"](#))

Anyway, several years ago, a number of R&D folk, what I like to call the flavor gurus (sort of parallel to the rules gurus but we focus on the color pie rather than the rules), got together to figure out what exactly each color represented. Richard had created the color pie very holistically when it was first created. This exercise went back and took a more thorough look at decisions that had been made. This revamping would later play out with R&D reshuffling some of the mechanics. The relevance to this story is that all of the flavor gurus tried a lot of exercises

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to help us figure out how we felt about colors. We'd pick topics and try to find examples in each color. This is where I got most of the characters that I talked about in my color columns.

One of the exercises was an introspective one. What color are you? Obviously, most people have aspects of all the colors. The question was which one are you centered in? Now, if you had asked me this question several years back, I would have answered blue. I'm a smart guy who likes to analyze things to death. But with all the thought we put into the color pie, I decided to really think about the question. And I realized something important. I'm not primarily blue (yes, it's probably number two); I'm primarily red.

You see, here are my two most defining qualities. I always follow my heart. And I never hold back what I'm thinking. Both very red qualities. The more I examined the issue – I'm very passionate; I tend to act before I fully think things through; I can get very emotional – the more I realized that I'm red. Very red. Probably the most red R&D member. Which reminds me of an interesting story. (Hey when I said free association, I meant it.)

What color are you?

For a long time I was very unique in R&D in that I came from a very different background from everyone else. As I used to put it, I studied words in college. Everyone else was a mathematician or an engineer or at least someone who studied a whole lot of math. Me? I got out of my math requirement by taking a philosophy course called The Philosophy of Mathematicians. (I got out of my other one by taking Spanish in high school – you see my AP test allowed me to put a language class in place of my math requirement – hey game players play games wherever they can.) While this is no longer true (Randy majored in philosophy for example – hmm, perhaps he took Philosophy of Mathematicians too), for a long time I was the intuitive thinker in a sea of speculative thinkers (and yes that's the Myers-Briggs test talking if you know what that is).

In short what that means was that all the other R&D members would think things through logically while I would make designs based on my instinct and gut. This led to the following conversation. I've decided to change the other R&D member's name as I don't particularly want to embarrass him. Note that there's have never been an Englebert in R&D. Also, you need to know that Englebert was the lead developer of the team and that I was on the development team. (Yes, for many years I was on every **Magic** development team). As for the card in question, I forgot what it was. I've decided to name it Fish Elemental. Note that there has never been a card called Fish Elemental (although I'm sure there soon will be).

Englebert: Okay, does anyone have any issues with the file?

Me: Yeah, I have a bad feeling about Fish Elemental.

Englebert: What do you mean a bad feeling? Have you played with it?

Me: No. I just think something isn't right about it. Did any of you get a similar feeling?

Englebert: What feeling? You haven't told you what's wrong with it?

Me: I don't know what's wrong with it yet.

Englebert: Then why are you bringing it up?

Me: Because I'm worried that there is something wrong with it.

Englebert: What!

Me: I don't know!

Englebert: But again, why bring it up if you don't know anything?

Me: I do know something. My Spider Sense is tingling.

Englebert: Your what?

Me: My gut is telling me that I should be worried.

Englebert: Your gut? Until your gut does some playtesting or at least has the slightest clue why there's a problem, I find this conversation useless to me.

Me: I was just asking if anyone else had a similar feeling.

Englebert: I don't care if anyone had a similar feeling. It doesn't matter. Unless you can provide hard data, you're just wasting the group's time.

Me: I can't just tell my instinct to clue me in.

Englebert: Then keep your instinct out of the development meeting.

Me: Hold your horses mister. I respect the fact that we think differently. I realize that no one else on this team thinks like me. But that doesn't make it any less valid. I'm a member of this team and that's how I think. You don't like it? Kick me off the team. But as long as I'm on the team, I'm going to do my job the way I function. And that involves my instinct. And in my instinct's opinion Fish Elemental smells funny. I'm just saying we need to pay attention to it! That's all!

