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Three Hundred and Counting

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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

After I finished my first hundred weeks of Making Magic, I wrote a [column](#) where I recapped and graded all my columns to date. Then after my second hundred weeks, I wrote [another column](#) where I recapped and graded 101 through 200. Perhaps you can see where this is going.

My "N Hundred and Counting" articles serve two purposes. For the longtime reader it's a chance to look over the last two year's worth of articles with some insight both on what I think of it quality-wise and some trivia about how I wrote it or what impact it had. For the new readers, it's a quick way to look through my archive to see what old articles you might want to take a peek at. For me, it's a chance to wax nostalgic as I remember what I've been doing week in and week out for the last hundred weeks.

As always, I will use the same scale to grade my columns. Note that I am only grading my own writing, although I will link to and recap Making Magic columns written by other people (it happens three times during the hundred weeks in question). Here's my scale:

- ***** (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.

And with that, we begin by setting our Way Back Machine to Halloween, 2005:

Week #201 (October 31, 2005) – ["Two Hundred and Counting"](#) (***)

I came very close to giving this column one more star than [One Hundred and Counting](#)—not because it's any better, but after seeing all the feedback I got on the column, I realized the "N Hundred and Counting" columns are an important resource. You see, whenever a reader responds to a column, it's indicated at the beginning of my email. This means I get to see how often (roughly, as newer columns do generate more email) people are reading old columns of mine in the archive. And the answer is a lot. When players first discover [magicthegathering.com](#), one of the great joys is the insane volume of our archive. Making Magic's three hundred columns are just a drop in the bucket. As such, I've upgraded this column to encourage more readers to use them as a resource. Finally, one other point I want to make. Every time I do one of these columns, I get comments about how I "slacked off" for a week. Ironically, this column takes me much longer to do than a normal column. (Plus poor Monty who has to hook up every link.) Finally #2 (yeah I was just fooling with that last "finally") I got a lot of mail about an improper grade in this column. I gave [Free Association](#) one star. It was a very offbeat column with a wonderful concept and a somewhat flawed execution. Since two star in its definition includes "a failed experiment," the column should at least get two stars. But rereading it after getting so much mail complaining I was being unfair to it I now believe it deserved three stars. Yes, it has its flaws (and even those aren't as bad as I remembered them) but the concept is so cool that it gets some points.

Week #202 (November 7, 2005) – ["Pretty Sneaky Sis"](#) (****)

It was Dimir Week and thus I continued my ten-part series on the color philosophies of the two-color pairs. While this article gave a little bit of insight on *Ravnica*, it really was much more about understanding the interconnection of two colors in the color pie. If you like the color pie, this is a must-read.

Week #203 (November 14, 2005) – ["Midas Touch"](#) (****)

If last week's was a column from my color pie collection, this one is one from my Design 101 collection. This article talks about the nuts and bolts of designing multicolor cards. It's definitely a little on the technical side but if you like getting a better understanding of how exactly we design certain styles of cards, this column's chock full of such info.



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Week #204 (November 21, 2005) – "[Thirty Two Short Columns About Dwarves](#)" (***)**

I obviously have a passion for pop culture references, some pretty blatant and some rather obscure. This entire column was based on a very obscure reference—a film entitled "Thirty Two Short Films About Glen Gould". It was an art house film (an expression which means "good but couldn't make a lot of money") that was comprised of thirty-two short films. (Okay, the title kind of gave that away.) It was Dwarf Week and somehow the idea of parodying a film almost no one had ever heard of struck my funny bone. (I should note that some people kind of know it because *The Simpsons* also parodied it.) Never before has my desire to do a pop culture reference so badly burned me. It was just a bunch of short articles, right? Go try to drink thirty-two shot glasses of the liquid of your choice. This article wins the award of being the article in three hundred weeks that took me the longest to write. That said, I'm really happy with how it came out. Sure, not every mini-article is a winner, but there are far more hits than misses, and even the misses aren't too bad. The ones that made me smile the most rereading it are the monologues by the Dwarfen Berserker. I just loved the idea of plugging his voice into that of a stand-up comedian archetype. This column has a little something for everybody, from autobiographical info to design stories to trivia.

Week #205 (November 28, 2005) – "[A Different Worlds](#)" (**)**

On the surface, this is a column about the first **Magic: The Gathering** World Championship (which I played in—you can read about it in the column), but really it's the story of how I took the big step that led to me getting a job at Wizards. If you like my autobiographical stuff, check this one out. Also, within the article is a link to my first ever article written for the Duelist.

Week #206 (December 5, 2005) – "[Disorderly Conduct](#)" (**)**

It was Boros Week, and this is part four of my two-color philosophy articles. Not much to say on this one. I believe it is the first time I ever referenced the A*Team in my column.

Week #207 (December 12, 2005) – "[Topical Blend #2](#)" (***)**

Every once in a while for fun (yes, for fun; see I've written for this long because I actually enjoy writing—it's really the only way to keep at it this long) I ask my readers to pick two topics, one **Magic**-related and one not. I then write a column blending the two together. For this column I was asked to blend the pros and cons of designing a sixth color with "Mark Rosewater is %#@\$ Insane!" The second topic was a popular thread on a very unofficial **Magic** web site (although for the record, I'm betting the vast majority of the people who voted for the topic didn't know that—I assume they just picked it and said, "Yeah, that's true"). So I wrote the column in the style of a thread on that web site responding to my column about designing a sixth color. The tricky part was that when you linked to the column you ended up in what looks like a bulletin board thread. Many readers, after a moment of disorientation, figured this out. Some others did not. So they wrote me. And I wrote back to every single one explaining that the "thread" was the column. A number of readers still didn't understand, and they would write back thinking I misunderstood them. In the end, this column has probably sucked up more time in email responses than anything else I've done. And the joy is that every time I link to this column (such as today) I get more confused email. So let me try to curb this one last time. When you hit the link, that thread you "accidentally" wind up at, it's not a mistake. I wrote that. All of it. There is no "real" article, just the snippets I made up to have various posters quote. Got it? Last note, I'm really proud of this column as it's probably one of the most "out of the box" columns I've ever written.

