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Interlude: When Decks Collide

Mark Rosewater
Building on a Budget
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hello. Mark Rosewater here. No, you didn't click the wrong article. Today, I'm writing "Building on a Budget". Why? Because Jay's busy writing "Making Magic" - you know, my weekly column on **Magic** design. Say what? You see, we're having a little fun this week here at **magicthegathering.com**. Yes, it's Swap Week. Here's how it's going to work. Each day, the two daily columnists are switching up their columns. (I'll leave the details as an exercise for you the reader.) What this means today is that you get to hear Jay sound off about **Magic** design and me about deck building on a budget.

Here's the rub. Jay's never designed a **Magic** card in his life and the last time I was seriously in to deck building, Bill Clinton was serving his first term. (For my non-American readers that's '92 through '96.) But I'm never one to back away from a challenge. And besides, while it might have been a while ago, I at least have done the thing I'm being asked to write about today. Jay on the other hand? Not so much (which is part of the fun of course). Be sure to check out how he handles "Making Magic". I know I will.

All Hands On Deck

But enough of **Magic** design. Today I'm talking about deck building. Now, I'll be honest. When I first heard from Scott I was going to write a "Building on a Budget" column, I was a little worried. I mean, this stuff pours out of Jay's pores. My pores? Just sweat. So I started making a list of interesting topics. For a while I was contemplating doing a series of budget budget decks. You know, for when you can't afford a budget deck. (The idea was based off a comedy piece I did for my high school paper where I introduced the idea of Cliff Notes for Cliff Notes - for the students that didn't have time for the Cliff Notes; I summed up twenty books each in one line or less.)

I also toyed with the idea of taking a theme deck that never existed, from a set before theme decks, and pimping it up JMS style. I even spent an hour contemplating teaching people how to round out their theme deck by designing new cards for it. But that kind of felt like cheating. No, I wanted to do an honest "Building on a Budget" topic. So, for inspiration, I started looking at the theme decks from *Ravnica* and *Guildpact*. And it reminded me of something I used to do for fun many, many years ago.



Back in the day I was a hard-core Johnny deck builder. If it was weird and unusual, I built it. I thrived on making decks that made my opponent scratch his head and go, "What in the world are you up to?"

But I didn't stop there. I kept looking for new and interesting deck building challenges. One of my favorite pastimes was actually building two decks that were designed to play against one another. I even wrote an article about it in one of the early, early *Duelists*. Perhaps next column swapping week I'll talk about that. But today, I'm going to touch upon another of my deck building quirks.

Because I built so many decks, I often found myself having to break them apart. One day, while breaking apart two decks, I got entertained by the idea of turning the two decks into a single deck. From that day on, whenever I needed to break decks apart, I would always start by combining two decks into one. Here were my key goals.

1. I wanted to capture an essence of each deck in my new combined deck. This meant that the new deck had to have elements of both decks I was breaking apart.
2. The merged deck had to be the same size as the decks being merged. Shuffling the two decks together and taking out a few token cards doesn't cut it.
3. The merged deck can only use cards from one of the original decks, no new cards. (When I did this kind of thing in the past, the whole point was seeing what I could come up with when forced to stick to just the cards in front of me.)

Round Three: The Angel of Wrath vs. the Minotaur Hero; the Clouded Mirror vs.

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- I wanted the deck to be fun to play. Fun superseded power level for me. Yes, I wanted to make a deck that could win, but I would seldom sacrifice cool things for the sake of improving deck efficiency. Like I said, I'm a Johnny through and through. (By the way, check out "Making Magic" next week when I'm going to re-explore Timmy, Johnny and Spike. Man, I hope Jay doesn't do that this week.)
- I emphasized diversity of play over consistency. That is, to ensure having a higher amount of card interactions, I tended to put less copies of any particular card in. This is really just another way to say point number four, but I felt having five points looked cooler. Yes, I'm even "coolness over efficiency" in explaining how I build the decks.

Once I had this idea cemented in my head, I remembered the part that comes after "Building" in the column's title. You know, the "on a Budget" part. But luckily, the thing that caused me to venture off on this little mind trip was *Ravnica* and *Guildpact* theme decks. And theme decks, as decks go at least, are pretty budget friendly. What if I spent my column today merging two theme decks?

