

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



# Two Hundred and Counting

Mark Rosewater  
Making Magic  
Monday, October 31, 2005



On the hundredth week of [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com), I took a look back at my first hundred week's worth of columns (in a column titled, of course, "[One Hundred and Counting](#)"). I used that column as a chance to do two things. Reminisce with those readers that remembered the columns and fill in the newer readers on what columns I had done. The column was well received, enough so that I decided to do one every hundred weeks.

Well, guess what? Time for part two, dealing with weeks 101 through 200. As I did last time, I will give a brief synopsis of each column and bring up any interesting tidbits surrounding it. And I will rate each one on a five point scale to clue you into which columns you might want to glance at or avoid. The scale I'm using is the same as last time. Here it is for those of you that did not read my last recap column or simply cannot remember details from something written one hundred weeks ago:

- \*\*\*\*\* (5 stars)      This is as good as it gets. One of my crème de la crème. If you're going to catch up on any old articles, these are the ones to read.
- \*\*\*\* (4 stars)        While not my absolute best, this article is one of my better pieces.
- \*\*\* (3 stars)         One of my bread and butter columns. Nothing spectacular, but nothing too shabby either.
- \*\* (2 stars)            At best a ho hum read. At worst, a failed experiment.
- \* (1 star)              The only real reason to read this is to say you've read every column. Not my finest hour.

I hope you either enjoy this walk down memory lane or have a chance to catch up on some columns of days gone by.

## Week #101 (December 1, 2003) – "[The Baby and the Bathwater](#)" (\*\*)

It was banding week. And so I did what any columnist would do when talking about a mechanic that had been abandoned years earlier, I talked about why R&D abandons mechanics. While this article isn't one of my standouts, it does a decent job of explaining why R&D does something that upsets so many players. (Remember that every mechanic is loved by someone. Even bands with others.) Note that the following week I claim that it should be rated a one star. Upon re-reading I feel I was too harsh and gave it two stars this time around. I should point out though that if you read this column you should also check out the following column as I better elaborate on a few points.



## Week #102 (December 8, 2003) – "[Red Letter Day](#)" (\*\*\*)

I make an effort to do a mailbag column several times a year. Besides always being interesting, it allows me a chance to directly respond with the players. As this is the primary goal of [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com), I take this responsibility very seriously. As mailbag columns go, this is a good one. And as you will see, I didn't shy away from people who spoke their mind.

## Week #103 (December 15, 2003) – "[Type I. Take 2](#)" (\*\*)

Every once in a while (every year or two) I write a column about Vintage (aka Type I). I had written what I felt was a very good column entitled "[Playing to Type I](#)" the year before. When I sat down to write my new column I realized that I wanted to repeat a lot of points I had made while also wanting to comment on a few of my older points. Then it hit me that it might be cool to rerun the old column with a new editorial. Sort of like having a DVD with the director commentary. That was the idea anyway. The column didn't go over that well because many readers felt I had slacked off by just rerunning an old column. No one seemed to notice that my commentary was as long as the original column (well, close anyway). If you care about Type I, I do recommend you take the time to read this column.

PRODUCTS

*Dissension*      *Guildpact*  
All Magic products

RULES

Core Game  
Basic Rulebook  
Comprehensive Rules  
All Magic Rules

MESSAGE BOARDS

All Magic message boards  
[magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com)  
forum  
Rules Q&A forum  
*Magic Online* announcements

---

MAGIC ONLINE

Download Now!      Check server status

*Magic Online Academy*      *Magic Online FAQ*

---

NOVELS

*Dissension*  
Ravnica Cycle, Book III  
by Cory Herndon  
More fiction at [Inside Wizards](#)

## **Week #104 (December 22, 2003) – “[Rules of the Game](#)” (REPEAT) (\*\*\*\*\*)**

Every December [magicthegathering.com](#) takes two weeks off for winter break. During that time, we run best-of columns from that year (always selected by the columnists themselves). This column was my runner-up for 2003. It was the column where I really explained my favorite “Restrictions breed creativity” mantra. If you have any interest in design (or just the process of creativity) this is a must read.

## **Week #105 (December 29, 2003) – “[A Day in the Life](#)” (REPEAT) (\*\*\*\*\*)**

This was the winner of not just 2003 but is my pick for my best column of all time (it's either this or a column coming in week #167). In this column I combined a format I was dying to do (Choose-Your-Own-Adventure) with a very popularly requested topic – what is it like to work in R&D? The most important thing you should know about this article is that it has a lot more truth than any of you will possibly believe. Oh yeah, and don't forget to chat with Skaff.

## **Week #106 (January 5, 2004) – “[Enter... the Matrix](#)” (\*\*\*)**

This was the first week of *Darksteel* previews. This particular column shows off a card called *Myr Matrix* and explains the origins of the indestructible mechanic. And, as always, I also introduce the design team.