Week #208 (December 19, 2005) – "[The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly Truth](#)" (REPEAT) (***)**

This was the first of three "Best of 2005" columns. (January 1st fell on a Sunday, meaning Wizards gave us January 2nd off, and we don't have new articles, usually, on days that Wizards is closed.) About once a year or so I write a "why we make bad cards" article. This year's version addressed a specific concern that kept coming up. If we had to make bad cards, why did we have to make any of them rare? I felt like this article did a good job of explaining a lot of things that players might not realize design and development have to do.

Week #209 (December 26, 2005) – "[Once More With Feeling](#)" (REPEAT) (***)**

This column is about the need of repetition. Interestingly, in my intro to the repeat I didn't comment on the irony of repeating a column about repetition. I will fix that oversight now. This was my favorite design philosophy column of 2005.



Week #210 (January 2, 2006) – "[Topical Blend #1: To Err Is Human](#)" (REPEAT) (***)**

This piece is one of the best things I have ever written. It's funny, it's insightful, it's painfully honest. This was my first Topical Blend column (I talked about my second one above), and man did I set the bar high. This is also the article that I got more positive feedback on than any other column I have ever done. Seriously, if you at all like my writing, check this one out.

Week #211 (January 9, 2006) – "[If You Guild It, They Will Come](#)" (*)**

This was the first week of *Guildpact* previews. I introduce the design team, talk about the three new guilds, and show off a preview card. Solid, but nothing out of the ordinary.

Week #212 (January 16, 2006) – "[Just The Ten of Us](#)" (*)**

This was week 2 of *Guildpact* previews. This one was a little more interesting than week 1 as I spent some time talking about a design issue of the *Ravnica* block, designing ten card cycles. This column is a bit nuts & bolts-y, but it does show how each block creates its own design issues. The one other funny tidbit about this column was the amount of mail I got because people mistakenly thought I was saying [Zen and the Art of Cycle Maintenance](#), an old column I link to in this column, was named after an 80s sitcom when it was this column I was talking about. A whole bunch of irate readers wrote in to tell me that *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* was a book long before it was made into a sitcom. I spent some time that week figuring out how the sitcom would work (if such a sitcom existed—which it doesn't). The only thing I knew for sure was that the show's name would be shortened to "Zen."

Week #213 (January 23, 2006) – "[Now I Know My ABC's](#)" (*)**

Guildpact was on the verge of coming out (yet it was after the Prerelease so the cards were public) so I spent this column talking about lots of little design tidbits. For structure, I chose twenty-six items, one starting with each letter of the alphabet. The little subgame you can play along with is to try and guess what aspect of *Guildpact* I'm going to talk about with each letter.

Week #214 (January 23, 2006) – "[Aaaargh!!!](#)" (**)**

It was Gruul Week, and so part five of my two-color philosophy series. Not much to say about this one other than the trivia that it is alphabetically my first column name. I'm not sure I was aware of this when I named it. (Unlike the phone book, where such shenanigans go on all the time.) It is also one of few column titles with punctuation. I'm going on and on about minutiae of the title. Clearly time to move on.

Week #215 (February 6, 2006) – "[Back Issues](#)" (*)**

This was a week where I addressed three issues that had been creating a lot of mail: the Pro Player cards, the lawsuit with a rumor site, and the *Coldsnap* "backstory." I explained why we did the first one, skipped the second one (although that column came later), and created a new backstory for *Coldsnap*, one a little sillier and clearly less real than the original. The alternate backstory article (linked in this article) is my favorite part of this column.

Week #216 (February 13, 2006) – "[Interview with Some Vampires](#)" (*)**

It was Vampire Week and, never wanting to miss a good pop culture reference, I interviewed a number of **Magic's** most famous vampires. This is one of my silly offbeat columns that become beloved or behated (yes, I invented the word, so I'm going to keep using it). If you liked [I cc: Dead People](#), my classic column in this genre, you'll probably like this column.

Week #217 (February 20, 2006) – "[Life Lessons. Part I](#)" (***)**

This column is in my personal Top Ten for Making Magic columns (and probably Top Five). It's quite personal, but I believe the **Magic** design content is actually pretty strong given how personal the rest of the column is. The interesting backstory about this column is that it was inspired by the great response to Topical Blend #1: To Err Is Human (see above). For some reason I decided to match the ten-part element and half way through I realized I'd written more than enough for a single column and made it a two-parter.

Week #218 (February 27, 2006) – "[Creative Differences](#)" (**)**

It was Izzet Week and part six in the two-color philosophy series. I know I don't write much about these columns, but really they are worth a read if the color pie is of any interest. For me, the color pie is the most fascinating aspect of **Magic**. I believe it is at the heart of everything—mechanics, flavor, everything.

Week #219 (March 6, 2006) – "[Life Lessons. Part II](#)" (***)**

My favorite story about this column is that in it I talk about my reasoning behind asking Lora, my then girlfriend, to marry me. (If you don't pay attention to things like this, she said yes and we have three kids now.) Four different readers wrote in to tell me that I had inspired them to propose to their significant other. And three of them even

went through with it. To the best of my knowledge all three significant others said yes and I think are all married now. I'll admit that as a writer, it's hard to top a feat like that.

Week #220 (March 13, 2006) – "[Topical Blend#2a: Celebrating Larry](#)"

It was Swap Week, so Making Magic was written for the first time in five years by someone else: Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar. You see, at the time Jay was writing "Building on a Budget" on Mondays so we swapped columns. Having the handicap of never having designed **Magic**, Jay decided to follow in my footsteps and write A Topical Blend column. To keep from stealing topics I might want, he chose the bottom in each category "Cards That Change Controllers When Something Happens" and "Snack Foods". Meanwhile...