I wish I could say the card in question was something like Tolarian Academy but since I can't remember, I doubt it. Englebert did come up to me after the meeting and apologize. And after that, my instinct was given a little more respect.

I bring this all up because I really think that red's flavor is often looked at with tunnel vision. Yes it likes to blow things up, but at its core it's about following one's heart. (And hey, sometimes your heart likes to blow things up.)

And that, my loyal readers, is what red made me think of.

Orange

Here's an obscure piece of **Magic** trivia. If you listed all the people that work on **Magic** and listed their high school, what high school would have the most names? I'm guessing very few of you would guess Orange High School of Pepper Pike, Ohio (in the suburbs of Cleveland and yes Pepper Pike is actually the name). It turns out that three different **Magic** people all went to Orange. One would be me. Two is Justin Ziran, the Brand Manager for **Magic Online**. And three is Matt Cavotta, **Magic** artist extraordinaire and member of the Creative Team.

So how did three guys from an oddly named high school from an even odder named city in Ohio all end up in Renton Washington? You'd think that they would be connected, but they're not. I was the first Orange alum to make it here. By way of Boston (where I went to college; Go Boston University!) and Los Angeles (where I worked in Hollywood – and yes, ended up on the "Roseanne" writing staff – man, I haven't worked that in for several months; I'm slipping). Justin came a few years later. And Matt joined us last year. ([Click here](#) if you haven't seen his awesome creative exercise that helped land him the job.)



Who knew?

So, if you're really interested in getting a job in Wizards working on **Magic**, here's the best laid plan according to our hiring pattern. Go to Orange High School (and it really is a good school – they taught me how to write). Then make it to the Pro Tour where you become a regular. Write a weekly article on **Magic** in your spare time. Then start hanging out with one of the R&D guys (Randy is your current best bet) at the Pro Tours. What could be easier?

Good 'ol Orange High. Raise your hand if you didn't know how I was going to tie orange into **Magic**.

Yellow

Let me start by saying this. Whoever invented yellow never intended for it to be used as a font color. It's two shades shy of invisible ink. Of course, no one is going to laugh at that joke because no one is ever going to see this section. The only way I know what it says is that I'm writing it in black and then changing it to yellow. But I'm sure someone is going to figure out how to read it (Players seem to have figured out the common run from the *Ravnica* logo.) so I guess I'm obligated to write something. I'll keep it short though.

New trivia question. What relevance does the color yellow have to **Magic**? I'm sure the first answer is that the multi-color cards are gold, which is a shade of yellow. Besides the fact that I'm waiting to talk about multi-color cards, calling gold yellow is a little bit of a stretch. I'm talking about actual yellow. The answer is non-basic lands. You see, in the early days, all lands had the same text box. Well, except the basic lands. Those were color coated. But eventually R&D realized that the basic lands were onto something. If a non-basic land only tapped for one color mana, wouldn't it help to color coat the text box with that color?

But this left the problem of what to do with the non-basic lands that didn't produce any color or produced more than one color. For the former, the text box was left uncolored. And for the latter, the decision was made to use yellow. Yellow (harkening to gold I guess) was supposed to visually tell the players, "Hey, look at me I can produce more than one color of mana". I bring this up, one, because it's a neat factoid, and two, I'm not supposed to say but just the fact that I can't say anything says something. Of course this is all written in yellow so it doesn't really matter. Hey you, "yellow skippers", you're ugly and your mother dresses you funny. (Okay, this time, don't tell them I said that.)



Green

One of the interesting things about **Magic** is that people often leave the game and come back after several years of absence. One such player that I'm excited to see return is Jamie Wakefield. What does he have to do with green? Everything. Jamie loves green more than any other person on the planet (and yes, I know I'm now getting deluged by letters from green lovers this week). And you know how I know he loved it? Because he loved it when it was the worst color in **Magic**. Everyone roots for the home team when they're winning. But only the real fans show up when they're losing.

