

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Not Their Time

Aaron Forsythe
 Latest Developments
 Friday, October 6, 2006



In [my Feature Article](#) this week, I went over the design and development of the 121 "timeshifted" cards. Yes, for as random of a subset as they were meant to appear, much thought and testing went into selecting exactly which cards could and should be reprinted.

Below are the sorry tales of fifteen beloved (or at the very least "famous") **Magic** cards that ended up ultimately not invited to the great Magical reunion that is *Time Spiral*. I shed many tears for each of them.

15) Concordant Crossroads

For each new keyword or mechanic we were willing to bring back, we wanted to make sure that the keyword actually did something. Because the entire point of the "World" supertype is to enable one to destroy the other when it comes into play, introducing a single World Enchantment into an environment means those interactions would never come up.



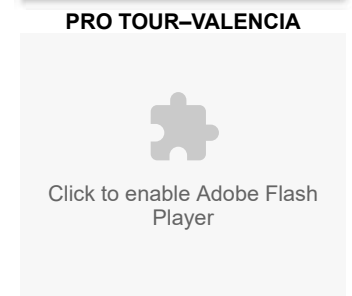
14) Takklemaggot

Takklemaggot was a magnificent card, both for how it played and for its whimsical name and flavor. Unfortunately, its current rules text is too long to fit into a card's text box using our acceptable minimum font size. (When cards are translated into other languages, their text length often increases, so we need to have some leeway.) Other cards that fell to the text-length issue were *Dance of Many*, *Coffin Queen*, and *False Orders*. I did some begging and pleading with the card editors to allow one old card in the set that had too much text; after all, what's more nostalgic than a card with tons and tons of tiny text? The one that made it? *Giant Oyster*.

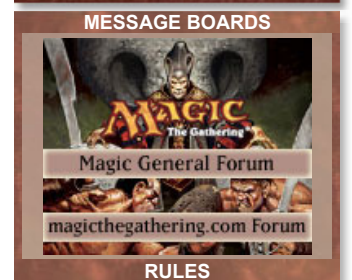
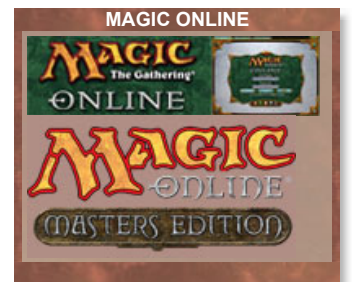


13) Crookshank Kobolds

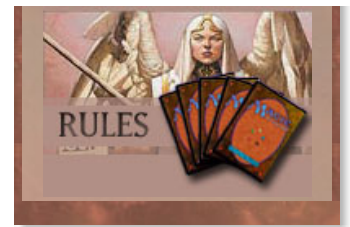
When I initially made the card *Cloudstone Curio* for *Ravnica*, lead developer Brian Schneider pointed out that the easiest combo with the card in Standard was two *Ornithopters* and a *Soul Warden*, which resulted in infinite life. To solve that problem, I suggested adding the "nonartifact" clause, which not only headed off the *Ornithopter* combo, but also any double-Mox infinite mana shenanigans that might have happened in Vintage. "Okay," Brian said, "we just can't print any Kobolds any time soon."



[Final Wrap-up Top 8 Video Archives](#)



"No problem," I thought at the time, "We haven't made a Kobold (0-mana nonartifact creature) in ten years, why would we start now?" That was obviously before timeshifted cards had been dreamed up. Kobolds, a nifty tribal subtheme from *Legends*, have remained popular among casual players for years and years, and we wanted to bring back some of the cards in the Timeshifted set. **Kobold Overlord** is on the Reserved List, which left **Kobold Taskmaster** as the best remaining lord. Additionally, we wanted some minions for him to lord over, so we tried a Kobold proper. The Curio deck was immediately rebuilt, and Brian demanded we stick to the promise we made a year before and nixed the Kobold. In its stead, **Kher Keep** was added to the main set, providing little buddies for the Taskmaster to power up.



12) Granger Guildmage

Granger Guildmage is the most powerful and famous of the *Mirage* guildmages, and we had every intention of reprinting him. However, there was too much similarity between the Granger and other green creature with white and red abilities in the set, **Thornscape Battlemage**, also the most popular member of a cycle. One of them had to go.

While attempting to puzzle out which one to cut, Matt Cavotta happened by the pit and said, "Wow, I only have one card (illustration) in the 'bonus' cards."