Week #220 (March 13, 2006) – "[Interlude: When Decks Collide](#)" ()**

Yes, I wrote my first, and most likely last, [Building on a Budget](#). While I thought my concept was strong—mashing two PCDs into one deck—I thought my execution was painfully slow and laborious. Plus, I don't really have all that much skill as a deck builder (although probably more than Jay had experience as a **Magic** designer), so this column was what it was meant to be: a chance for readers to laugh at authors out of their element.

Week #221 (March 20, 2006) – "[Timmy, Johnny and Spike Revisited](#)" (**)**

This was my follow-up to the most visited column (and note not just "Making **Magic**") on [magicthegathering.com](#)—[Timmy, Johnny, and Spike](#). While I've definitely made my presence felt on **Magic** design, probably my longest legacy will be the introduction of the player psychographics. This column goes into much greater depth than the original column and clarifies many misconceptions players have about the psychographics. This is definitely one of the must-reads of Making Magic. (There's even a test so you can see where you fall.)

Week #222 (March 27, 2006) – "[Playing By Their Own Rules](#)" (**)**

It was Orzhov Week. You know what that means. Yes, Part #7.



Week #223 (April 3, 2006) – "[Direct Mail](#)" (**)**

This is a mailbag column where I answer letters from my readers. This one was particularly interesting because a number of the letters were in response to my lessons from Life Lessons (see above). As a result, this is one of the more personal letter columns I ever wrote.

Week #224 (April 10, 2006) – "[Seeds of Dissension](#)" (*)**

This week began *Dissension* previews. I introduce the design team and show off a very cool preview card.

Week #225 (April 17, 2006) – "[Split \(Odds & Ends\)](#)" (*)**

For some reason, I seem to make my second preview week article meatier in nuts & bolts design info. I spend a lot of time in this column going into great length explaining all the issues of making gold split cards. If that topic sounds interesting, I guarantee you no other article ever written on the topic goes in to grittier detail.

Week #226 (April 24, 2006) – "[In The Cards](#)" (*)**

Hmm, I'm noticing a trend on small sets. Week 1, introduce design team and talk overview. Week 2, jump into some detailed aspect of a design requirement for the set. Week 3 (post-Prerelease), talk about the design of random cards from the set. Well, at least that's how *Guildpact* and *Dissension* worked.

Week #227 (May 1, 2006) – "[Slow and Steady](#)" (**)**

It was Azorius Week, and thus time for part #8. My biggest failing with this column is that I finally made the mistake of reusing a title. The original [Slow and Steady](#) was for Sorcery Week back in April of 2004. Oops.

Week #228 (May 8, 2006) – "[Dissension Design Documented](#)"

This is the second Making Magic not written by yours truly. See, Aaron was the lead designer for *Dissension* and I was on the development team (my first in a few years), and so we thought it would be fun to swap design and

development columns for a week. Aaron took a page from a feature I had done the previous year on *Ravnica* ([Getting Your Philosophy](#)) and took the design document from *Dissension* and interspersed comments throughout. This meant...

Week #228 (May 12, 2006) – "[On the Flipside](#)" (*)**

I wrote [Latest Developments](#) for the week. In it, I talked about how *Dissension* cards changed from design handover to print (i.e., during development). While there is some overlap between the kind of changes design and development make, this column lets you see some of the development issues that design rarely worries about.

Week #229 (May 19, 2006) – "[It's About Time](#)" (**)**

For some reason Tempo Week inspired me to make one of my most hands-on columns ever. The column is a twenty-question quiz where I make you deduce whether the card in question should, by design's basic rules and philosophies, be an instant or a sorcery. Be careful, I'm very tricky. I got a huge amount of positive feedback on this column, and I've been looking to find another topic that would allow me to do something similar. I haven't found it yet, but I'm still looking.

Week #230 (May 26, 2006) – "[Improving Upon Nature](#)" (**)**

It's Simic Week; I'm almost done with my ten-part series. I never do explain why the Simic Signet is a bar of soap.

Week #231 (May 26, 2006) – "[Improving Upon Nature](#)" (REPEAT) (**)**

It was Memorial Week (another Yankee holiday), and thus Wizards' offices were closed, so no new Making Magic column.

Week #232 (June 5, 2006) – "[As Good As It Gets](#)" (**)**

I stumbled onto this little gem of an article totally by accident. I had wanted to write a completely different column and it totally fell apart on me so with my back to the wall I grabbed the simplest (meaning something I knew cold) topic I could: what makes **Magic** such a great game. It introduces a number of ideas that have become a staple for me when talking about the game (The Golden Trifecta and The Crispy Hashbrown Effect being the two largest). I got a lot of mail from this column from people who agreed with what I said but had never quite been able to put their finger on it before.



Week #233 (June 12, 2006) – "[Angels Among Us](#)" (*)**

It was Akroma Week, so I did some research to figure out what I could write about. While doing my research, I realized that I had fought printing Akroma as-is. We were honoring one of the most popular legends of all time (she'd won a head-to-head competition to earn her own theme week) and my greatest contribution was trying to stop it. Well, a good a topic as any. I often talk about my successes. It seemed only fair to give my failures some airtime.

Week #234 (June 19, 2006) – "[Law and Order](#)" (**)**

From time to time, I use Making Magic as a platform to talk about issues that have raised public attention. This column was one such column. Wizards of the Coast was involved in a lawsuit with an individual from a rumor site and this column finally addressed the issue. (Nobody from Wizards could say anything while the lawsuit was pending.) It's very easy to see the "company" in this kind of a lawsuit as a faceless entity. I wrote this column to explain why Wizards had done what it did.

Week #235 (June 26, 2006) – "[There's No Business Like Snow Business](#)" (*)**

It was the first week of *Coldsnap* previews. I introduced the team, talked about the challenges of designing a third set for a block designed a decade ago and then dove into the creation of snow mana. The highlight of this column is the story of how we discovered snow mana and the understanding of how it's going to impact future design.