Checking Your Decks

With my column idea locked up, I was forced to go to the next step. Writing it. This meant that I needed to pick two decks to merge. Obviously, I would pick two from the seven available in the *Ravnica* block. Having merged plenty a deck in my day, I knew that as I was going to be merging two-colored decks, I needed to have the decks overlap in at least one color. The reason for this is that I wanted to merge the decks together and having two different sets of two colors would make the task much harder than it needed be.

This meant that to start I would need to pick one of the seven *Ravnica/Guildpact* theme decks. The choice was obvious to me. As readers of my column know – by the way, I want to say hi to all the "Building on a Budget" readers that might never have read me before – I'm a little more willing to go off on tangents mid-sentence than Jay is – This is actually the way I think scary enough – Oh wait, this isn't a design column, let's get back to the main sentence – I'm an Izzet man through and through. Passion smashing into intellect. That's me.

In R&D I sit in an area known as "The Pit". It's where most of the designers and developers sit. Anyway, near my desk is Devin Low and Mark Gottlieb. When I told them of my choice, both were a little skeptical. Devin designed the Izzet theme deck ("[Izzet Gizmometry](#)") and Mark was a long-time writer of the wacky deck building column ("House of Cards" – check in this Wednesday to see what wacky decks Matt Cavotta builds). They both informed me that I had chosen the absolutely worst deck to merge. They explained that it was the deck that was most isolated and different from every other theme deck in the *Ravnica* block. I should pick another deck.

As I stated above, I'm a Johnny. (I have quite a bit of what Jay calls "rogue-itis".) Throughout my life whenever someone told me that something couldn't be done, I flocked to it like the buttered side of the bread to the kitchen floor. I would always pick the topic that no one else dared to do. When my writing teacher said that any protagonist could work for a story other than animals and dead people, I began my next short story with the line: I never saw the car that ran me over.

Suffice it to say, I'm going use the Izzet theme deck. And when you look how the colors shake out, that means that there are three other decks I can choose to merge with: *Dimir Intrigues* (blue/black/red), *Charge of the Boros* (white/blue/red) and *Gruul Wilding* (blue/red/green).

All this has really just been the intro. Now the fun begins. Time to get our hands dirty and merge two decks.

Izzet Live or Izzet Memorex?

To begin we should first look at the deck that I'll be starting with: a little theme deck named Izzet Gizmometry (designed as I said earlier by R&D member Devin Low). Here's the breakdown of the deck:



Izzet Gizmometry		
60 cards		
12 Island	1 Gelectrode	1 Mark of Eviction
10 Mountain	2 Wee Dragonauts	2 Peel from Reality
2 Izzet Boilerworks	1 Tibor and Lumia	2 Telling Time
1 Nivix, Aerie of the Firemind	2 Izzet Chronarch	3 Train of Thought
25 land	1 Izzet Guildmage	2 Convolute
	2 Petrahydrox	2 Runeboggle
	9 creatures	2 Thunderheads
		1 Vacuumelt
		2 Frazzle
		2 Repeal
		3 Pyromatics

1 Rain of Embers
1 Reroute
1 Leyline of Lightning
1 Electrolyze
26 other spells

Let's dive in and look at the deck.

The Mana

Island
Mountain
Izzet Boilerworks

Not much to say about these cards. They make sure the deck has blue and red mana.

The "Cares About Instants and Sorcery" Cards

Nivix, Aerie of the Firemind
Gelectrode
Wee Dragonauts
Tibor and Lumia
Izzet Chronarch
Izzet Guildmage
Leyline of Lightning

These cards are the core of the deck. Play a lot of spells (mostly instants and sorceries) and these cards get quite good. Note that these cards comprise seven of the nine creatures in the deck (only **Petrahydrox** doesn't neatly fit in this category – yet even it is able to occasionally turn another spell to its advantage). In addition, other than a few direct damage spells (**Pyromatics**, **Rain of Embers** and **Electrolyze**) and **Petrahydrox**, these cards comprise all of the victory conditions.

The "Stay Alive" Cards

Mark of Eviction
Peel from Reality
Convolute
Runeboggle
Thunderheads
Vacuumelt
Frazzle
Repeal
Reroute

The deck needs instants and sorceries to do its thing. You might as well use them to keep you alive. This deck does a lot of bouncing and counterspelling.