## **Week #107 (January 12, 2004) – “[Arcbound to Happen](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

On the surface this article is about the designing of the arcbound mechanic. (It was week two of the *Darksteel* previews after all.) But underneath this is an interesting insight into how an idea comes together from different places. If you are at all interested in how my mind works when I create cards, I suggest you check out this column.

## **Week #108 (January 19, 2004) – “[To Affinity and Beyond](#)” (\*\*)**

Writing preview weeks is hard. This is the third and final preview week for *Darksteel* and it shows. This column explains the tweak on affinity in *Darksteel* (affinity for basic land types) and explains why we didn't do more affinity from \_\_\_\_\_ in the *Mirrodin* block. In my defense though I was a little busy at the time this was due. (See the following week.)

## **Week #109 (January 26, 2004) – “[Special Delivery](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

Some columnists feel a great need to separate their column from their personal life. No such problem here. My twins were born and I got kind of sappy. But a good sappy. The topic at hand is how personal things get when you create something. Oh yeah, and I show off cute baby pictures.

## **Week #110 (February 2, 2004) – “[In the Black](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

This is my fourth column in my color pie series. In this column I explain everything you wanted to know about the color black and its color pie philosophy. In addition, I prove my willingness to jump into the snake pit as I explain why black isn't inherently evil. And, of course, I reveal who the black member of *The Simpsons* is.



## **Week #111 (February 9, 2004) – “[Free Association](#)” (\*)**

This week's column gets an A for effort and a D for execution. What I was trying to demonstrate is a very important part of trading card game design. But it didn't quite come out as well as I had hoped. It turned out that the idea was odd enough that it needed a lot more time than I realized. Still, if you like my wacky columns, this one is up there.

## **Week #112 (February 16, 2004) – “[Talk To Me](#)” (\*\*\*)**

How many columnists give their readers homework? This column was all about getting feedback from my readers. And it worked like gangbusters. The reason the rating for this is only so-so is that the coolest part about this column wasn't the column itself but the response it created.

## **Week #113 (February 23, 2004) – “[Starting Over](#)” (\*\*\*)**

It was mulligan week so I spent my column explaining the origin of the mulligan and followed its evolution. The topic is a little dry but I felt I did it justice. And I even got in a joke that I had to call "dibs" on when the theme of the week was announced to the writers.

### **Week #114 (March 1, 2004) – "[Time Heals All Wounds](#)" (\*\*\*\*\*)**

This is my one foray into fiction writing in my column (okay, "[Myr Myr, Off the Wall](#)" had a little fiction section). I don't want to give anything away as this column is much more fun if you don't know what it's about.

### **Week #115 (March 8, 2004) – "[Sliver Me Timbers](#)" (\*\*\*)**

It was slivers week so I talked about the design of slivers. And when I say I talked about the design I spared no details. If you like slivers this column covers a lot of ground. (If you don't, it still does, but you'll be less interested.)

### **Week #116 (March 15, 2004) – "[Loose Ends](#)" (\*\*\*)**

While preparing my last recap column ("[One Hundred and Counting](#)"), I realized that there were a number of issues that I mentioned but had never followed up on. As such, I asked my readers for any loose ends they were interested in hearing about.

### **Week #117 (March 22, 2004) – "[A Cycling Built For Two](#)" (\*\*\*)**

It was cycling week and so I did to cycling what I did for slivers two weeks back. I delve deep into its design. Interesting stuff, you know, if you like cycling.

### **Week #118 (March 29, 2004) – "[Say What](#)" (\*\*\*\*)**

This column took way longer than expected due to the amazing response I got to my original "[Talk To Me](#)" column. The results were fascinating and clearly have had a big impact in my role as Head **Magic** Designer. Most players know what they like, but it is fascinating to see what everyone else likes. I find that most players deviate in several ways from the larger group.

### **Week #119 (April 5, 2004) – "[Unhinged or No?/The original April 1st announcement](#)" (\*\*\*/\*\*\*\*\*)**

I have done many April Fools jokes in my life, but the announcement of *Unhinged* is far and away the best prank I have ever played. The day after the "announcement" I took a poll to see if players believed that *Unhinged* was real. The result? Yes – 50.6%, No – 49.4%. In addition, as the *Un* sets' greatest fan, being able to finally talk about the release of the second one was pure joy. Check out the thread on this column if you want to see how happy I made some people. This column by the way is the FAQ where I announce *Unhinged's* existence and answer many questions that I thought players would have. As a little trivia note, this is the only theme week (it was Hidden Gem Week) I did not write in theme.



### **Week #120 (April 12, 2004) – "[Write Away](#)" (\*\*\*)**

This column is a different kind of mailbag column as instead of answering specific letters I answered popular questions (the top most popular in fact). Most of these questions are still popular so if you haven't read this column, you might want to peek at the questions.