Week #236 (July 3, 2006) – "[Of Ice and Men](#)" ()**

It was the second week of *Coldsnap* previews so I introduced yet another design team, this time the *Ice Age* / *Alliances* design team (aka the East Coast Playtesters). As *Coldsnap* was building on what they had done, I

spent most of the column talking about the mechanics *Ice Age* and *Alliances* had introduced. Also, I introduced the world to Arcum Dagsson (well, his card version anyway).

Week #237 (July 10, 2006) – "[Feeling a Draft](#)" (*)**

This column explains all the design issues with creating a small set that can be drafted by itself. As the experiment didn't turn out to be the success that we hoped, here's a chance to look back at the constraints we were working under while designing *Coldsnap*.

Week #238 (July 17, 2006) – "[Snow: Mana Mystery](#)" (**)**

It was Snow Week. I was a little punchy. What we ended up was another one of my wacky columns where I wrote a "documentary" that interviewed the different mana symbols. I was particularly happy with how this turned out. As a quick aside, I find it funny how often my college communications degree seems to come up in my job. While I think this column stands on its own, if you have any knowledge of documentaries, I think there's just a lot more humor for you to enjoy.

Week #239 (July 24, 2006) – "[Talking Tech](#)" (**)**

This column addressed an interesting design issue we came across when working on *Coldsnap*. How much has design technology changed between *Ice Age* and *Coldsnap*? The answer is "quite a bit," and this column uses the contrast between the two sets to talk about many of the advances of design technology since the early days of **Magic**.

Week #240 (July 31, 2006) – "[Cantrip Down Memory Lane](#)" (*)**

Cantrip—this is your life! Yes, it was Cantrip Week, so I explained the life story (and since this is my column I guess I should stress that I don't mean that literally—cantrip isn't a character that speaks or anything) of the cantrip mechanic. Bet you didn't know there was a struggle behind the scenes to make cantrips a regular evergreen mechanic. (Well, unless you already read the column.)

Week #241 (August 7, 2006) – "[80,000 Words](#)" (***)**

This is another of one of my popular columns of all time. I give a tour of the Wizards of the Coast office using nothing but eighty pictures. As the title seemed to confuse some readers, I was playing on the adage "a picture is worth a thousand words". I had been planning to do an all-photo column for over a year, but I hadn't figured out what topic wanted such a treatment. Then it dawned on me one day that I could show off Wizards new building (we moved across the street). Because I had no words (other than on my erase board in the photos), I would like to correct a big oversight. I could not have done this column without the help of my trusty camera woman. Yes, all the pictures were taken by my wife Lora during my lunch break (that's why almost no one was in The Pit). She even went out and got me lunch so I could eat during the weekly **Magic** meeting. There are so many stories behind this column that I've been tempted to do a column that's a "director's cut" where I write text to accompany each picture explaining how we made it. You may only have seen eighty pictures, but more were taken. (Maybe I'd even show a few of those.) Let me know in the thread or my email if this is something you'd like me to spend a week's column on.

Week #242 (August 14, 2006) – "[Hedonism with Attitude](#)" (**)**

It was Rakdos Week, and my ten part series came to a close. Also, I included my ballot for the second year of the Hall of Fame. (Yes, I voted for Mike Long again and yes, I was raked over the coals for it—again).

Week #243 (August 21, 2006) – "[State of Design 2006](#)" (***)**

When I became Head Designer, I decided that I wanted to write a yearly State of Design column (much akin to the U.S. President's State of the Union address) where I explain where I see design is at. I critically look at the previous year and talk about what things design is working on for the year to come. As the year to come is a known entity to us, this is a great opportunity for me to sneak in a few hints of things to come. Now that that next year is known to all of you (aka *Time Spiral* Block) this might be a fun re-read to see what kinds of things I hint at. The other importance of this column is that I officially announced *The Great Designer Search*, an online "reality show" where we gave anyone qualified a chance to earn a paid internship in R&D doing **Magic** design. To see how that turned out, click [here](#).

Week #244 (August 28, 2006) – "[Beginning At the End](#)" ()**

It was End of Turn Week (no really) and it was time to say goodbye to Anthony Alongi, the last remaining writer other than yours truly to have a column since [magicthegathering.com](#) began. To say goodbye, Anthony got to pick the theme of the week. Included is a little section that wasn't visible the day the article went live. You see, Anthony was announcing his leaving the next day, yet I had to make sense of End of the Turn Week on Monday. The article itself has a lot of little design inputs but overall I felt the column never really gelled. Although if you like minute design observations, don't let the ** rating scare you away.

Week #245 (September 4, 2006) – "[Blast From the Past](#)" (*)**

It was the first week of *Time Spiral* previews and I dive right in. I introduce the design team and talk about how exactly we ended up with a nostalgia theme (we didn't start with one).

Week #246 (September 11, 2006) – "[Needing a Little Time](#)" (*)**

It was the second week of *Time Spiral* previews and I explained everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask about the design of suspend. The most interesting insight, in my opinion, is the explanation of why suspended creatures gained haste.

Week #247 (September 18, 2006) – "[Plenty of Time](#)" (*)**

For the final week of *Time Spiral* previews (remember, big sets get three weeks while small sets get two), I talked about all the different ways we tried to express the feeling of "time" in the design. This is another dense design article for those of you that can't get enough of all the little tiny decisions design needs to make.

Week #248 (September 25, 2006) – "[Purple Reign](#)" (*)**

As we were trying to keep *Time Spiral's* "timeshifted" cards secret until the Prerelease, there was no mention of them on [magicthegathering.com](#) until this column. Formatted as an FAQ, I covered as much as I could about what exactly the timeshifted cards were. How they came about? Well, that would be for the following week.

