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Mix & Match, Part I

Mark Rosewater
Making Magic
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Welcome to Hybrid Week. This week we'll be talking about a mechanic near and dear to my heart. Of course, you should already know that as I've said numerous times. You know, like when I first talked about how hybrid was created in *Ravnica* (City Planning, [Part I](#), [Part II](#) & [Part III](#)) or when I talked about how we built an entire block around it (*Shadowmoor* than Meets the Eye, [Part I](#), [Part II](#) & [Part III](#)) or when I talked about how it was almost a major part of *Time Spiral* block ([Blast from the Past](#)) or when I talked about how hybrid showed up on different ends of the form / function scale ([Building Blocks](#)) or when I talked about the design of some individual hybrid cards ([Shadowmoor More More](#)). So after nine different columns talking about hybrid do I have anything left to talk about for Hybrid Week? Of course, I do. Why? Because I love talking about hybrid. In fact, I love it so much I made this column a two-parter just so I can continue to talk about it through next week. And someday, I plan to do a block where we return to the hybrid theme which means even more columns about hybrid.

What is today's hybrid-themed topic going to be? Several weeks back I [talked about](#) how *Godhead of Awe* intersected the white and blue slices of the color pie. I thought it would be interesting to look at all 110 traditional hybrid cards (as opposed to the six monocolored hybrids—or I should say five monocolored hybrids and *Reaper King*, whatever exactly he is) and explain how they intersect color philosophy-wise. I'll do fifty-five this week and fifty-five next week.

Enough with my exposition, let's start talking hybrid.

#1) *Æthertow*

I'm going in alphabetical order, so we'll start with *Æthertow*. White has long had the ability to destroy/remove from game (yes, I still hate the term) attacking and/or blocking creatures (*Chastise*, *Condemn*, *Devouring Light*, *Excise*, *Exile*, *Just Fate*, *Neck Snap*, *Second Thoughts*, *Soul Nova*, *Terashi's Verdict*, *Unified Strike*, and *Wing Shards*, among others). Blue has long had the ability to "bounce" creatures to the top of its owner's library (*Consign to Dream*, *Ether Well*, *Forced Retreat*, *Repel*, *Spin into Myth*, *Submerge*, *Temporal Eddy*, *Time Ebb*, and *Whirlpool Whelm*, among others). We felt like if white can destroy an attacking or blocking creature then merely sending it away for a short duration felt okay (white, for example, can "flicker" things away until end of turn). Likewise, if blue can "bounce" creatures outright then making a spell that only affected a subset should be fine.

#2) *Ashenmoor Gouger*

Back in the day both black and red had "CARDNAME cannot block" and "CARDNAME attacks each turn if able" as part of their respective pies. The idea was that black and red creatures are more likely to be the ones that just attack mindlessly. To help delineate the two colors, we decided to put the first in black and the second in red. Black has creatures that don't care to protect the planeswalker that summons them, while red has creatures that don't have the restraint to not attack whenever they can. My point is that these two abilities are a hair's breadth away from one another anyway, so allowing one of them to be on both black and red wasn't really a color pie problem.

#3) *Ashenmoor Liege*

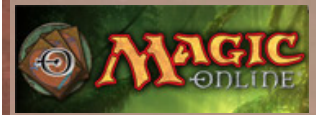
For starters, the *Crusade* ability (+1/+1 to all blah) isn't particularly black or red, but it's the kind of thing we often allow to cycle. Also, to be fair, we allow the ability for tribal reasons. Anyway, +1/+1 to your team is something we've justified as being fair in any color if the circumstances are right. The "target me and get hurt" part of the card reflects a general flavor both black and red. Because the ability tends to fall more on the red side of the line, we made the punishment life loss instead of damage to pull the feel of the effect back towards center.