The Reactive & Proactive Cards

Petrahydrox
Pyromatics
Rain of Embers
Electrolyze

These cards do double duty. Not only are they instants and sorceries (well, except for **Petrahydrox**) that help keep you alive, they are also spells that have the ability to help win the game.

"Get More Cards" Cards

Telling Time
Train of Thought

These cards are the grease of the deck. They ensure that you not only have cards but that you have the right cards when you need them. And, of course, they are an instant and a sorcery.

When you put it all together, Izzet Gizmometry is a deck that has the ability to do its offensive thing while being quite defensive. Also, in the spirit of the Izzet (and theme decks in general), it has a lot of diversity, opting to play numerous one-of and two-ofs.

Dimir the Merrier

After examining the Izzet deck, I took a look at the other three guild theme decks that overlapped in a color. Both the Boros and the Gruul deck were very focused on aggressively attacking. The Dimir deck, on the other hand, while very different in focus from the Izzet deck, at least had some elements in common. It didn't take long to realize that the Dimir deck (aka [Dimir Intrigues](#), designed by R&D member and former pro player Mike Turian) was my best bet.

Before I begin merging, I thought I would start by taking a look at the Dimir deck. Here's what you get:



Dimir Intrigues



60 cards

11 Island	2 Lore Broker	2 Induce Paranoia
10 Swamp	3 Vedalken Entrancer	1 Dream Leash
2 Dimir Aqueduct	2 Wized Snitches	2 Last Gasp
1 Duskmantle, House of Shadow	2 Belltower Sphinx	1 Ribbons of Night
24 land	2 Dimir House Guard	2 Disembowel
	1 Mausoleum Turnkey	3 Consult the Necrosages
	2 Sewerdreg	1 Clutch of the Undercity
	2 Dimir Infiltrator	2 Psychic Drain
	1 Szadek, Lord of Secrets	1 Dimir Signet
	3 Lurking Informant	15 other spells
	1 Dimir Guildmage	
	21 creatures	

So what's going on here? Let's break it down:

The Mana

Island
Swamp
Dimir Aqueduct
Dimir Signet

Self explanatory.

The "Mill You Out" Cards

Duskmantle, House of Shadow
Lore Broker
Vedalken Entrancer
Belltower Sphinx
Szadek, Lord of Secrets
Lurking Informant
Induce Paranoia
Consult the Necrosages
Psychic Drain

This deck has two routes to victory. The milling strategy is the most pronounced.

The "Manipulate Your Opponent" Cards

Wized Snitches
Sewerdreg
Lurking Informant
Dimir Guildmage
Dream Leash
Consult the Necrosages
Clutch of the Undercity

Dimir is sneaky. As such it likes to mess with the opponent. These cards tend to force discards, steal your opponent's things or just mess up their draw. While these cards do not outright win the game, they do keep pushing the odds in your favor.

The Creature Control

Dimir House Guard
Dream Leash
Last Gasp
Ribbons of Night
Disembowel
Clutch of the Undercity

This deck is all about stalling until it gets the things it wants to happen. These cards get rid of pesky creatures that might speed up the game.

Life Gaining

Ribbons of Night
Psychic Drain

Life gain is just another tool for surviving long enough to do your dirty work.

Card Advantage/Card Drawing/card Utility Cards

Lore Broker
Mausoleum Turnkey

Lurking Informant
Dimir Guildmage
Consult the Necrosages

The Dimir deck is all about getting subtle advantage. Cards like these help you do that.

Tutoring Cards (aka Transmute)

Dimir House Guard
Dimir Infiltrator

One other potent tool of this deck is the Dimir keyword, transmute. With so much utility cards, these two cards do a lot to smooth out the deck.

So there you have it. The Dimir deck is overflowing with cards that subtly keep shifting the advantage towards you. With that advantage you will win through either milling or creature damage.

When Izzet Met Dimir

Now that we have our two decks, it's time to begin the merging. Since the point of this column is to help you merge your own decks, I thought I would walk you step by step through how I would merge these two decks. I'll try to stop at points along the way and stress elements that I think are important when merging two decks.