Week #249 (October 2, 2006) – "[Timeshifting Into Gear](#)" (**)**

It was Timeshifted Week so I spent my column walking through how we came up with the idea of doing timeshifted cards. In addition, (and this is what brings the column up to four stars from three for me) I talk about how the rumor sites started piecing things together and how we tried to throw sneaky roadblocks in their way (never by lying mind you, just by putting out truths that we believed were likely to misinterpreted). But in the end, we weren't able to stop them especially when we were also accidentally helping them along the way.

Week #250 (October 9, 2006) – "[Tests of Endurance](#)" (***)**

In order to narrow down our applicants for *The Great Designer Search*, we created three tests: an essay test, a multiple choice test and a card design test. This column walks you through the essay and the card design tests and links to the [multiple choice test](#) which was this week's feature article. But the test was only the first part of the fun...

Week #250 (October 11, 2006) – "[The Great Designer Search Multiple Choice Answers](#)" (***)**

Wednesday of that week, (you could take the test and score it on Monday) I not only revealed the answers but explained each and every one. While this is technically a "Making **Magic**" column you won't find something written by me that has as much dense design info as this article. Just remember to [take the test](#) before you look at the answers.

Week #251 (October 16, 2006) – "[Between a Grok and a Hard Place](#)" (***)**

It was Suspend Week, but did I talk about suspend? Technically I did, but this column spends most of its time instead talking about an important aspect of design that I haven't seen anyone talk about in print before—grokking. This column is very dense but filled with very important game design info.

Week #252 (October 23, 2006) – "[American Pie](#)" (*)**

While most players loved *Time Spiral's* timeshifted cards, there was a group of players that were very concerned about R&D's willingness to break the color pie. In this column I explain the rule that's bigger than the "Obey the Color Pie" rule.

Week #253 (October 30, 2006) – "[We're Off To See The Wizards](#)" (*)**

It was Wizard Week, so I let the public peek behind the scenes to see the actual interviews I held with some of the Wizard cards that made it into *Time Spiral*, both the normal set and the timeshifted sheet. The column's a little on the silly side.

Week #254 (November 6, 2006) – "[Design 103](#)" (***)**

I used some of the cards designed by The Great Designer Search finalists to explain some common mistakes made by novice designers. This is the third in my ongoing series of talking about **Magic** card design for novice designers. (The previous two columns obviously being [Card Design 101](#) and [Card Design 102](#)). I was really happy with how these cards turned out. The one other note from this column was some criticism that it was unfair to use the GDS candidates. My reply was that this was exactly what they had signed up for. They were going to design cards and we were going to comment on them publicly. The candidates, by the way, seemed happy for me to showcase them in my column.



Week #255 (November 13, 2006) – "[Name Dropping](#)" (*)**

It was Legends of *Time Spiral* Week, so I talked about the design of some of the legends that did and others that didn't make the set. If you want to know what happened to Sidar Kondo or Vuel (assuming you know who either of those two people are), take a peek.

Week #256 (November 20, 2006) – "[On The Stack](#)" (*)**

During The Great Designer Search, the judges kept telling the candidates to stop referencing the stack on the cards. Many players were confused. Isn't the stack vital to the game? If so, why can't it appear in rules text? And hey, *hasn't* it appeared in rules text? These and other questions were all tackled in this column.

Week #257 (November 27, 2006) – "[Removing Busywork](#)"

Other than the first week of [magicthegathering.com](#) (because it started on a Tuesday), has there ever been a week that Making Magic did not appear? Why yes, this week. In its place was Lost in the Shuffle by Richard Garfield (creator of **Magic** for those that somehow do not know that). What was going on? The Past Returns Week, where each columnist was replaced by someone who wrote a similar topic... in the past. One of the cooler theme weeks we've ever done. If you haven't had a chance to hear Richard talk about game design, please take the opportunity to do it now. So what was I up to this week?...

Week #257 (November 27, 2006) – "[Magic: The Puzzling—Copy That](#)" (***)**

As it was Past Returns Week and I didn't have a column to write, I volunteered to do what first brought me to **Magic**—**Magic: The Puzzling**, my old **Magic** puzzle column from *The Duelist*. The puzzle turned out quite well. Careful though, it's tricky. Special thanks to Mike Turian, who went over and above playtesting the puzzle for me.

Week #258 (December 4, 2006) – "[Making 'Making Magic'](#)" (*)**

This week I looked inward and talked about how I write Making Magic week in and week out. While it's a very different topic from my norm, I think you'll find that there is a lot of overlap between writing and card design. Also, for my readers who seem to love charting out my life, I talk a little about how I started working for Wizards (and yes, it had to do with writing / puzzle making).

Week #259 (December 11, 2006) – "[Hidden Treasures](#)" (*)**

It was Easter Egg Week (unlike [Egg Week](#), which was an April Fools joke, long, long ago), so I talked about why we the people who make **Magic** hide things for the players to find. While I understand the timing (Easter Egg week was synced up with *Time Spiral*, which has more Easter Eggs than probably any other set ever published), I have to admit that I was disappointed we couldn't have had the theme the same week as Easter.

Week #260 (December 18, 2006) – "[Timmy, Johnny, and Spike Revisited](#)" (REPEAT) (***)**

Once again, I had three weeks off for the holidays because of how they fell. As is normal, I make my selections from bottom to top, making this my third favorite from 2006. This goes to show how strong I felt 2006 was, as this column could easily have been #1 in most other years.

Week #261 (December 25, 2006) – "[80,000 Words](#)" (REPEAT) (***)**

Once again, in any other year this could very well have been my top pick. In fact, I'm pretty sure that if I polled my readers this would have been the first pick (well, based on my mail anyway). This is one of the rare columns where presentation and subject intertwined almost flawlessly. I've been very tempted to do another all-photo column, but I haven't found the subject matter that would do it justice.

Week #262 (January 1, 2007) – "[Life Lessons. Part I & II](#)" (REPEAT) (****)

I was very proud of this column (okay, two columns) in that I thought it combined a very personal touch with a very relevant topic. Plus, it's hard as a writer not to bond with columns this personal. Anyway, I cheated and picked these two columns as my favorite for the year.