### **Week #121 (April 19, 2004) – "[Slow and Steady](#)" (\*\*\*)**

It was sorcery week so I answered the age-old question – Why does **Magic** have to have sorceries? If you are interested in **Magic** design, this column hits upon a fundamental aspect of trading card game design.

### **Week #122 (April 26, 2004) – "[Collecting My Thoughts](#)" (\*\*\*\*)**

Every time I tie my personal life into the topic I seem to get interesting columns. This week I share a hobby of mine and explain how through it I have learned many valuable lessons about how to make a collectible. I suggest checking out this article for no other reason than to see my collection (and by the way, it's more than doubled in size since these photos).

### **Week #123 (May 3, 2004) – "[Dawn of a New Day](#)" (\*\*\*)**

This is the first week of *Fifth Dawn* previews. In it I introduce the team (including someone who doesn't even work at Wizards – this prompted a lot of mail) and explain some of the basics the team did when we first started designing the set. Hey, there's even a preview card. Okay, that part might not be so exciting now.

## Week #124 (May 10, 2004) – “[Here Comes the Sunburst](#)” (\*\*)

This was week two of *Fifth Dawn* previews. This column talks about the creation of the sunburst mechanic. At the end, by the way, I post the job that would later be taken by Matt Cavotta.

## Week #125 (May 17, 2004) – “[Scry Me a River](#)” (\*\*\*)

In week three of *Fifth Dawn* previews, I explain the creation of the scry mechanic. This is another nuts and bolts article, but for those that like nuts and bolts (and hey, isn't the role of a design column to be a nuts and bolts column) and particularly the scry mechanic, this one's for you.



## Week #126 (May 24, 2004) – “[Cog Wild](#)” (\*\*\*\*)

If the topic of **Magic** design interests you (and remember, this is the **Magic** design column), this is the kind of column you should be able to sink your teeth into. In this column I explore how a small theme in *Fifth Dawn* got created, built and massaged in design (the “cog” theme, if the title wasn't enough of a give away). And like [my feature of a few weeks ago](#), I also reprint an actual document from design that I intersperse comments into.

## Week #127 (May 31, 2004) – “[Gimme a Break](#)” (\*\*\*\*)

Hey, two meaty design columns back to back. This week I took a look at when and why rules should be broken. In short, I'm for rule-breaking when used properly. What does that mean? Read the column.

## Week #128 (June 7, 2004) – “[Myr Myr Off the Wall](#)” (\*\*\*)

This column gets four stars on format and two stars on content. The idea behind the column is very cool and it makes it an entertaining read. That said, I don't really say all that much. This is definitely one of my “form over function” columns. Still, if you like me doing wacky stuff, this column's for you. Also, if you enjoyed my fiction of week #114 (“[Time Heals All Wounds](#)”), this column includes a little follow-up.



## Week #129 (June 14, 2004) – “[Head Games](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)

Unlike last week, this is one of my columns where my function keeps up with my form. This is one of those columns that has so much interesting information stuffed into it, you might have to read it twice. But be warned, the information is not always in plain view. I don't want to spoil this column if you haven't read it but it's an insight into the creative process. Or, more accurately, my creative process. The only negative is that I would have formatted this column slightly differently if I had to do it again. Other than that, this article is in my personal Top Ten.

### **Week #130 (June 21, 2004) – “[Que Serra Serra](#)” (\*\*\*)**

There are small stretches where I stray from the straight-forward articles. June of 2004 seemed to be one of those months. This column during angel week is structured as an interview with Serra Angel. The article is light and fluffy. Funny, yes, but not filled with anything of any real substance. That said, light and frothy can be fun, if you're in the mood for light and frothy.

### **Week #131 (June 28, 2004) – “[Adventures of Letter Man](#)” (\*\*\*)**

Another letter column. Pretty average as letter columns go. I think the letter columns are important and thus I'll keep doing them, but I doubt I'll ever get one that knocks the ball out of the park. To keep the metaphor going, my letter columns are always singles and doubles, but hey, singles and doubles are important too.

### **Week #132 (July 5, 2004) – “[Where Have All the Demons Gone](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

In this column I explain the long hiatus of the creature type demon. If you like behind the scenes columns, this one reveals a very different vantage point than most articles of this kind. In it, I explain many forces that you might not realize we have to think about. If how **Magic** is made is interesting to you, not just from an R&D perspective, but from a larger brand prospective, this column is a good read.

### **Week #133 (July 12, 2004) – “[Design 102](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

Every other year or so, I write an article on the how-to's of designing **Magic** cards. The first was, obviously, called “[Design 101](#)”. If you enjoy making your own **Magic** cards, this is a must read. (Well, if you have any desire to improve at it, at least.)

### **Week #134 (July 19, 2004) – “[Seeing Red](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

This is the final column in the color philosophy series. (Final is a little inaccurate as there's an artifact one that comes later. Oh yeah, and I'm starting a ten column series on the ten two-color interactions in conjunction with *Ravnica*.) I believe red is the most misunderstood color, so this column probably has the most eye opening revelations of the five columns.