So what happens when these two decks decide to merge? There are a number of options. My favorite way to merge decks is to begin by figuring out what the two decks have in common. Here's what I see:

- Both decks have a blue component
- Both decks have a very defensive nature
- Both decks make significant use of instants and sorceries
- Both decks, while very focused on a particular strategy, tend to have a lot of diversity to be flexible



After looking at the list, I've decided to start by examining what resources blue has in each deck. Here are the monoblue cards in the Izzet deck (note I'm counting the hybrid cards as monocolour for these purposes):

Izzet Guildmage
Petrahydrox
Mark of Eviction
Peel from Reality
Telling Time
Train of Thought
Convolute
Runeboggle
Thunderheads
Vacuumelt
Frazzle
Repeal

Here's the monocolour blue cards in the Dimir deck:

Lore broker
Vedalken Entrancer
Wizened Snitches
Belltower Sphinx
Lurking Informant
Dimir Guildmage
Induce Paranoia
Dream Leash

Ironically, I have enough blue cards to build a monocolour deck, but as I'm actually merging two guilds, it seems a little cheesy to just ignore the two-color feel of each deck. What I'm aiming for is a deck that marries the sense of the Izzet with the feeling of the Dimir.

The reason that I'm focusing on the blue cards stems back to a lesson I learned in college. In one of my writing classes (for "Building on the Budget" readers who may not be used to my writing style, this excursion will tie back in – really) I had a teacher who explained to us that every movie had a protagonist. Even in a buddy movie or an ensemble movie, one character is the protagonist. And when you start examining things closely, it's true. (Bill & Ted – Ted; Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid – Butch Cassidy; Romeo & Juliet – Romeo; Thelma & Louise – Louise; the list goes on.) This belief in screenwriting led me to a similar belief in deck building: Every deck has one major color. One color is the most important color in the deck. And for this deck,

due to the overlap, that color is going to be blue.



Szadek, Lord of Secrets
Lurking Informant
Induce Paranoia
Consult the Necrosages
Psychic Drain

So when I look at blue, what do I see? Defense, defense, defense. With a little card drawing and some milling. What does this mean? In my opinion (and please be aware that deck merging is not a science; when you merge your own decks definitely feel free to follow whatever interests you in the overlap between the decks), that means that this deck is going to stall until some other means defeats the opponent. To keep the sense of Izzet and Dimir alive, I'm going to pick one route to victory from each deck. (And don't worry I'll come back to the blue cards as a group later). For Dimir, that is obviously milling. First, because most of the pieces are already in blue, and second because, let's face it, milling's fun.

For Izzet, I am definitely going to latch onto a few of the "we love instants and sorceries" cards. I'm not quite sure which ones yet. So let's start with the milling side. Here are the milling cards again from the Dimir deck:

Duskmantle, House of Shadow
Lore Broker
Vedalken Entrancer
Belltower Sphinx

A quick check shows me that zero cards from the Izzet deck allow me to help mill out my opponent. The two card drawing cards (**Telling Time** and **Train of Thought**) both only allow you to draw cards. (A quick aside – when I design card drawing cards, I always lean towards "target player" drawing the cards so that when situations come up where you might want to make your opponent draw a card, you can.)

The most exciting cards from this list are **Induce Paranoia**, **Consult the Necrosages** and **Psychic Drain** as they are all instants and sorceries that play into the Izzet theme. Duskmantle has an extra use as it's a source of mana, although colorless mana comes at a high cost in a three-color deck. Thus, I'm cutting it. **Lore Broker** and **Lurking Informant** have additional utility beyond milling the opponent out. **Vedalken Entrancer** does as well if you think of its 1/4 body as defense. I like Szadek but he's a little color intensive for a three-color deck (although it matters less at seven mana). He can stay for now.

Now let's look at the flip side. Let's take a look again at the "cares about instants and sorceries" cards from the Izzet deck:

Nivix, Aerie of the Firemind
Gelectrode
Wee Dragonauts
Tibor and Lumia
Izzet Chronarch
Izzet Guildmage
Leyline of Lightning

The interesting cards from this list are **Gelectrode**, **Wee Dragonauts**, **Izzet Chronarch** and **Leyline of Lightning**. Why? Because these are four cards that work synergistically with the instants and sorceries from the Dimir deck. Nivix has the same problem as Duskmantle. **Tibor and Lumia** shine when red spells are played. Not exactly a specialty of the Dimir deck. **Izzet Guildmage** has no real targets other than **Last Gasp**.