Week #263 (January 8, 2007) – "[Chaos Theory](#)" (***)

It was the first week of *Planar Chaos* previews so I jumped in to explain what exactly this crazy "alternate reality present" set was all about. R&D loves to make fun of me for the core, mantle, and crust definitions but for all their teasing we used the concepts throughout design and development. My biggest regret with this column is that the graphics people misunderstood one of my graphics directions. I first present how players see the color pie with a circle that says "Color Pie." Then I say how I see the color pie. There was supposed to be a circle inside a circle inside a circle and only the tiniest circle had the word "Color Pie." See, what the players thought of the color pie was just what I was labeling the core. I felt the Color Pie had two more additional layers to it. The second graphic was supposed to encompass the first one. Yeah, well that didn't work out and the graphic just makes me seem like I'm crazy. (Oh, I'm crazy all right, just not because of that graphic.) There is still one poster on the boards who mocks me with the graphic in their sig.



Week #264 (January 15, 2007) – "[Utter Chaos](#)" (**)

For the second week of *Planar Chaos* previews, I showed off a preview card, explained how fading turned into vanishing, and debated whether or not *Planar Chaos*'s design was creative. This column brings up an interesting dilemma I've noticed in my threads. As the audience gets better educated, the criticisms of each set become more complex. As such, I've become more inclined to talk about the comments because I feel they allow for interesting subject matter. But whenever I address complaints, I'm accused of being defensive. A question for the thread: how exactly can I be responsive to criticism without being seen as defensive?

Week #265 (January 22, 2007) – "[The Great Mix-Up. Part I](#)" (***)

The designers of *Planar Chaos* rewrote the color pie for the expansion. This column walks you through what the color pie looks like in this alternative world. This first part focuses on keyword and keyword-like abilities.

Week #266 (January 29, 2007) – "[The Timeshifts They Are a Changing](#)" (***)

It was Timeshifted Week, Part Deux, so I talked about how we decided what *Planar Chaos*'s timeshifted cards were going to be. (It wasn't until well into design, interestingly, that we even decided for sure we were going to have timeshifted cards in each set of the block.) This column is probably most famous for introducing **Magic** design's Rule of Three. (I'm not going to tell you what it is; you're going to have to read the column.)

Week #267 (February 5, 2007) – "[The Great Mix-Up. Part II](#)" (***)

This second half examines the color-shifting of the non-keyword mechanics. Hopefully, this two-parter shows how much thought went into all the color-shifting that we put into the set. This column also has the only appearance so far of a bonus item of the end of the column called "Talkback" where I asked for a response from a specific portion of the audience. I got great feedback and it was very valuable. The only reason I haven't done another Talkback is that I got really busy and just forgot about it until I was reading through my columns to write this. I promise Talkback will make future appearances.

Week #268 (February 12, 2007) – "[When the Going Gets Bluff](#)" (****)

It was Bluff Week so I had a little fun. I told five outlandish **Magic**-related stories, only four of which were true. Can you figure out which story is a bold lie—I mean bluff? By the way, the other four stories are honest to goodness the truth. I swear.

Week #269 (February 19, 2007) – "[Breaking Rules](#)" (****)

Planar Chaos messed with the color pie. Some players were very upset that we did it. This column explains why we break rules and why that rule-breaking is so fundamental to the game. Also, I explain the rules about breaking rules. Yes, such things exist.

Week #270 (February 26, 2007) – "[Nights of the Round Table](#)" (***)**

I honor of *Planar Chaos*, we had a "What If?" Week where each columnist wrote their column assuming some "what if" scenario was true. I chose "What if [magicthegathering.com](#) had been there since the beginning?" With that, I present the first preview week for *Arabian Nights*. I was very happy with how this turned out, particularly in that I felt I did a good job of presenting the new set in the context of how we would have presented it back then.

Week #271 (March 5, 2007) – "[Tales of a Runner](#)" (**)**

Inquest Magazine (I already miss them) did [a feature on me](#), and the feature inspired me to flash back to some stories from my past—half from my days as a Hollywood runner (a.k.a. slave), and half from my early days in R&D. The most famous story from this column has become the swordfish story, which has been referenced in the oddest of **Magic** articles. By the way, if you want to hear more runner stories, drop me an email or post so in the thread.



Week #272 (March 12, 2007) – "[You Can Say That Again](#)" (*)**

It was Echo Week, so I talked all about the origin of echo including a bit of info on echo's designer, Mike Elliott (including Mike's favorite ever picture of him, at least at a **Magic** event). This is definitely one of those columns where I plumb the depths of a single topic, but if the design of echo is something that sounds interesting, jump on in.

Week #273 (March 19, 2007) – "[Myth-Undertsandings](#)" (*)**

So I messed up in the previous column and claimed that a duck's quack doesn't echo (stupid Snapple cap). Turns out many of my readers watch "Myth Busters," and I was busted. Somehow, I turned that into a topic for the week. Yes, I talked about myths about R&D. And yes, our quack also echoes.

Week #274 (March 26, 2007) – "[Fatty, Fatty, Two By Four](#)" (***)**

I'm always surprised how often theme weeks spawn columns way beyond the topic at hand. In this case it was Fatty Week, and it got me talking about how R&D designs differently for each of the psychographics. This column has more design meat on it than most.

Week #275 (April 2, 2007) – "[Connect The Dots](#)" (***)**

This was one of those columns that I had been planning to write forever. It's also one that leans more on the general side of design than the **Magic** side, but I feel the topic at hand couldn't be more relevant to what I do everyday. The topic: creativity. In this column, I tackle the topic of creativity from a number of angles. The two highlights are my theory on what I think creativity is and a top ten list of ways to be more creative. This is one of my more self-indulgent columns (and yes, I have a few of these), but I believe it really delivers on what it promises.