### **Week #135 (July 26, 2004) – “[On Tour, Part I](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

There was a book published recently that deals a lot with the Pro Tour (“Jonny Magic and the Card Shark Kids” by David Kushner). I was the primary person responsible for providing research material for the author. Digging up all that stuff got me a little nostalgic and resulted in my writing a two-part column about the Pro Tour from my perspective. This column is definitely a little of the beaten path, but if you have ever had even the faintest interest in the Pro Tour, it's worth a read.

### **Week #136 (August 2, 2004) – “[Ice Guys Finish First](#)” (\*\*\*)**

It was *Ice Age* week so I chose to make a top ten list of what I considered the ten best-designed cards in the set. Even with some time, I like my choices. If you haven't read this, I suggest you try to see what ten you'd list before you see my choices.

### **Week #137 (August 9, 2004) – “[On Tour, Part II](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

The most interesting part about this two-part column was the responses it generated. There were clearly two entrenched camps. One that is intrigued by organized play and found the columns very interesting and the other, and the camp that despises everything that the Pro Tour stands for and berated me for wasting precious column space on the topic. The first group outnumbered the second (in my mail at least), but the second group seemed to feel more strongly about the issue.

### **Week #138 (August 16, 2004) – “[Putting the Un in Fun](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

It was *Unglued* week so I talked about the design of *Unglued*. Go figure. The interesting thing is that I did it pretty straight laced. Yes, there's my normal amount of humor, but the column isn't cutesy in any way. There's no wacky format. I just explained how the set came to be and how design evolved. If you enjoy the *Un-* sets, I think you'll

find this column very interesting. Also, I had a lot to say so this one's a little longer than normal (and this from a man that doesn't write short columns).

### **Week #139 (August 23, 2004) – “Odds and Ends” (\*)**

This week was really a column about nothing. I had a lot of little odds and ends that I wanted to discuss. While the information wasn't useless, this column doesn't really stand the test of time. The most interesting thing I can comment on is the Extra Helping #3 at the end of the column. This was over a year ago and I still haven't finished it? Why? Because the project turned out to be WAY, WAY bigger than I thought it would be. I got thousands of replies. I am going to finish this project but I'm going to have to revamp how I do it. Stay tuned to a future column where I explain how.

### **Week #140 (August 30, 2004) – “Now With Added Flavor” (\*\*)**

This is the first week of *Champions of Kamigawa* previews. In the column I explain how the block was inspired and I talk about what went into the basic design. If you like the *Kamigawa* block, this might interest you, but I'll be honest that this isn't one of my best columns. Still, not a one star.

### **Week #141 (September 6, 2004) – “Arcane and Able” (\*\*)**

This is the second week of *Champions* previews. And a second fair but not outstanding column. If it's any consolation, my handoff for *Ravnica* was September 1 so my mind was clearly in a different block.

### **Week #142 (September 13, 2004) – “Splice of Life” (\*\*\*)**

Once I handed off my file, I was able to get back to writing slightly off-kilter columns. This one looks at the origin of the splice mechanic in a genre you might not expect (tell-all autobiography). The story of the splice mechanic is actually interesting and the format I think actually helps with the storytelling.

### **Week #143 (September 20, 2004) – “Flipping Out” (\*\*\*)**

This column explores the origin of the flip creatures from *Champions*. The flip cards had a few more twists than the average mechanic so it's an interesting story. This column is a perfect example of one of my solid middle-of-the-road columns. Not amazing, but in no way boring.





### Week #144 (September 27, 2004) – [“Combo Platter”](#) (\*\*\*)

It was combo week, so I spent my column explaining how design doesn't design combos. Well, with a few exceptions, all (well I did forget one) spelled out in the column.

### Week #145 (October 4, 2004) – [“Change For the Better”](#) (\*\*\*\*)

This is one of my “poke the bear” columns (don't worry, I explain the term in the column). In it I explain why change is crucial to **Magic**. If you read “Making **Magic**” to better understand **Magic** design, this one's an important read.

### Week #146 (October 11, 2004) – [“That's the Spirit”](#) (\*\*)

It was Spirit Week so I talked about the design of a number of cards that happened to be spirits. This is one of my “talk about individual card design” columns that I do a couple times a year. Nothing ground-breaking but I've discovered that there's a section of readers that really likes these types of columns. If you're one of those people, this column is for you.

### Week #147 (October 18, 2004) – [“Elegance”](#) (\*\*\*\*\* or \*)

Although I've written two hundred plus columns, I feel “Making **Magic**” has been defined by a handful of columns. This is one of the columns. I'm a very untraditional columnist. I like to experiment. This was one of my big experiments. And it was either one of my biggest successes or my greatest flop. It all depends on who you ask. No column I've written has ever polarized my audience more than this column. Readers seemed to love it or hate it. Check out the thread if you don't believe me (although be warned that the thread has more nay-sayers, sort of the way the threads work).