After a first pass, here's the "victory condition" cards that I'm still looking at:

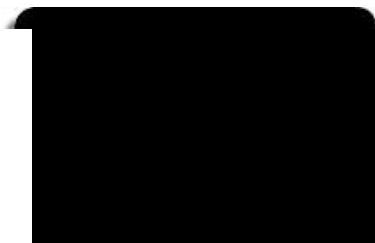
Lore Broker
Vedalken Entrancer
Szadek, Lord of Secrets
Lurking Informant
Induce Paranoia
Consult the Necrosages
Psychic Drain
Gelectrode
Wee Dragonauts
Izzet Chronarch
Leyline of Lightning

Out of the Blue

Next I want to take a look at the monoblack and monored cards. My feeling on them is that unless they contribute super efficiently to one of the two themes, they're gone. The deck has to revolve around blue, meaning that any nonblue card has a high bar to pass to get into the deck.

This time we'll start with the Izzet and look at monored:

Pyromatics
Rain of Embers



Reroute
Leyline of Lightning

The only one that interests me is **Leyline of Lightning**. **Pyromatics** requires way too much red mana to make sense in the new deck. **Rain of Embers** and **Reroute** just don't do enough to warrant including. I'm not sure yet if I'm keeping the **Leyline** but it at least makes it past the first cut.

Next we have monoblack:

Dimir House Guard
Mausoleum Turnkey
Sewerdreg
Last Gasp
Ribbons of Night
Disembowel

The first three do not clear my hurdle. The last three are good creature removal. They'll stay for now.

Now that we have monocolor out of the way, it's time to look at the multi-colored cards. Let's start with the Izzet ones: (I'm not going to list the ones I already talked about when examining the "cares about instants and sorceries" theme)

Electrolyze

That's it. Good creature kill so it stays for now. Dimir's contributions: (Likewise I'm not including the milling cards here)

Dimir Infiltrator
Clutch of the Undercity

Neither of these seems worth the investment in black.

So where does that leave us for non-monoblue?

Szadek, Lord of Secrets
Lurking Informant
Consult the Necrosages
Psychic Drain
Gelectrode
Wee Dragonauts
Izzet Chronarch
Leyline of Lightning
Last Gasp
Ribbons of Night
Disembowel
Electrolyze



The Straight and Narrow

Time to do more trimming. Here are all the cards that we still have in our deck: (Note I'm including the mana cost as this is something we're going to have to start thinking about)

Blue:	Mark of Eviction	1	
	Lore Broker	1	
	Peel from Reality	1	
	Telling Time	1	
	Train of Thought	1	
	Convolute	2	
	Runeboggle	2	
	Thunderheads	2	
	Vacuumelt	2	
	Frazzle	3	
	Vedalken Entrancer	3	
	Wizened Snitches	3	
	Induce Paranoia	2	
	Belltower Sphinx	4	
	Dream Leash	3	
	Repeal	X	
	Black:	Last Gasp	1
		Ribbons of Night	4
		Disembowel	X

Red:	Leyline of Lightning	2	
Traditional Multicolor:	Consult the Necrosages	1	
	Electrolyze	1	
	Gelectrode	1	
	Wee Dragonauts	1	
	Izzet Chronarch	3	
	Szadek, Lord of Secrets	3	
	Psychic Drain	X	
Hybrid:	Lurking Informant	1	
	Dimir Guildmage		
	Izzet Guildmage		
	Petrahydrox	3	
Land & Artifacts:	Dimir Aqueduct		
	Island		
	Izzet Boilerworks		
	Mountain		
	Swamp		
	Dimir Signet	2	

Now we're going to divide everything into one of six categories:

1. produces mana
2. acts defensively
3. helps us draw or filter cards
4. supports milling
5. supports "cares about instants and sorceries" theme
6. none of the above – don't get emotionally invested in these cards

Once we have our cards divided up, we'll be in a much better place to evaluate them as we can look at what options each section of the deck has. I'll still just be trimming at this point because I'll need to look at the lists together for synergy purposes.

Here are the cards that fit #1: (produces mana)

Dimir Aqueduct
 Island
 Izzet Boilerworks
 Mountain
 Swamp
 Dimir Signet 2

With a three-color deck, we're going to need all the color fixing help we can get. This means everything in this category stays. I'm going to table discussing balancing this group of cards until we get to the end.