"Which one?" I asked.

"**Thornscape Battlemage**." On that note, **Granger Guildmage** was shown the door.



11) Whipcorder

As I mentioned in this week's Feature Article, we had a five-card cycle of morph creatures in the Timeshifted set for a long time. **Whipcorder** was the best candidate for white.

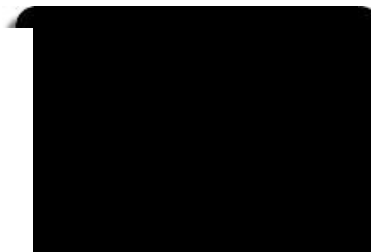
Once upon a time, during *Onslaught* development, someone thought it would be cute to make **Whipcorder** a Rebel, even though the cards relevant to that particular creature type had rotated out of Standard a year prior. That little detail made **Whipcorder** relevant in Extended as **Ramosian Sergeant's** new pal, but it also ended up haunting us come time to put the timeshifted set together. With the Rebel mechanic returning in the form of **Amrou Scout**, **Whipcorder's** Rebel status was mattering in Standard. Because we already had one really good two-mana Rebel to search for (**Knight of the Holy Nimbus**), we cut **Whipcorder** so as not to give any potential Rebel decks every good tool it might want on a platter.



10) Contagion

Contagion was in the Timeshifted set long before design for **Coldsnap** actually began. Like many other *Ice Age*-era-themed cards, it was cut from the set when similar cards (in this case, pitch spells such as **Soul Spike**) were added to **Coldsnap**.

And I had so looked forward to -2/-1 counters.





9) Anger

A lot of the cards we brought back should have a different relative power level to themselves at the time of their last appearance, which is why this experiment is so exciting. **Shadowmage Infiltrator**, for instance, should be better simply because **Psychatog** isn't around to steal the show. Similarly, **Soltari Priest** should be worse because the environment is missing **Crusade** and **Empyrial Armor**, and **Desert** shores up some of red and blue's vulnerability to him.

Anger, in our playtesting, was *too* much better than the last time he was printed (and, if you recall, he was no slouch then, either). A lot of the cards in *Dissension* (Rakdos' hand-emptying) and *Time Spiral* (madness enablers) made **Anger** an easy addition to a lot of decks, and it was kind of scary. Imagine **Avatar of Discord** attacking on turn three, followed by a Zombified **Bogardan Hellkite** joining it on offense on turn four. That's 20.



8) Armadillo Cloak

Here's another fan favorite that ended up packing a little more punch than we would have guessed. *Invasion* was a cool set, but its green-white cards as a whole pale before the ones in Ravnica. **Watchwolf** and **Loxodon Hierarch** put **Llanowar Knight** and **Sabertooth Nishoba** to shame. And both of the former can wreak a lot of havoc wearing **Armadillo Cloak**, much to the chagrin of anyone trying to play red.

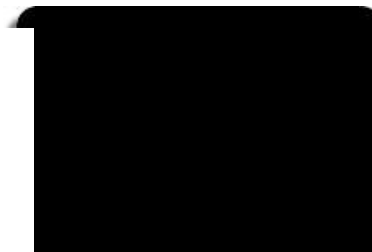
Similarly, a **Paladin en-Vec** can make **Armadillo Cloak** almost as scary as **Umezawa's Jitte** in many matchups, giving power boosts and life points almost as freely as the legendary equipment.



7) Capsize

One thing we tried to avoid with our selection of reprints were cards that would play exactly *the same* as they did the first time around, especially if the decks they enabled were unlovable.

I had **Capsize** in the set for awhile mainly because it was a "famous" buyback spell, not because anyone here in R&D remembered actually enjoying the card. Quickly the first **Seedborn Muse** decks were built with



I will admit, having been on the wrong end of many decks packing many copies of Maze of Ith in the FFL, that my nostalgia should stay where it was, safely in my head and out of most **Magic** games. Several of my coworkers expressed concern over my initial attempt to get the card reprinted, claiming they hated, *hated*, **HATED** the card like few others, blaming it for many a ruined experience as casual players. I can confidently say now that I had romanticized the card, and that it is an incredibly powerful and frustrating weapon, and that the nostalgia is better served as an homage on **Ith**, **High Arcanist**.



3) Serendib Efreet

Here's another bomb that I really hoped would have worked out. Of course, some creatures are merely powerful while others are patently absurd, and the 'Dib falls in the latter category.