I would like to use this time to make a few points. One, I personally believe this is one of the best columns I've ever done. It's probably one of the best things I've ever written. That said, it was designed to evoke strong responses (and not all positive). See two weeks later for a better insight into what I was up to. Two, while the word **Magic** does not appear in the column, there is probably not a column of mine more about **Magic** design than this one. Three, if you haven't read this and you have a slow modem, be warned. Be very warned!

***No column I've written has ever polarized my audience more than this column.***

I've been asked many times if I regret writing this column. My answer is: not for a second. The column did exactly what I set out for it to do. If it isn't your cup of tea, I understand that. But “Elegance” is everything that I feel “Making **Magic**” is about. That doesn't mean I'm going to repeat this trick again. In general I like coming up with new ways to make you write angry letters (and nice ones too). But if you don't like offbeat experimental columns like this one, you're reading the wrong column.

### Week #148 (October 25, 2004) – [“Top Ten of the Morning”](#) (\*\*\*)

It was Top Ten week so I did a Top Ten list of Top Ten lists. (Anthony Alongi would do the same joke later in the week – this is why being the Monday columnist is so good.) This column is pure fluff, but fun fluff.

### **Week #149 (November 1, 2004) – “[An Elegant Response](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

This column explains what I was doing with “[Elegance](#)”. Some people thought my little experiment was cool (many of which didn’t like “[Elegance](#)” itself) while others, well, wrote more angry letters. If you’ve read “[Elegance](#)” you definitely have to give this a read.

### **Week #150 (November 8, 2004) – “[The Un Starts Now](#)” (\*\*\*)**

This was the first week of *Unhinged* previews. So I, of course, talked about *Unhinged* design. Like my *Unglued* column (Week #138 – “[Putting the Un in Fun](#)”), this was pretty straightforward without too much silliness.

### **Week #151 (November 15, 2004) – “[Un and Games](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

What better for the second week of *Unhinged* previews than to explain the design parameters (one could call them rules) of the set. Yes, even the set that breaks the rules itself has rules. (Man, where are the funny columns about the crazy, non-tournament legal set?)

### **Week #152 (November 22, 2004) – “[Having Un](#)” (\*\*\*)**

Remember when I said I do a couple of columns a year about the design stories of individual cards? Yeah, this is one of those, but about *Unhinged* cards. Which happen to lend themselves to odd stories more than normal **Magic** cards, so there are a number of fun stories and tidbits in this column.

### **Week #153 (November 29, 2004) – “[Mining the Past](#)” (\*\*\*)**

It was Throwback Week so I spent my column quizzing readers to see if they could figure out which *Unhinged* card was inspired by a particular older card. If you’re familiar with *Unhinged*, this should be fun for you. Be warned, it’s not as easy as you might first think. Also, this column is the beginning of my extra FAQ questions for *Unhinged*. Check the end of the article of this and the next few weeks’ articles.



### **Week #154 (December 6, 2004) – “[Up and Down](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

This is another of my “honest, warts and all” look at design. This article looks at several common complaints about design and explains why these unpopular things have to be.

### **Week #155 (December 13, 2004) – “[Walk Softly and Carry a Big Acrostic](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

It was puzzle week, so I chose to do an acrostic. If you don’t know what that is, it’s a type of puzzle. Kind of like a crossword puzzle, but different. Mark Gottlieb who, is a puzzle editor, said I did an excellent job for my first time making an acrostic. Also, I was quite proud of how much **Magic** trivia I crammed into the puzzle. Note that you can type into the article if you want to figure out the puzzle on screen.

### **Week #156 (December 20, 2004) – “[Head Games](#)” (\*\*\*\*) - REPEAT**

This is the first week of 2004’s best-of weeks. “[Head Games](#)” was my third favorite column of the year.

### **Week #157 (December 27, 2004) – “[Special Delivery](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*) - REPEAT**

This is the second week of best-of. “[Special Delivery](#)” was my pick for my second most favorite column of the year (and the sentimental favorite).

### **Week #158 (January 3, 2005) – “[Time Heals All Wounds](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*) - REPEAT**

Due to Wizards of the Coast’s holiday schedule, I had a special third week for best-of. “[Time Heals All Wounds](#)” is my favorite column of 2004.

### **Week #159 (January 10, 2005) – “[When Ninjas Attack](#)” (\*\*)**

It was the first week of *Betrayers of Kamigawa*. So what else could I talk about but ninjas (and, well, it was Ninja Week). There's some interesting stuff about how ninjutsu came about but other than that this column is a little light on substance.



### **Week #160 (January 17, 2005) – “[Flip Service](#)” (\*\*)**

In the second week of *Betrayers*, I previewed a flip card and talked about how the lead designer came up with the tweak on the flip mechanic. Well, at least how I thought he did.