Here are the cards that fit #2: (acts defensively)

Mark of Eviction
 Peel from Reality 1
 Last Gasp 1
 Convolute 2
 Runeboggle 2
 Thunderheads 2
 Vacuumelt 2
 Electrolyze 1
 Frazzle 3
 Induce Paranoia 2
 Ribbons of Night 4
 Dream Leash 3
 Repeal X
 Disembowel X

Might as well start with the toughest category. I'll begin by looking for what cards in this list do double duty. *Induce Paranoia* is both a counterspell and a milling card. It stays. Everything else but *Mark of Eviction* and *Dream Leash* are instants or sorceries. While both of the two cards are quite strong, they fight against the Izzet half of our theme. And adding in

the milling cards is already going to eat into our instant and sorcery quota. This means that I'm cutting **Mark of Eviction** and **Dream Leash**. (Remember, for me it's more about flavor and feel than raw card strength. Your version can and should look different based on what you like, which is the whole point.)

Next I look at how efficient my remaining cards are. I'm most drawn to the cards that permanently deal with my problems; that is, actual removal cards or hard counterspells (cards that pretty much counter everything). This leads me to want to keep **Last Gasp**, **Electrolyze**, **Frazzle**, **Ribbons of Night** and **Disembowel**. I also would like to have access to one bounce spell. Looking between **Peel from Reality**, **Vacuumeit** and **Repeal**, my interest in **Izzet Chronarch** pushes me towards the **Peel from Reality**.

This means that **Convolute**, **Runeboggle**, **Thunderheads**, **Vacuumeit**, and **Repeal** are out.

Here are the cards that fit #3: (helps us draw or filter cards)

Telling Time 1 4
 Train of Thought 1 4
 Dimir Guildmage 2 4
 Consult the Necrosages 1 4 5



With my emphasis on instants and sorceries, I'm cutting the **Dimir Guildmage**. I'm not quite sure how to decide between the other three. I'm going to wait for my next pass before I narrow these down further.

Here are the cards that fit #4: (supports milling)

Lore Broker 1 4
 Lurking Informant 1 4
 Vedalken Entrancer 3 4
 Induce Paranoia 2 4 4
 Belltower Sphinx 4 4
 Szadek, Lord of Secrets 3 4 4 4 5
 Psychic Drain X 4 5

I'll start by including the one sorcery of the bunch, **Psychic Drain**, as it plays nicely with the Izzet half of the deck. Next, I'm cutting the expensive cards as I don't think I have the luxury of waiting too long. This means **Belltower Sphinx** and **Szadek** have to go. Finally, I cut the **Lore Broker** as its milling abilities are quite slow and I think I have enough other ways to get cards.

Here are the cards that fit #5: (supports "cares about instants and sorceries" theme)

Izzet Guildmage 2 4
 Gelectrode 1 4 2
 Wee Dragonauts 1 4 2
 Leyline of Lightning 2 2 2
 Izzet Chronarch 3 4 2

Izzet Guildmage gets cut again (hey, how'd he sneak back in here) as there just aren't enough cards to make use of his abilities. **Leyline of Lightning** has a few strikes against it. It's the only card left that has two non-blue mana in its mana cost. Also, its ability has no defensive capabilities. It's important for the "cares about instants and sorceries" cards that I choose have the ability to double up (as in, do more than one thing thanks to interactions with other cards like **Wee Dragonauts** and **Gelectrode**). Thus, **Leyline of Lightning** is gone, because it only does one thing (it can't be defensive and offensive) and doesn't interact with the Izzet side of the deck as well.

Here are the cards that fit #6: (none of the above)

Wizened Snitches 3 4
 Petrahydrox 3 4

Gone.

The Home Stretch

Okay, we're getting close. The last step is looking at mana curve. Also, I'll be listing how many copies of the card I have available as this starts to become important.