Jamie was there for green in its lean years, so it's fun watching him come back when green is king. For those of you that have never heard of Jamie Wakefield, he is one of the great writers on the game. Not so much because he offered the most insightful strategy (although he has some of that) or examined parts of the game that no one else did (he also did some of this). Jamie was just a good writer that really enjoyed the game and was able to convey that feeling in his writing. Jamie is currently writing for Star City and he's definitely worth a read (provided you're able to read him – note: he is one of the site's premium authors).

Talking about Jamie reminds me of a story involving myself, him and my greatest (what's the opposite of fan; I like to make up words so I'll call him my) "unfan". I don't want to publicly embarrass him so I'll just call him Arnold. I'm not sure why he had it out for me, but Arnold used to write threads with such fun names as "Why I Hate Mark Rosewater" and "Why Mark Rosewater Hates You". (And note this was way back before it was en vogue to hate me.) The last important piece of this puzzle is that Arnold is a good friend of Jamie's.

So I show up at Pro Tour Chicago (the one Bob Maher won; or should I say the one Brian Davis lost). While looking over the player list (I used to always do that at the start of the tournament so I could see what players were available for Feature Matches) when I noticed that both Jamie and Arnold are playing in the Pro Tour. I had met Jamie once before (I think this was his second Pro Tour), but I had a chance to chat with him again when I featured him round one in the Feature Match Pit. After his match (which I believe he lost by a large margin) he and I started talking about Arnold. I asked why he hated me so and Jamie just smiled. He didn't know.



Wakefield, at PT Chicago '99

So I suggested that I take Arnold out to dinner so that he could get all his issues off his chest. I invited Jamie along to help keep the peace. Jamie thought I was a little crazy to suggest this but he went and talked to Arnold and set it up. That night, the three of us went out to a nearby pizza place (man, Chicago has some good pizza). I let Arnold ask all the questions he had and then I answered each one of them as honestly as I could. And I was pretty blunt in my honesty. I wanted to do whatever I could to bury the hatchet.

Several weeks later I see an article by Jamie talking about the dinner. Jamie is very nice and commends me for taking out my biggest critic. Then comes Arnold's article. In which he trashes me. His biggest complaint was that I wasn't taking responsibility for what my people had done. But this was

long before I had any people. I wasn't in charge. I didn't even have any direct reports. I managed no one. It wasn't that I wasn't taking responsibility. I didn't have the responsibility. And I was just honestly trying to explain how things had gone wrong (I assume the topic was *Urza's Saga* block).

Anyway, the lesson of this story is that you can't change a leopard's spots. If Arnold didn't like me before, there was no reason to expect him to like me any better after. I'm pretty open in my communication. If you don't like me, odds are it's because there's something not to like. I learned that I have to let people feel the way they want to feel. I have to be who I am and they get to like me or not like as they see fit. All in all, a very good lesson to have. (And hey, the pizza was spectacular.)

Blue

I have a theory that the colors extend their personalities into how people think of them. Red, for example, tends to evoke people's emotions. Black makes people selfish. Green taps into people's visceral senses. White prompts a lot of organizing. And blue is tricky. To everyone that tries to examine it. This includes the designers. Why did blue get so much of the original color pie? Because it tricked Richard. Look at Alpha. Blue did just about everything. In fact, in the early days of **Magic**, mono-blue was the deck to beat. Why? Because it had no weaknesses. It could do just about anything it wanted.

And throughout its history, blue has continually tricked R&D. One of my pet peeves, for example, is that blue was seen as the tricky color and the color that could play with the rules of the game. Mistake me if I'm wrong, but aren't those two categories like ninety-nine percent of all mechanics? Blue played blue's game even in the metagame. It tricked the designers and developers into seeing it as the color that could do whatever it wanted. And even now even with us trying to crack down on it, it still manages to sneak things like **Vedalken Shackles** past everyone. (Remember **Old Man of the Sea**? Wasn't he fun?)

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Now when I sit down with the blue section of my file, I feel like I have to be on alert, because blue will try something if I'm not paying attention. ("**Giant Growth**, come on, it's tricky.") But blue, I got your number. I'm onto your game. No more clever cards for you.