### **Week #161 (January 24, 2005) – “[A Few Words From R&D](#)” (\*\*\*)**

From time to time I like to write “behind the scenes in R&D” columns. This is one of those. But rather than tell stories like I do in most of them, I presented R&D lingo. If you've ever hankered to talk like R&D, here's your chance.

### **Week #162 (January 31, 2005) – “[Ninjas & Pirates & Myr... Oh My!](#)” (\*\*\*)**

This column introduces the Creative Team and explores some of the many issues the team has to face. This column was the first on [magicthegathering.com](#) to dip its toe into the subject matter (now dipped weekly in Matt Cavotta's “Taste the **Magic**” column).

### **Week #163 (February 7, 2005) – “[Thread Rover](#)” (\*\*\*)**

This was kind-of like a letters column. But instead of replying to letters, I replied to posts on “Making **Magic**” threads. As I often explain, the threads tend to be a little more hostile than my e-mail so this letter column is a little more “jumping into the fire” than my average mailbag column.



### **Week #164 (February 14, 2005) – “[Land of the Rising Fun](#)” (\*\*\*)**

It was Japan week so I shared some stories about my first trip to Japan. This is not the column you expect when you first start to read it, but I promise it's an interesting read.

### **Week #165 (February 21, 2005) – “[Design of the Times](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

On the heels of my *Ice Age* Top Ten comes my Alpha top five. Why only five? Because I go into much greater detail. This is another one of my columns where I sneak a lot of important design philosophy issues in places no ones looking.

### **Week #166 (February 28, 2005) – “[Just the Artifacts Ma'am](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

This is kind of a color philosophy week and kind of not. In it I spend a lot of time exploring what exactly an artifact is and what kind of flavor it's supposed to have. The end result is a column very unlike the color philosophy articles but a very interesting article (in my opinion anyway) nonetheless.

### **Week #167 (March 7, 2005) – “[Topical Blend #1 – To Err Is Human](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

I often talk about how restrictions breed creativity. This may be the best article I have ever written (there are a few other contenders, but this one is a solid front-runner) and it was based on two unrelated topics picked by all of you (**Magic** design mistakes and women if you haven't read the article). This column is also one my most personal columns ever. From the feedback I got on this column I learned two important things. One, you like when I mix my personal life with my **Magic** design talk (I got more mail on this column than everything except “[When Cards Go Bad](#)”, my “why we make bad cards” column). And two, there seems to be a high correlation between “like to play **Magic**” and “have had some issues with women”. (I'll just chalk that up to **Magic** players being primarily men.) Anyway, if you haven't read this column, I'd strongly urge you to take a peek. It's as good as my column gets.

### **Week #168 (March 14, 2005) – “[Feeling the Draft](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

This is another nuts and bolts design column where I explain how we design cards for the purposes of draft. There's no gimmick to this column. It's just me explaining the basics of a very important part of card design. Also, this is the column where I show off Matt Cavotta's awesome creative exercise that helped him land the Creative Writer position.

### **Week #169 (March 21, 2005) – “[The Troubled One](#)” (\*\*\*)**

I don't want to give too much away on this column as the surprise (and yes, many readers figured it out before the end) is an integral part of the column. It's only three stars as while I think the column is solid, it doesn't go the extra length that a truly good column does. One last note, I strongly urge you to read the thread of the column if you read it. In it, I approach the same topic in a more serious treatment.

### **Week #170 (March 28, 2005) – “[Counter Intelligence](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

You'll notice I often refer to columns as “nuts and bolts” columns. That's not an insult. What I mean is that the column explains some very practical aspect of card design. And as this is the **Magic** design column, I'm assuming that is of interest to a large number of my readers (mail seems to back me up on this one). It was Control Week so I was explaining everything you ever wanted to know about how to design counterspells. The column is quite thorough and very informative if the subject matter is at all interesting to you. (I guess it's still informative even if you don't care for the topic.) That said, nuts and bolts columns are a little drier as I tend to avoid the shenanigans when trying to explain small nuances.



### **Week #171 (April 4, 2005) – “[The Answer Lies Within](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

I get certain questions a lot in my mail. This column was my answer to a number that I got enough that I felt they needed answering. All of them dealt with how design functions and why we do certain things we do. If you like **Magic** design philosophy this column's for you.

### **Week #172 (April 11, 2005) – “[Discard Tricks](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

If you liked “[Counter Intelligence](#)” then you're probably going to like “[Discard Tricks](#)”. It was Discard Week so I wrote the same article except I talked about how discard spells are designed. The format is identical (something by the way that I do infrequently so close to one another – I like to mix things up to keep the column fresh). This column is also interesting in that it spurs a very interesting column the following week.