Here's what I have left:

Two mana: **Peel from Reality** 1 4 2 copies
Last Gasp 1 5 2 copies

	Telling Time	1, 4	2 copies
	Train of Thought	1, 4	3 copies
	Lurking Informant	1, 4	3 copies
Three mana:	Consult the Necrosages	1, 4, 4	3 copies
	Electrolyze	1, 4, 4	1 copy
	Gelectrode	1, 4, 4	1 copy
	Wee Dragonauts	1, 4, 4	2 copies
Four mana:	Frazzle	3, 4	2 copies
	Vedalken Entrancer	3, 4	3 copies
	Induce Paranoia	2, 4, 4	2 copies
Five mana:	Ribbons of Night	4, 4	1 copy
	Izzet Chronarch	3, 4, 4	2 copies
Variable mana:	Disembowel	X, 4	2 copies
	Psychic Drain	X, 4, 4	2 copies

I've decided to have twenty-five mana sources as that's what both original decks had. This means I have thirty-five spaces left in my deck for spells. If you count the above cards, I have thirty-three cards. This means I get everything above plus I get to go back and find two cards that I want.

Counting up my cards, I have nineteen instants and sorceries. The original Izzet deck had twenty-five. I feel like one of the things I want to do is bring up my instant and sorcery count. If I only look at things that got cut in the last pass, I have the following cards to choose from:

Convolute	2, 4
Runeboggle	2, 4
Thunderheads	2, 4
Vacuumelt	2, 4
Repeal	X, 4

After looking over what I have, I decided to add another counterspell. This leaves me a choice between **Convolute** and **Runeboggle**. As I care more about stopping spells than greasing my card flow, I choose to put a **Convolute** in the deck.

For the other spot, I decided to bring **Izzet Guildmage** back in the deck after all. Looking at the deck, there ended up being **Peel from Reality**, **Last Gasp**, and **Telling Time** for him to target, plus he helps my early game a bit while also increasing the Izzet feel of the deck (even though he's a creature).

Finally, I have to deal with the mana. Here's a little trick I like to do for mana ratios. (It's rough but it works.) Count up all the colored mana symbols in your cards. I count hybrid mana twice, once for each color. Then use this ratio to pick out your mana sources. For example, with the cards I have, here's my count:

Blue – 32
Black – 13
Red – 6

This translates into the following percentages:

Blue – 62.7%
Black – 25.5%
Red – 11.8%

I don't like putting any color that has cheaper spells (4 or less) under 20%, so I'll shave a little off of blue for red. This leaves us with:

Blue – 54.5%
Black – 25.5%
Red – 20%

One slot is for the **Dimir Signet**. Besides being a good color fixer, it helps get us ahead on mana. This leaves us with twenty-four slots for land. If we break it down by percentage, we would get the following:

13 Islands
6 Swamps
5 Mountains

But wait, we have four "karoos" (the common *Ravnica* multicolor lands). It's definitely worth playing all four of those. I'll mix them in by removing one of each basic land that matches its mana (that is, removing an island and a swamp for the two **Dimir Aqueducts** and an island and mountain for the two **Izzet Boilerworks**). This leaves us with:



- 2 Dimir Aqueduct
- 1 Dimir Signet
- 9 Island
- 2 Izzet Boilerworks
- 4 Swamp
- 3 Mountain

Mix this all together and here's our deck:

Gizometry Intrigues

60 cards

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Dimir Aqueduct 11 Island 2 Izzet Boilerworks 5 Swamp 4 Mountain <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>24 land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Izzet Chronarch 3 Lurking Informant 1 Gelectrode 1 Izzet Guildmage 3 Vedalken Entrancer 2 Wee Dragonauts <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>12 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Consult the Necrosages 1 Convolvute 1 Dimir Signet 2 Disembowel 1 Electrolyze 2 Frazzle 2 Induce Paranoia 2 Last Gasp 2 Peel from Reality 2 Psychic Drain 1 Ribbons of Night 2 Telling Time 3 Train of Thought <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>24 other spells</p>
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If You Build It...

Whew! I'm sure glad I don't have to do this every week. Hopefully, this column has given you a little insight in how to merge two decks together. It really is quite fun. Try it, you'll like it. As always, I'm curious to hear any feedback any of you might have. Just be gentle. "Building on a Budget" is not my forte.

Come back next week for Jay's last column and check out "Making Magic" if you have any interest in what exactly Timmy, Johnny, and Spike really mean.

I'd say "until then" and write a pithy exit line, but I don't think that's done here in "Building on a Budget" so I'll just say farewell.

Mark Rosewater



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