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# Interview With Some Vampires

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Making Magic  
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Welcome to Vampire Week!

Okay, I'm sure most of you (at least the ones that bother to read my little teasers for the following week and then bother to remember what I said) are saying, Vampire Week? What's black and white about Vampire Week? To which I reply, um, well I was going to do an in depth analysis of *Odyssey's Repentant Vampire* that has the distinction of being Black and White (although at different times). All right, all right. That's a blatant lie. I... well, I thought it was Orzhov Week this week. Why? I don't know. Scott sent out the list of upcoming theme weeks and I didn't look at it as thoroughly as I should of.



You see, I write my articles late night at home, so I don't have access to my e-mail at work. Thus, when I was writing my teaser, I just thought back to what I had read. Which, now that I've seen the upcoming list, is way off. You aren't seeing Orzhov week for a little while. Oh, we're doing it, but not until after Izzet Week and a few others, such as Vampire Week. Which is what I'm doing today. Okay? Let's begin.

## "Is There A Sucker Born Every Minute?"

As this is Vampire Week and "Making Magic" is a design column, it seems only natural to have a discussion on the design of vampire cards. But instead of addressing this from the normal R&D perspective, I thought it would be much more insightful to discuss this topics with some of the vampires themselves. As such, I put together a round table of famous **Magic** vampires and gave them the chance to ruminate on vampires and **Magic** (plus a few other topics that naturally worked their way into the conversation.)

The gathering is a who's who of **Magic's** undead. First we have *Sengir Vampire*, the original vampire from Alpha. Next we have *Baron Sengir*, one of the earlier iconic vampires. The third vampire to join us is *Shauku Endbringer*, a frightful bloodsucker from Jamuraa. Joining them is *Crovax the Cursed*, one of the original crewmembers of the Weatherlight who would later go on to be their arch nemesis. In addition, we have *Repentant Vampire*, an oddity in that he, at times, is the only non-Black vampire in existence. And finally, *Szadek, Lord of Secrets*, one of the newest vampires to the game.

**Gentlemen, let me begin by welcoming you all here and thanking you for finding the time to talk about vampire design. Here's hoping that you find it in your hearts not to eat me.**

**Baron Sengir (BS):** That's the difference between vampires and most other creatures of the night. We have manners.

**Shauku, Endbringer (SE):** Of course, I'm not sure if eating reporters is considered bad etiquette.

**Crovax the Cursed (CC):** I think it depends on who they're working for. For example, something like *Newsweek* I think you need to leave alone. But *Weekly World News*? I eat those guys like popcorn. Enough with the Bat Boy already.

**Sengir Vampire (SV):** So where are you from again?

**Szadek, Lord of Secrets (SLS):** [Magicthegathering.com](http://Magicthegathering.com). It's Wizards' site. I don't think eating him will help our cause.

**Uh, thank you. What cause?**

**SLS:** The cause of vampires on **Magic** cards. While our PR is good, we really don't have the numbers you might expect.

**Repentant Vampire (RV):** Yeah, thirteen years and we have sixteen vampires. What's that about?

**SLS:** You mean sixteen creatures with the creature type vampire. There are numerous other creatures in the game that are clearly vampires that do have the official status.

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**BS:**  
You would think that being Black, a large flier, having the Sengir ability, the name Sengir and



looking like – this!- might be enough to actually get a little “counts as a vampire” text.

**RV:** Whatever gramps. The point is we have sixteen official vampires. It's something like 1.1 per year. That's disgraceful!

**SLS:** The number's actually eighteen. You've forgotten **Mistform Ultimus**.

**RV:** We need to kill him. If for no other reason just so he can stop messing up every other trivia question.

**I think we're drifting a little off topic. The reason we brought you here today was to talk about the design of vampires. Who would like to start?**

**SV:** I guess I'm the obvious one to begin. Where should I start? Okay, let's talk about the “vampire mechanic.” What I mean is how does R&D represent the fact that a card is a vampire?

**CC:** Well, we have to fly. Because of course, all vampires fly.

**SLS:** With the exception of **Krovikan Vampire**. And, of course, **Mistform Ultimus**. Plus, technically you only jump.