#4) *Augury Adept*

Here's where alphabetization gets me. This is a card I'd rather not talk about fourth, but [Doug Beyer](#) had to start it with the word "Augury." Well, you can't fight alphabetization (and, supposedly, City Hall). My issue with this card is this: I didn't want to print it. It's not that I didn't like it, I just think it's a white-blue gold card and not a white-blue hybrid card. So how did it see print? Well, there was an interesting philosophical division within R&D

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about what hybrid should and shouldn't be able to do. It caused many arguments. You might surmise, by the way, that I lost this argument (I lost the fight on Giant Solifuge too), but since I have a column where I get to voice my opinion, I am going to present my side. Then in the sake of fairness, [Devin Low](#) is going to present the other side this Friday in [Latest Developments](#). With that said, I present my side (Point to Devin's Counterpoint):



I feel that hybrid has plenty of design space. As do traditional gold cards. Let's let hybrid be hybrid and gold be gold. We can design hybrid cards without having to resort to making faux gold cards. In my opinion (and as Head Designer and the person who has designed more hybrid cards than anyone), there is plenty of design space for hybrid. First, hybrid cards can have effects that overlap. White and green share life gain. Black and blue can mill. Red and green can destroy artifacts. Second, I feel like it's acceptable for colors to pull outside of their base area of abilities (what I call the core of the color pie—see [my Planar Chaos color pie column](#) for more on what this means). A white hybrid card, as an example, can regenerate things that white doesn't normally get to regenerate because white as a color has a philosophy of protecting things. The stretch does not pull white outside of its color philosophy. Third, I'm okay with hybrid cards that do things outside of their colors if the net effect feels in flavor of their color. This is the same rationale behind why I'm okay with *Form of the Dragon* even though red doesn't get *Moat*-style effects. Becoming a dragon feels very red. That's three huge areas that I feel comfortable with hybrid exploring. And I believe that is plenty to get the job done. Other members of R&D, though, feel that there's a fourth acceptable option: a hybrid card is both colors regardless of how it's played. *Augury Adept*, for instance, is a white card even if you spend only blue mana to play it. As such, we should be allowed (in small amounts—even the other side agrees that this is a special case) to let the card have an ability that fits for white (such as life gain) even if it doesn't fit the other color (obviously blue in this case). I reject this fourth category because it feels to me like it violates the spirit of both the color pie and hybrid itself. There is a line in the sand that separates hybrid from gold and I believe this area crosses it. I don't mind coming close to the line, but I don't like hybrid cards that feel like they're really supposed to be gold. Once again, for emphasis, let hybrid be hybrid and let gold be gold. Viva la color pie! Devin? (Once again—check in Friday for Devin's response.)

#5) Barkshell Blessing

This is a simple one. Both white and green get small *Giant Growth* effects. (And yes, Green gets big ones too.)

#6) Barrenton Cragtreads

This is part of a cycle. As Devin [mentioned on Friday](#), originally the entire cycle had protection from the shared enemy colors. The problem was that the *Shadowmoor* block enabled monocolored play (no really, try it) and creatures with protection proved to be too much of a beating, so we scaled back the effect to make it strong against that color but not completely unstoppable. We felt if each color was allowed to have protection from its enemy color that it could have a subset of that ability.

#7) Boartusk Liege

This is the second Liege. As I explained above, *Crusade* type effects are fair game for all five colors. Trample is on this card because as of *Future Sight*, trample has become a secondary keyword ability for red. (Check out my article [Keyword Play](#) for more on the stretching of keyword abilities to more colors.)

#8) Boggart Ram-Gang

In the same column I reference in the last card I talked about how there was much discussion about which color to allow haste in secondarily. In the column I explained that black narrowly won out over green. Since then, there has been a lot of talk. The green contingent felt we made a mistake. Green could really use haste, they explained. But black needed it design-wise, I would counter. In the end, we came to a compromise—black and green both get to use haste secondarily. Haste, we decided, was cool enough that it could handle three colors having it. Note that red will still be the only color to have it as a primary keyword meaning it will still show up much more in red than black or green. What this does mean is that black and green both now have the thumbs up to use it from time to time. It turns out, by the way, that black, red and green also are the three colors that wither is centered in. The one exception we made for wither, though, as it was a brand new ability and thus not defined in the color pie, was that we'd allow it in white or blue if it was a hybrid card with one of the three main wither colors (*Shadowmoor* only went to that well once on *Oona's Gategarden*.)