### **Week #173 (April 18, 2005) – “[Fun Fun Fun](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

A writer on the boards took me to task for a comment I made in “[Discard Tricks](#)”. This led me to write a column about the importance of “fun” to a designer and how we set about to make cards fun. This column gets much deeper into the psychological aspect of design than any other column I've written. If nothing else, I hope this column shows that R&D thinks a lot more about aspects of the game than players might realize at first glance.

### **Week #174 (April 25, 2005) – “[By Any Other Name](#)” (\*\*\*)**

It was Name Week so I talked about how I create design names for cards. Let me be up front that this article is about as fluffy as they come. That said, it's light-hearted and fun and definitely gives an insight into design that I know no one else have ever breached (possibly for good reason). Not one of my time capsule columns (that is, something that would be of great importance to the **Magic** readers of 2075), but a cute read if you have the time.

### **Week #175 (May 2, 2005) – “[Today and Tomorrow](#)” (\*)**

Every once in a while I like to use my column to update you on the state of the future designs. I share codenames and design team rosters. This is one of those columns. Informative at the time, but not exactly evergreen. This is the kind of the thing you can skip unless you feel a need to read everything I've done. Also, this is the column where all of you named the 2008-2009 block Rock, Paper, Scissors.

### **Week #176 (May 9, 2005) – “[Epic Struggles](#)” (\*\*)**

It was the first week of *Saviors of Kamigawa* previews and my card showed off the epic mechanic. As such, I spent my column explaining how it got designed. I was a bit limited by the fact that the story I was telling wasn't the most thrilling of stories. I do introduce the design team and give a few tidbits about the design. I recommend this column only to those of you that were big fans of *Saviors*.

## Week #177 (May 16, 2005) – [“The Sun'll Come Out To Maro”](#) (\*\*\*)

It was week two of *Saviors* previews and this time I was talking about the “wisdom” (aka “hand size matters”) theme. I got to talk about *Maro* so that jazzed me up a bit. Nothing spectacular but a solid column.

## Week #178 (May 23, 2005) – [“Choosing a Channel”](#) (\*\*)

For this one I showed off and then explained the origin of the channel mechanic. There's some cute behind the scenes stuff but I'll be honest that it's not up to my normal standards. I was getting ready to head off for the *Magic Invitational* and this column did not get the attention I normally give my columns. But hey, part of doing a weekly column is having some ups and downs.

## Week #179 (May 30, 2005) – MEMORIAL DAY – NO COLUMN

Back in the day, [magicthegathering.com](#) would have columns regardless of if it was a holiday or not. The problem with this was that the holiday meant that the people running the website had the day off. This created all sorts of hassles (you see, it really does take a day to prepare a day's worth of content, so five days of content with only four work days to do it presents a problem) so finally it was decided that the website would only have new content on days that the staff was at work. I bring this up because this was the first time that my column hit a holiday and I didn't write a new column.

## Week #180 (June 6, 2005) – [“One With One With Nothing”](#) (\*\*\*)

The *Saviors* card *One with Nothing* upset a lot of players. You know what upsets them even more? Explaining why we made it bad on purpose. That's what I did this week. This is another column that has a fun thread to read. And by fun I mean fun for all of you. Me? I'm kind of raked over the coals. Of course, that comes with the job and I've been raked over the coals so many times that I get kind of sentimental about it now.

## Week #181 (June 13, 2005) – [“Saving Space”](#) (\*\*\*\*)

This is an example of a column where the format enhances the topic matter. In it I talk about space conservation in design. But then I let you all in on the fun by providing problems for you to solve. This is one of my most interactive columns (and the feedback from the column has encouraged me to do more interactive columns). See how you fare with some of the problems I face every day.

## Week #182 (June 20, 2005) – [“Decking the Hall”](#) (\*\*)

Now, I'm used to hate mail. But I wasn't ready for what poured my way when this column came out. In it I explain why I believe the Pro Tour is important (not just unto itself but how it helps *Magic's* design and development) and then I go on to list my choices for the inaugural Hall of Fame ballot. Let's just say I picked someone controversial. Definitely read the thread to this column if you check the article out.

## Week #183 (June 27, 2005) – [“It's a Long Story/We've Got Beatdown”](#) (\*\*\*)

“[Decking the Hall](#)” created so much ill will that I felt compelled to address the issue one last time. But I felt it unfair to make people that didn't want to read about the Player Whose Name Shall Not Be Spoken have to read about it two weeks in a row. So I did the honorable thing and wrote two columns. The explanation column turned out okay and you should read it if you read “[Decking the Hall](#)”. My other column, mostly due to time constraints as I was writing two articles, is way below my normal quality threshold. Not only that, I left a number of cards off my list (see the column to understand what I'm talking about).

## Week #184 (July 4, 2005) – INDEPENDENCE DAY – NO COLUMN

No column. I did throw a cool Fourth of July Party though.