**CC:** I don't understand how you're the lord of secrets if you keep butting in to tell people stuff every other minute.

**SLS:** It's the things I don't say that matter most.

**CC:** Then how about shutting up?

**SLS:** I was just pointing out that it's ironic that, mythologically speaking, the majority of vampires or vampire-like creatures do not fly.

**SV:** The flying part doesn't even bug me. I can understand the flying. Here's the harder part for me to swallow. In order to feel like a vampire, R&D has deemed that the creature must have some sort of “feeding” mechanic. For example, take my ability, the sort of default vampire ability. The idea is that if I kill you, I grow stronger. Which in practice sounds great, but...

**BS:** You never kill anything. Tell me about it.

**RV:** I've been there.

**SV:** Don't get me wrong, I love being a 4/4 flier, but I never get to eat! I'm starving.

**CC:** That's why eating your teammates has a lot of appeal. You can't control the other guy, but when you look your wizard in the eye and say “if you feed me, I going to kick some you know what”, you get food.

**SE:** But sometimes they don't feed you. Your opponent gets a good blocker and all of a sudden, you're on a diet. I think my way is best. Just see what you want and eat it. It's the only way to live.

**CC:** I'm pretty happy with my design. I think it actually does the best job of capturing the flavor of what it means to be a vampire. Eat and you get stronger. Don't eat and you get weaker. We aren't into bloodsucking for the fun of it. I mean, it is fun, don't get me wrong, but feeding is about survival. I don't think the Sengir ability really hits that home.

**SLS:** I'm equally happy with my flavor. True, I feed on thoughts rather than blood, but I think there's a similar sense of desire.

**CC:** But you don't get weaker. I think that's important.

**So you feel the need to represent the eternal hunger as being the weak link in design?**



CC: Yes.

SE: Crovax, come on. You know the real problem as well as I do. We all know.

**Which is?**

BS: The demons.

**The what?**

BS: Rare Black has a pinch in the iconics of its rare fliers.

SV: Grandfather, in English.

BS: Here's the easiest way to look at it. Let's say R&D makes a big White rare flier. What do they do with it? They make it an angel. Now let's say the creature's Red instead. Right, it becomes a dragon. Now, let's shift the card over to Black. What happens? It becomes a vampire. Or a demon! Black has two iconic creatures for big Black rare fliers.



SE: And don't think this is a fair fight. Demons have the numbers on us...

SLS: Twenty-four demons, twenty-six if you count *Un*-sets. And twenty-seven if you feel obliged to include *Mistform Ultimus*.

RV: I should just eat him.

SE: And Wizards stopped making them for years!

BS: It's a combination of factors. First, demons co-opted what I call the "drawback mechanic". That is, their thing is to be bigger for less, but have a drawback. However, drawbacks can be built around. Vampires have to have the "feeding" flavor, and flying, which makes us always have to be expensive. You know what the cheapest vampire in *Magic* history costs? Szadek?

SLS: Four. *Vampire Bats* cost one and *Vampire Hounds* cost three, but neither one is a vampire.

BS: Four!

SLS: The cheapest demon is also four.

CC: But demons get to be 7/7, 8/8, 9/9. Baron's as big as it gets and he's 5/5.

BS: That's because we're mechanically capable of growing. No one cares if his 9/9 gets a +1/+1 counter. We're hampered by our mechanical definition.

**Are you suggesting that R&D change how they design vampires?**

BS: No.

RV: Yes! Yes, they should. There's no reason... uh oh. Uh guys, it's happening.

**What's happening?**

SV: Quick pin him down.

SE: Grab his feet.

**What's going on?**

BS: Get the rope.

**What...**

SV: He's turning.

RV: Oh no, I reverted. What did I do? What did I do? Did I kill anyone?

SV: *Repentant Vampire* has a bad habit of turning good.

SE: At which point he tends to turn on all of us.

**How did this happen?**

SV: No one knows.

SLS: There are rumors that he was cursed by gypsies.

BS: All right. Who filled up the graveyard?

SV: Shauku?