#9) Cemetary Puca

Over the years we have let blue Shapeshifters copy just about anything (*Clone* and *Vesuvan Doppelganger* being the oldest) and we've let black steal abilities from creatures in the graveyard (*Cairn Wanderer* being the most recent). This card is just finding the overlap between these two areas.

#10) Cultbrand Cinder

Black has always had the ability to grant creatures -1/-1 and in *Shadowmoor*, we've decided to allow red access to -1/-1 counter granting as we felt it's a form of direct damage.



#11) Curse of Chains

Both white and blue have creature tapping in their slices of the color pie. Yes, white usually has tappers like **Goldmeadow Harrier** and blue has tapper / untappers like **Stonybrook Angler**, but both are close enough to overlap in hybrid.

#12) Dawnglow Infusion

One of the things we learned when making a hybrid sets is which allied color combinations overlap the most and the least. The most by far is green-white, as evidenced on this card. (What do you get when you cross green with white? Awesome life gain.) The least? Blue-black.

#13) Demigod of Revenge

Both black and red get big rare fliers, although red's are Dragons more often than not. As of **Future Sight**, both get haste. And both have creatures that can get themselves back from the graveyard. For black it is most often cards in the **Ichorid** camp, while for red it's most often those of the Phoenix persuasion.

#14) Deus of Calamity

Future Sight put trample secondarily in red (plus **Magic** has a rule that says any color can get trample if the creature's big enough), and land destruction has been in red and green since the days of **Alpha**.

#15) Din of the Fireherd

This is definitely one of those cards that borrows from the color pie slices of the two colors in question. Black often forces the opponent to sacrifice creatures while red has some history (not a lot, but some) of forcing the opponent to sacrifice lands. Since black can destroy land and red can destroy creatures (albeit almost exclusively these days with damage) we felt allowing each color to dip its toe in its ally's pie was thematically close enough to home. (I hope the dipping a toe into pie wasn't a disturbing metaphor.)

#16) Dire Undercurrents

Here's where we start getting sneaky. The first part of the card is strictly a blue ability, while the second is a black one. We rationalized this one because you need a blue creature to trigger the first and a black one to trigger the second. True, with hybrid technology you are able to trigger the first ability playing only Swamps and the second while playing only Islands, but we felt the color restrictions were enough to allow the slight bleed.

#17) Dream Salvage

Blue is king of card drawing so it gets to do this. We allow black to "drain" the opponent meaning we let black get whatever it is causing the opponent to lose so tying card drawing to card discard does fit black's color pie slice.

#18) Elvish Hexhunter

Ah, green and white. Are you really the same color?

#19) Emberstrike Duo

This cycle caused some confusion when it first came out because the +1/+1 bonus seems odd for certain colors. While we wouldn't do the bonus in isolation on certain colors, power / toughness boosting is enough of a basic ability that it's pretty much shared by all colors at a low level, and so we felt fine using it on a cycle. The other ability always ties into the color triggering it, in this case first strike with red. As with **Dire Undercurrents**, there are some hybrid shenanigans you can pull to gain first strike without tapping any Mountains, but we felt that if hybrid gets to slide anywhere it's on this kind of card.

#20) Enchanted Evening

One of the tricks of designing hybrid effects is to make something that's never existed before. That way it hasn't yet been assigned to a color (or colors). That said, this effect alters everything in play, which ties into white's equalizing theme and blue's "changing the state of other things" theme.

#21) Everlasting Torment

Both black and red have prevented life gain (**Forsaken Wastes** and **Flames of the Blood Hand** are the first two that pop into my head) and each has stopped damage prevention in its own way (red has cards like **Urza's Rage**, while black just causes life loss instead of damage). As I explained above, wither falls in both black and red.