That's right: Serendib had to go and **Psionic Blast** got to stay. That should speak volumes about the power level of everyone's favorite "green" blue card (that would probably actually be black in the modern color pie).



2) Crystalline Sliver

Like **Capsize**, **Crystalline Sliver** falls into the "been there, done that" camp. Its effect on constructed would essentially be the same as it was years ago: "Oh, all your Slivers are untargetable now. Clever. I guess I lose."

The card simply offers too much for too little, and the one-sidedness of the game states it creates is undesirable. We made a ton of new Slivers, many of which do cool things that Slivers have never been able to do before. We'd much rather have those cards as centerpieces of decks as opposed to **Crystalline Sliver**.

And just think, **Crystalline Sliver** wasn't even the best WU card we had to cut.



1) Meddling Mage

I love Chris Pikula as a person, and I love his Invitational card as well. I feel bad that **Meddling Mage** was redone as a Judge promo with art that doesn't include Chris's ugly mug.

We brought back several Invitational cards in the Timeshifted set—Jon Finkel's **Shadowmage Infiltrator**, Darwin Kastle's **Avalanche Riders**, and Kai Budde's **Voidmage Prodigy**—so we're clearly comfortable reprinting those kinds of cards. So where in the world is **Meddling Mage**?

The Mage is not too powerful in the abstract, and in many environments I imagine he'd merely be a "good" card as opposed to a ridiculous one. *Time Spiral*, however, is not such an environment due to one very important set mechanic: suspend.

I've heard time and again how good **Remand** is against suspend cards (and it's true), and **Meddling Mage** is even better because you can't "fight back" with your own permission. In general, we like our new mechanics to be successful, and adding a second top-tier card to the environment that crushes suspend almost without trying would probably doom the mechanic from the get-go.



Previous Polls:

Do you plan on attending a *Time Spiral* prerelease event?

Yes	9361	70.3%
No	3950	29.7%
Total	13311	100.0%

Success! The *Time Spiral* round of prereleases was the biggest yet (at least in North America), breaking the record previously held by *Guildpact*. If you didn't go, you missed one heck of an event, but fear not... the store Release Events [are this weekend!](#)



Have you ever played with **Thallids** before?

Yes, they're cool.	6708	43.3%
No, I've never seen them played, but I knew what they were.	3588	23.2%
No, I've never heard of them before now.	3057	19.7%
No, but I've played against them.	1081	7.0%
Yes, but I don't like them.	1060	6.8%
Total	15494	100.0%

I loved them. They are so lovable, those fungi. And itchy.

Which is your favorite green fatty?

Silvos, Rogue Elemental	2866	22.4%
Verdant Force	1930	15.1%
Kodama of the North Tree	1787	14.0%
Force of Nature	1034	8.1%
Ravenous Baloth	1020	8.0%
Mystic Enforcer	983	7.7%
Call of the Herd	836	6.5%
Erhnam Djinn	680	5.3%
Krosan Tusker	550	4.3%
Spectral Force	438	3.4%
Fangren Firstborn	354	2.8%
Molder Slug	239	1.9%
Jade Leech	90	0.7%
Total	12807	100.0%

Come on. If Devin can claim in his article that **Siege-Gang Commander** is a red "fatty" because "it's 5/5," then I expect to see my personal favorite **Deranged Hermit** in the poll! After all, it's 9/9!

This Week's Poll:

Which of today's cards would you have liked to have seen reprinted in the Timeshifted set?

- Concordant Crossroads
- Takklemaggot
- Crookshank Kobolds
- Granger Guildmage
- Whipcorder

- Contagion
- Anger
- Armadillo Cloak
- Capsize
- Urza's Rage
- Spiritmonger
- Maze of Ith
- Serendib Efreet
- Crystalline Sliver
- Meddling Mage

Bonus Poll:

How interested would you be in purchasing a *Transformers* collectible game made by Wizards of the Coast?

- 1 (not at all)
- 2 (slightly interested)
- 3 (moderately interested)
- 4 (very interested)
- 5 (extremely)

*Aaron Forsythe was a professional **Magic** player and Internet columnist prior to leaving Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to join Wizards of the Coast. His first duty here was Content Manager of this very website, a job that required him to do actual work as opposed to playing games all the time. So when a position opened in R&D, he jumped at the chance. He is now director of **Magic** R&D., and still plays **Magic** in his free time when he's not busy playing **Magic**.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Aaron Forsythe](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