**SE:** I haven't eaten since that atog last night.

**BS:** Then who? Crovax!

**CC:** I was hungry. I grow weak, remember?

**BS:** You couldn't have stopped at six?

**CC:** Oh, bite me! They don't call it eternal hunger for nothing. Besides, you can't have just one goblin.

**SE:** Amen to that, brother!

**RV:** As you have taken a life, I now have no choice but to take yours.

**CC:** And how are you going to do that all tied up?

**RV:** Well, not now. But I'll get lose. And then the smiting shall begin.

**We should really get back on topic. We were talking about demons.**

**SV:** To be fair, our issues aren't really with the demons. We actually get along with the demons.

**SLS:** In certain mythologies, vampires are demons. The so-called Slayerverse from the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television show is a fine example.

**SV:** I think the real problem is that we've "costed ourselves out of the market".

**What do you mean?**

**SV:** For starters, as iconic creatures, we've eliminated ourselves as ever being common. Yeah, we have our common bats and hounds, but the vampires themselves have to be at least uncommon. Then, we have to be of a certain size. Can't be below 3/3 or above 5/5.

**SLS:** I don't think the 5/5 is a cap.

**SV:** Possibly not, but in thirteen years, no one's broken it. And we have to have a "vampire feel". By the time you're done, you just have an unwieldy creature.

**BS:** I think you're forgetting something important. Flavor. We ooze flavor. When little Timothy opens his booster pack, he is quite delighted when one of us shows up.

**SV:** My point wasn't that we weren't cool. I was talking about our power level. Name one vampire that's ever shown up in a top tier Constructed deck.

**CC:** The angels have. The dragons have. The demons have. The goblins have. The elves have. Even the stupid Kavuu stepped up to the plate. We're like the only iconic left not to have a card make it to the Big Show.

**RV:** As I've been struggling for over a minute, I'm willing to concede that I'm not getting untied without help. So, I'd like to volunteer to go a little easier on whoever frees me.

**SE:** I think the issue is that vampires keep being relegated to Timmy. With a random Johnny thrown in every once in a while. But Spike? Spike sees no vampire love.

**So what would you recommend to the designers of the game?**

**SV:** Stop being afraid of the vampires. Make us something meaty. How cool would it to have a top-level deck with the word "vampire" in it.

**BS:** Here, here.

**SV:** Oh yeah, and kill the stupid Sengir ability. Of course, grandfather it for me, but don't let any other poor sap have to live with it.

**RV:** Okay, here's what I'll do. I'll let the person who unties me leave with a five-minute head start.

**SE:** Personally, I think Szadek is a step in the right direction. He steps into a second color. He has the ability to get huge and do fun sacrifice tricks with damage on the stack.

**SLS:** Thank you.

**SV:** I agree. I know Szadek's not the... argh!

**What just happened?**

**CC:** Repentant Vampire killed Sengir Vampire.

**That can't be good.**

**SE:** Don't worry about. He's not legendary. Besides, he's already dead.



Um, okay. Any last words before we wrap this interview up?

**BV:** I recommend that we tie **Repentant Vampire** back up.

**SE:** I could kill him if you guys want. He's not legendary either.

**BV:** I think I speak for all my fellow vampires...

**RV:** You don't speak for me heathen!

**BS:** Could one of you gag him please? What I was saying is that I feel I speak for all non-White vampires in that we'd like R&D to step a little more out of the box when designing us. I'd love to see new ways to capture "feeding". And would it kill development to allow one of us to be a staple tournament card?

**CC:** Ditto.

**SLS:** I think the Baron speaks much truth.

**SE:** You mind if I have the last word?

**Sure. Is that important to you?**

**SE:** Yes. I am the Endbringer after all. I hope that the audience that reads this interview understands that as a whole the vampires aren't all that upset. But we feel like we've held up out end as an iconic. Now it's R&D's turn.

**Well I want to thank all of you that are still alive, I mean undead, for joining me for this interview. I think my readers will be quite interested in what you all have to say.**

**Before we wrap up, I just want to remind my readers to tune in next week, when I share a few lessons.**

**Until then, may you feed until your belly's full.**

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*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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