#22) Fate Transfer

I already covered this one in my column last week ([Shadowmoor More More](#)):

One of the challenges of designing hybrid cards was finding non-obvious overlap. (Yes, yes, both white and green can destroy enchantments.) The neat thing about this card was that it had an effect



that neither color has normally (mostly because -1/-1 counters are not a normal part of the game), yet each color had effects similar to it. Blue has numerous cards that move enchantments from creature to creature and black has many spells that hurt others for its own benefit. Also, as I mentioned above, we were always on the lookout for blue "creature kill."

#23) Firespout

While this card is technically a hybrid card, it makes use of a mechanic that allows us to put color-specific abilities on it. You cannot get the "red" part of the card without using red mana or the "green" part without using green mana. Thus, we have no worry of trying to find color pie overlap. Instead, this card dips into traditional multicolor territory, finding effects in the two colors that parallel one another. This time it's the **Earthquake / Hurricane** dynamic that first showed up in Alpha.

#24) Fists of the Demigod

Ah, the cycle of common Auras. I have a soft spot in my heart for them. There was a big discussion throughout development whether or not this cycle should be common or uncommon (design turned the original cycle in at common—I should note, not *Shadowmoor* design but *Eventide* design... but that's a story for another column). We knew we wanted the Auras to be powerful because they do such a good job at encouraging playing with hybrid creatures, but there was worry that the enchantments were too strong for common. Matt Place and I led the crusade to keep them at common to heavily encourage playing with hybrid creatures. So when you feel a need to curse someone, feel free to curse Matt or myself. As far as the color pie goes, we kept to the philosophy that colors that are referenced can stick to their own color pie. Interestingly with this card, red already has access to wither and black gets occasional access to first strike (thank you, **Black Knight**).

#25) Fossil Find

Here's another interesting hybrid design technique. Find a broad aspect of each color and find the overlap. For example, red has a long history of random effects. Red, for example, doesn't normally tutor, but it can tutor with some randomness thrown in (**Gamble**). Green, meanwhile, has graveyard recursion as a standard part of its pie slice. So a random graveyard recursion card dips its toe into both pools.

#26) Fracturing Gust

Green can destroy enchantments, white can destroy enchantments. Green can destroy artifacts, white can destroy artifacts. Green can gain life, white can gain life. Okay, green-white hybrid design wasn't exactly pulling teeth.

#27) Fulminator Mage

Both colors get a **Grey Ogre**, and both colors can destroy lands, let alone nonbasic lands. Nothing to see here, move along.

#28) Ghastlord of Fugue

This is another card that bleeds a little. For starters, though, both colors get some version of unblockability. True, we call black's fear, but philosophically we're willing to let that one slide. The second ability was originally "Coercion the opponent and then they get to draw a card." This was creating an "I filter you" kind of feel which was a little more blue. I guess I could try to make some philosophical parallel between blue's countermagic and black's discard as each preemptively stops a spell, but who am I kidding. The second ability is just a bleed in blue. See **Augury Adept** above for more on why we occasionally did this.

#29) Giantbaiting

Yeah, green gets to do haste more often than once in a blue moon. The only slightly out of color thing here is that green doesn't normally make creatures for just the turn, but as it is king of token making we felt it was enough in the ballpark.

#30) Glamer Spinners

Both white and blue have flash. They are the #2 and #1 colors at flying. White is king of enchantments and blue loves moving things around. The one design note I'll throw in is that we toyed for a playtest with this card allowing you to move the enchantments from any creature to any other creature, but it did a little too much to hose the common Auras we were trying to persuade people to play, so we changed it back (this card is as it was originally designed).

#31) Glen Elendra Liege

As I explained above, every color gets some access to **Crusade** style effects. The most interesting thing to talk about this card though is flying. I've mentioned that blue/black was the most troublesome allied color pair in relation to the overlapping of their color pie slices. For example, as far as creature keywords go, white and blue share flash, black and red share haste, red and green share trample and green and white share vigilance (a bunch of this is a result of the keyword spreading that came about during *Future Sight* design—once again, see [my column on this](#)). Blue and black don't really have anything in common. Well, except flying. True, white also has it and red gets it on larger creatures at rare. Green even gets it on rare occasion. But when we were searching for overlap, we were so desperate for blue-black overlap that we often took flying and were happy with it.