## Week #185 (July 11, 2005) – [“Hanging with Roy G. Biv”](#) (\*\*\*)

It was Rainbow Week and so I wrote about rainbows. You know, as they apply to *Magic*. If this sounds weird, it was. I rated it a three as I think the seven sections average out to a three. There are one or two sections that actually have four star material.



## Week #186 (July 18, 2005) – [“The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly Truth”](#) (\*\*\*\*)

One of my recurring themes in “*Making Magic*” is explaining why R&D makes bad cards. This column addresses a subset of the question – why do there have to be bad rares? If you at all care about that question, I urge you to

read this column (you know, assuming you haven't already).

### **Week #187 (July 25, 2005) – “[Outwit. Outplay. Outlast](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

It was Core Set Week so I decided to have a little fun. I don't want to give too much away but the title should let you know that the reality show *Survivor* is involved. This column has almost zero seriousness in it. It's one of my fun columns just about showing a particular stat in the most entertaining way I could think of.

### **Week #188 (August 1, 2005) – “[Once More With Feeling](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

More **Magic** design philosophy, this time talking about the importance of repetition. You see, repetition is important. Note that there's more joke in this review than there is in the whole column, but it is a pretty incisive look into an aspect of design that I think few players think about.

### **Week #189 (August 8, 2005) – “[Body Snatchers of the Invasion](#)” (\*\*)**

It was *Invasion* week so I talked about *Invasion* design. I was on the design team so I'm able to get pretty “behind-the-scenes” about it. Not a stellar column but it has lots of tidbits about *Invasion* if you like that kind of thing.

### **Week #190 (August 15, 2005) – “[By The Letter](#)” (\*\*\*)**

Another mailbag column. Not much more to say really.

### **Week #191 (August 22, 2005) – “[Equipment To Be](#)” (\*\*\*)**

This column definitely has some attitude. It even has a quirky gimmick. I even managed to squeeze quite a bit of information in. I'd give this three and a half stars if I allowed myself that rating, but I don't and I didn't feel like this column needed to be rounded up. Oh yeah, it was Equipment Week. I talk at great length about equipment.



### **Week #192 (August 29, 2005) – “[State of Design 2005](#)” (\*\*\*\*\*)**

I've talked about some fluff columns. This is an anti-fluff column. This is as serious as it gets. I decided that when I took over as Head **Magic** Designer I wanted my version of a State of the Union address. I needed to wait a year for **Magic** to catch up (we work a year ahead). This is my first State of Design column. I plan to do one every year. This column is chock full of my take on current **Magic** design and where I plan to take the game. If this doesn't sound of interest to you, you're reading the wrong website.

### **Week #193 (September 5, 2005) – “[City Planning. Part I](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

The story of *Ravnica* design was so big I broke it into three parts. I strongly urge you to read this if you're a fan of *Ravnica*.

### **Week #194 (September 12, 2005) – “[City Planning. Part II](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

Part two. Still good. Still worth reading.

### **Week #195 (September 19, 2005) – “[City Planning. Part III](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

And part three. Quality level stays constant throughout. Lots of cool tidbits.

### **Week #196 (September 26, 2005) – “[+1/+1 For the Road](#)” (\*\*\*)**

Did you ever wonder what a column written by a glass bead would sound like? Well, here's your chance. He talks all about counters and tokens and what role they play in **Magic** design. In many columns you might think I'm kidding, but you know I'm not.

### **Week #197 (October 3, 2005) – “[Group Think](#)” (\*\*\*\*)**

This is the first in a ten part series exploring the color philosophies of the ten two-color interactions (aka guilds). I rated this only four stars as I don't think this series is going to be able to hit the bar of the mono-color philosophy

series. That said, I think the two-color interactions create some very interesting nuances that the column takes a look at (well, the green/white one anyway). Oh yes, this was Selesnya Week.

## Week #198 (October 10, 2005) – “[Twenty Questions](#)” (\*\*\*\*)

This column is an interview where I face off against the most vicious interviewer I've ever had – myself. I felt like I asked questions that I've always wanted to be asked and then I answered them as honestly and straight-forward as I could.

## Week #199 (October 17, 2005) – “[Jamuraa, the Merrier](#)” – REPEAT

The site was down for a week while Online Media (that's the group that produces the website) moved to our new building.

## Week #200 (October 24, 2005) – “[Life and Death](#)” (\*\*\*\*)

This was Golgari Week so I explained the philosophy behind black/green.

### Whew!

I hope this resource column has proved valuable. I know from my mail that there are constantly new readers discovering the site so it is my hope that columns like this help the new-comers catch-up. It also should allow old-timers a chance to revisit some of my old columns. No matter which camp you fall in, I hope you had fun.

And if you have comments on any of the columns linked to in this column, please write me. I'm always interested in feedback on my columns, even years after I originally wrote them.

Join me next week as I explore a sneaky, sneaky guild.

Until then, may you enjoy the fruits of your own labor.

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.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Mark Rosewater](#) archive