Week #276 (April 9, 2007) – "[The Future Is Now. Part I](#)" (**)**

I hadn't led the design of a set since *Ravnica* so I was raring to go when *Future Sight* preview weeks rolled around. So much so that I wrote a three part article explaining how the set got designed.

Week #277 (April 16, 2007) – "[The Future Is Now. Part II](#)" (**)**

Here's Part II.

Week #278 (April 23, 2007) – "[The Future Is Now. Part III](#)" (**)**

And Part III. This three-part column probably has more in-depth detail on a set design than you're likely to find just about anywhere. And *Future Sight* was an especially hard set to design.

Week #279 (April 30, 2007) – "[Timeshift After Timeshift](#)" (*)**

It was Timeshifted Week, Part Three, so I shared a bunch of design stories about how individual future timeshifted cards got designed. It's funny that I bring up [Tarmogoyf](#) only to point out that its reminder text

references planeswalkers. Since **Tarmogoyf** has an interesting little design story I'll make up for the oversight and share it now. You see, I created **Tarmogoyf** because I was looking to create a futuristic **Lhurgoyf**. I thought in the future perhaps the **Lhurgoyf** would be looking for something different than how many creatures you had. What other thing on cards in graveyards could it count up? How about card types? Then I realized that it was extra cool because we could hint at card types that didn't exist yet. The card was not beloved by development, but I managed to keep it in the set by arguing how cool the planeswalker-in-reminder-text thing was. Then we designed a planeswalker in green and a card had to go. Bye bye **Tarmogoyf**. When planeswalkers were shelved to give us more time to work on them, **Tarmogoyf** came back.

Week #280 (May 7, 2007) – "[Melvin and Vorthos](#)" (*****)

So Matt Cavotta invented a fourth psychographic. Then during "Timmy, Johnny, and Spike Revisited" I talked about how Vorthos is not a psychographic but a profile from another scale. I even hinted at an unknown player type named Melvin. Almost a year later I finally got around to explaining how I saw Melvin and Vorthos. This is another column that introduced language that has become commonplace in **Magic** threads. Be warned, though, that you might need to read it more than once as the ideas in it are a little harder to grok than my average fare.



Week #281 (May 14, 2007) – "[The Scrying Game](#)" (***)

It was Scry Week, so I talked about how scry was chosen for *Future Sight* and how we went about tweaking it. I then tell a bunch of card design stories about various *Future Sight* cards with scry. This ended up a solid but narrow column.

Week #282 (May 21, 2007) – "[Design Language](#)" (*****)

In "Fatty, Fatty, Two By Four" (see above), I talked about how to design big creatures for each of the three psychographics. The topic proved so popular I dedicated an entire column talking about how to design for each type of player. I even talked about Melvin and Vorthos as I had just talked about them a few weeks earlier. I'm a big proponent of the idea that good design starts with understanding who you are designing for. This column is one of the best I've written examining what this means specifically when designing for **Magic**.

Week #283 (May 28, 2007) – "[Design Language](#)" (REPEAT) (*****)

It was Memorial Day (another pesky U.S. holiday) and Wizards was closed, thus no Making Magic. To make matters worse it was Theme Week Week, where each day each columnist pretended it was a theme week from the future. (Ah, *Future Sight*.) It killed me to miss it...

Week #284 (June 4, 2007) – "[Dear Maro](#)" (****)

So I didn't. I just went last (a first for me). Yes, for me, it was Theme Week Week. My future theme week: Parody Week, where each column uses their column to parody some other style of writing. I chose an advice column where I doled out design advice. Yes, I made fun of the format of advice columns while giving actual design advice. Seriously, the design advice given in this column is very solid.

Week #285 (June 11, 2007) – "[Here's the Kicker](#)" (***)

It was Kicker Week, so this column is everything you ever wanted to know about the kicker mechanic from how it was created to who created it (not me) to lots of card-by-card trivia.

Week #286 (June 18, 2007) – "[Keyword Play](#)" (****)

During *Future Sight* development I pitched a rework of the creature keyword abilities, both creating some new keywords and adding existing keywords to colors they had not been in before. This column uses annotated versions of the actual documents I used to successfully pitch the idea to **Magic** R&D. This is an excellent example of seeing how R&D works to try and constantly advance the game.

Week #287 (June 25, 2007) – "[Enchantment For Better Things. Part I](#)" (***)

It was Enchantment Week, and I came up with a brilliant idea. I had designed enchantments for ten different blocks. Why didn't I use the column to explore the design of one enchantment from each block, talk about its design, and tell a few stories about things that happened along the way? Then when I was halfway through it I realized that I had already exceeded a week's worth of words. So I did what I often do when this happens (and it happens regularly): I turned it into a two-parter.

Week #288 (July 2, 2007) – "[Enchantment For Better Things, Part II](#)" (***)

Here's part II. The only surprise is that it turns out I can't count (I'm a word guy), and there were actually eleven blocks to talk about.

Week #289 (July 9, 2007) – "[Signed, Sealed and Delivered](#)" (***)

It was Sealed Deck Week, so I examined how Sealed Deck was first created. A lot of readers don't realize how much research certain columns take. For this column, I made some educated guesses and then I ran my guesses by Richard Garfield. It turns out I was mostly correct.

Week #290 (July 16, 2007) – "[Two Plus Two](#)" (****)

One of the fun parts of my column is that I often get to be the one who tells you stuff first. This column is a perfect example. We needed to tell the distributors this year's "two two-set blocks" plan as it affected how they might order, so I got the chance to break the news to all of you before we did so. The fact that this big announcement happened at a time no one expected made the task that much more fun. As *Shadowmoor* is still a mystery at the time of writing this column, perhaps you might want to peek back to see if I've snuck in any clues.

Week #291 (July 23, 2007) – "[The X Files](#)" (***)

In honor of *Tenth Edition*, we had X Week. The writers were allowed to interpret this any way we wanted to. My column was X (think Roman) tidbits about X. The column is a bit hit and miss, but there are a few highlights, the biggest of which is my continuation of [Outwit, Outplay, Outlast](#) (my take on turning the base sets into a reality show a la "Survivor"), updated for *Tenth Edition*.