#32) Godhead of Awe



I also addressed this card in my column *Shadowmoor* than Meets the Eye, [Part II](#): (As I said in the intro, it was this response that inspired the column you're reading today.)

A number of people in the boards and my email asked what was white and blue about this card. My answer is this: white has the ability to reduce creatures to a small 0/1 or 1/1 state. This can be seen in cards like *Afterlife*, *Crib Swap*, *Humble*, *Humility*, and *March of Souls*. Its flavor is that white can bring meekness through its power of humility. Blue, meanwhile has the ability to change the shape of other creatures. It can be seen on cards like *Ovinomancer*, *Polymorph*, *Pongify*, and *Shapesharer*. Note that *Godhead of Awe* bleeds a little in each area. White tends to neutralize the creatures abilities when it shrinks them and blue tends to target its "polymorphing" effects on single creatures, but the idea was that each color was close enough that it felt okay. And in hybrid design, we have to be willing to be a little more lax as long as we are keeping to the color's philosophies.

#33) Gravelgill Axeshark

While I didn't think about this going in, having two virgin creature keywords, wither and persist, turned out to be a godsend for hybrid design. As I said above, black and blue were always causing us problems, so it was nice to be able to create undefined pie space for us to use. You'll note that persist shows up in monocolour in all five colors (white—*Twilight Shepherd*, blue—*River Kelpie*, black—*Puppeteer Clique*, red—*Furystoke Giant*, green—*Woodfall Primus*; and yes, the observant of you will realize that it's a rare cycle) as well as showing up in every hybrid combination save white-blue.

#34) Grief Tyrant

Black and red got the lion's share of -1/-1 counter granting, so this card really wouldn't make sense anywhere else but in this hybrid combination. Note that white and green do not directly put -1/-1 counters on creatures (well, except themselves) and that blue only moves existing ones onto creatures.

#35) Guttural Response

Red and green have always had anti-blue sentiments in common. Both colors also have anti-permission effects as part of their respective color pie slices. For example, red and green are the two colors that get "cannot be countered." I'll be honest that this card pushes in this area a little more aggressively than we have in a while (and one could argue we ever have in green), but we feel this shift is something well within red and green's domain.

#36) Heartmender

Okay, white and green can't put -1/-1 counters onto other creatures. It seems only fair then that they're the two colors that get to take them off. (Yeah, yeah, blue can remove them by moving them elsewhere.)

#37) Helm of the Ghastlord

One of the ways you can tell that we have such a hard time with blue and black is that we keep retreating to well-established areas for the color combination. Blue draws, black discards—see the cool contrast. The big discussion with this card was it okay that neither ability was a keyworded one. Most of the other cards from the common aura cycle have two keywords while this one has none. In the end I argued that the *Ophidian* / *Magpie* and *Specter* abilities were iconic enough that the card felt pretty clean even if it does have a lot of text.

#38) Impromptu Raid

Yes, I've had a long-lasting love affair with the *Urza's Saga* card *Sneak Attack*. Here's one of our love children. While the ability is more of a red one, it is so creature-centric and so much about getting creatures from library to play (a green ability) that the net conglomerate of the card felt okay to us for green.

#39) Inkfathom Infiltrator

"Can't block" and "unblockable" is one of a few other interesting blue-black contrasts. Unblockable felt okay for black as it has fear as a standard keyword, and "can't block" felt okay for blue as all the colors have various blocking restrictions built-in. Note that black and blue are two of the three colors to have shadow, which is essentially "can't block," "unblockable" creatures.