Well, maybe a few. Blue is the tricky color after all.

Indigo

Every group has what I call the "obscure" member. That is the one whose status is greatly increased because it's part of the group. Like the Martian Manhunter. Who? He's the superhero that, along with Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Green Lantern and the Flash started the Justice League. You only know the Martian Manhunter because of the Justice League. The same goes for Indigo. If not for the rainbow (and I guess the Indigo Girls); you'd never hear of Indigo. In fact, if not for the clever Roy G Biv thing, I think people might have just called it dark blue.

I thought for this section, I'd look at a few of **Magic's** indigos.

- **Healing Salve** – This is an easily forgettable card. But when it gets grouped in with **Ancestral Recall**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Dark Ritual** and **Giant Growth**, it tends to get a little more profile. In Alpha, these were known as the boons. Each color got three of something for one mana. Man, by the way, did white get hosed. I feel like white got there last on Boon Day. "I'd like three cards. Oh, taken? Um, how about three damage? Gone too. Three mana? No. I'd take an increase in power and toughness. Also gone. What's left? Damage prevention and life gain. Anything else? Okay, I guess I'll take it."
- **Zombie Master** – Alpha had three lords. The awesome **Lord of Atlantis**. The pretty good **Goblin King**. And the sorry excuse for a lord, **Zombie Master** (Check out my zombie column, "**1cc Dead People**" for more on this). This card would have been left for dead (as always in my column, pun intended) if the lights illuminating the other lords hadn't spilled over on it.
- **Jester's Mask** – When **Ice Age** came out, everyone was all abuzz about the Jester's items. As it turns out **Jester's Cap** was the real deal. **Jester's Mask** merely had the fortune of being the one other card starting with Jester's.



- **Golden Wish** – The Wishes were awesome. That’s what people said. In truth, **Burning Wish**, **Cunning Wish** and **Living Wish** were awesome. **Death Wish** was fair. And **Golden Wish** kind of sucked. But it was a wish, so it got to hang out in the cool, exclusive club.
- **Timetwister** – Don’t get me wrong, **Timetwister** is a very good card. It’s restricted for a reason. But one of the nine best cards of all time? I don’t think so. (All the Vintage players can let me know if I’m putting my foot in my mouth. It seems the Vintage crowd really enjoys pointing out when I do this.) The best comparison I can make to **Timetwister** is Brahms. Yeah, he was a good composer, but he’s no Bach or Beethoven. He was just lucky enough to have his name start with the letter B. Just as **Timetwister** is lucky to be blue.
- **Plains** – If not for the grouping of this card as one of the “basic lands”, I’m not sure how often people would think about this card. :)



Violet (aka Purple)

So what do I think of when I think of **Magic** and purple? Yes, the sixth color. For some reason whenever the topic of the sixth color comes up, everyone always thinks it would be purple. I don’t quite know why. I know *Inquest* did an article many years ago that talked about a sixth color and used purple. If you look at the colors, red, green and blue are taken. Yellow is kind of close to gold. So that leaves Orange and Purple. No slight against Orange (it is my alma matter after all) but I can see why Purple won.

Purple also reminds me of an odd talk we had in R&D one day about how multi-color should work. Shouldn’t red and blue cards be purple? Following this logic, here’s how the ten pairs play out:

- White/Blue – Light Blue
- Blue/Black – Dark Blue
- Black/Red – Dark Red
- Red/Green – Brown
- Green/White – Light Green
- White/Black – Grey
- Blue/ Red – Purple
- Black/Green – Dark Green
- Red/White – Pink
- Green/Blue – Aquamarine

And that is my rainbow article. Let me know what you thought of this little experiment.

Join me next week when I answer the most common question being asked of me these days (okay, the second most common – I don’t think we need a third “Why are you voting for Mike Long?” column)

Until then, may you have a chance to reflect on what color means to you.

Mark Rosewater

*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he’s in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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