Week #292 (July 30, 2007) – "[What's The Problem?](#)" (****)

I like mixing it up, so this week's column is all about **Magic**-themed logic problems. My favorite part of writing this column was taking classic logic problems and finding a way to change the focus to **Magic**. The most interesting side effect of writing this column is that I'm very curious whether we'd ever want to print Chaotic Taiga and its ilk. (What is Chaotic Taiga, you ask? Read the column.)



Week #293 (August 6, 2007) – "[Everything Old Is New Again](#)" (***)

It was Old Favorites Week (a tie to the many returning old cards in *Tenth Edition*), so I spent my column talking about the pros and cons of bringing back old things, be they mechanics, cards, or what not. The topic is a little dry but definitely a real issue that design faces in every set.

Week #294 (August 13, 2007) – "[State of Design 2007](#)" (****)

It was time for my yearly State of Design column. This one pulls no punches as I look very critically at the previous year. For once the threads thought I might be being too harsh on myself and my design teams. Also, I outline what design hopes to accomplish in the year ahead (yes, more hints).

Week #295 (August 20, 2007) – "[Onslaught Machine](#)" (***)

It was *Onslaught* Week (it was a way to talk about tribal with *Lorwyn* previews coming up), so I told a lot of card design stories from, you guessed it, *Onslaught*. This column is a lot of little stories rather than a few big ones.

Week #296 (August 27, 2007) – "[Topical Blend #3: Sessions](#)" (****)

I feel that this is the weakest Topical Blend yet, and still I gave it five stars. That tells you how high the bar has been set for my Topical Blends. I felt the topics for the week (picked by you my readers), **Dungeons & Dragons** and top ten creature designs, were a little too easy to combine, so I tried a more offbeat approach. Like Topical Blend #1 and "Life Lessons," this is a very personal column with actual stories from my D&D playing days. The biggest complaint I have about this column is that the end feels rushed. Why? Because it is rushed. See, when I was about half way through I realized that I was over five thousand words. That's several thousand more than I usually write. I didn't have the time to finish on deadline and I couldn't make it a two-parter because *Lorwyn*

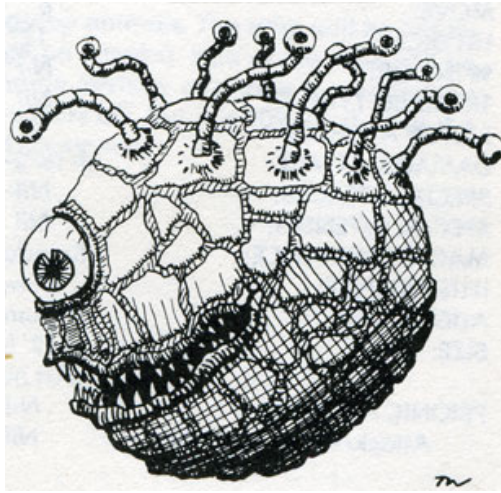
previews were starting and the next week there was no column due to the holiday, so I just sped up the latter half. Even with that, I still am very proud of this column.

Week #297 (September 4, 2007) – "[Topical Blend #3: Sessions](#)" (REPEAT) (***)**

It was Labor Day (again), so no new Making Magic. Or so you would think...

Week #297 (September 4, 2007) – "[Planeswalking the Walk](#)" (*, my part anyway)

Since I didn't have a column that week, I wrote an article for the [Planeswalkers Minisite](#). It was written by me, in my voice. It even had a pun title. For all intents and purposes it was a Making Magic article. But technically it wasn't, so it doesn't show up in the Making Magic archive. And because it was on a minisite (a technical reason that I can't explain), it doesn't show up in my author archive. In addition, the article is listed under "Planeswalker Rules," so no one who wants to find it can. Basically, it's the hardest thing to track down that I've probably ever written on the site. Which is good, because it stinks. Well, my part anyway. Gottlieb's explanation of the planeswalker rules is good. My first draft approached the article from a completely different vantage point, but it was decided that I should save that issue for another day so I had to rewrite it at the last minute. Add to that that I didn't want to give away what I was planning to write for an upcoming Planeswalker Week, and I ended up with a pretty poor column. Hey, I couldn't expect to get through a hundred columns without at least a single one-star review.



Week #298 (September 11, 2007) – "[A Lorwyn / Lorwyn Situation](#)" ()**

It was the first week of *Lorwyn* previews, and I felt I stumbled a bit in this column—so much so that I apologize the following week.

Week #299 (September 18, 2007) – "[Lorwyn at all Costs](#)" (*)**

For the second week of *Lorwyn* previews, I talked about what I feel is the biggest shift in tribal from *Onslaught*, pushing of all the tribes into multiple colors.

Week #300 (September 25, 2007) – "[Lorwyn One for the Team](#)" (*)**

The last week of *Lorwyn* previews. This week I explored the design of my preview card, Mirror Entity, and spent more time talking about some *Lorwyn* philosophy. The one interesting tidbit of this column (something caught in the thread) is that I messed up the pun in my title. I was originally going to call the column "*Lorwyn* One for the Gipper" but decided the reference was too obscure (which is crazy given how I constantly make far more obscure references—*Thirty Two Short Films About Glen Gould?*) and changed it. The problem is that "win one for the team" isn't the expression. It's "take one for the team." Oh well.

Bowling 300

And that is three hundred weeks of Making Magic. You'll note that I ended the week before [the one I told you was the three hundredth week](#). It turns out my own internal accounting was wrong. You'll have to wait for that column until "Four Hundred and Counting" (have no fear, I'll get there). I hope you enjoyed the journey through the last two years. This column takes a lot longer to write than most, but the feedback I always get tells me that it is an important and useful resource.

Join me next week when I get a little short.

Until then, may you love something enough to write a million words about it.

Mark Rosewater

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



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