#40) Inkfathom Witch

It's interesting to note that while the witch cycle could have generated effects that were not hybrid compliant as they require mana of both colors, all of them create effects that overlap the two colors. The reason we felt okay with fear, by the way, was the same rationale for why unblockable was okay on a black creature. The reason the effect feels black and blue to me is that it criss-crosses blue's ability to change other's forms with black's aggressive "power at the sake of vulnerability" theme.

#41) Kitchen Finks

Make sure to check out this week's [feature article](#) as it is written by Sean Fletcher, the "doesn't actually work for Wizards yet got on a *Magic* design team" guy. I bring this up here because this is one of his cards (he talks about it in the article; go find out why it was called "Heather's Chipmunk" through most of design). Once again we find green and white playing nicely together. What I found so interesting was how often green and white got to go to the life gain well.



#42) Kulrath Knight

Flying and wither make perfect sense. The odd thing about the last ability is how it feels neither black nor red. The flavor I like, which makes the card feel black-red to me, is that it punishes the injured.

#43) Loamdragger Giant

Vanilla creatures, it turns out, still get to go in every color. That said, red and especially green just get bigger guys at common and uncommon. Besides, we had to have a few new Giants.

#44) Manaforge Cinder

Color washing into your own color is something that pretty much every color gets to dabble in a little. Historically black has gotten to do it more than red, but it's fair game for both.

#45) Manamorphose

Green is the color that has the easiest time producing other colors. Red, though, gets the one-shot mana production effects. Find the Venn diagram intersection of these two abilities, and voila!

#46) Medicine Runner

Green and white are the two colors that can remove -1/-1 counters. To help this card play nicer with *Lorwyn* block and the rest of **Magic**, we removed the -1/-1 restriction and allowed it to affect any counter. Luckily, counter removing hasn't been all that defined so there really weren't any issues here.

#47) Memory Plunder

This ability is relatively unique. Black has the most historical claim to paying things out of the graveyard so it seemed like it wanted to be on a black hybrid card. As blue-black was our trouble hybrid, we tossed it this bone.

#48) Memory Sluice

Blue and black might have their issues, but they'll always have milling.

#49) Mercy Killing

While most of green-white was a slam dunk, there were a few cards like this one that made R&D stretch some design muscles. The reason we felt that this card made sense in green-white was that we looked at the card through a different lens for each color. For green, we thought of this as a token-generating card that required a creature sacrifice (okay, you can sacrifice an opponent's creature, so it's a little quirky). For white, we thought of this as an equalizing spell that turn something harmful into something a little less threatening (the quirky part for white is that traditionally white never uses these kinds of spells on itself). Mix the two together and we have a card that lines up with similar cards in each color. Interestingly, the combined result feels neither mono-white nor mono-green.

#50) Merrow Grimeblotter

Blue gets -X/-0 effects. Black gets to shrink whatever it pleases although it does more -X/-X and +X/-X than anything else. As far as the untap symbol goes, we treated it like a tap symbol, meaning it was color-neutral.

#51) Mirrorweave

White has the power to equalize things. This is, for example, where the flavor of something like *Humility* comes from. Blue has the power to change the shape of itself and others. *Mirrorweave* has a unique effect that sort of crosses the space in between these two areas.

#52) Mistmeadow Witch

White and blue are the two flickering colors so this ability makes perfect sense in both colors. On a side note, I'm a huge fan of flicker effects and definitely feel like its one of the tools we can play up more to give white some extra oomph.

#53) Morselhoarder

This is another card that plays with the mana generation overlap of red and green. Also, it shares red and green's desire to make big beaters.

#54) Mudbrawler Raiders

Another card in the "block-me-not" cycle. We did toy with changing around the stats with these guys but in the end decided that the 2CC 3/3 fit perfectly for what we wanted them to be.

#55) Murderous Redcap



As we let -1/-1 counters bleed over to red, it seems only fair to let a little direct damage to creature bleed over to black. Also, creature kill seems like such a nice thing for black and red to bond over.

I've hit the halfway point so that means I'm done for today. Join me next week for #56 through #110.

Until then, may you find the meaningful overlaps in your own life.

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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