

REVISED SECOND EDITION

BESM

BIG EYES, SMALL MOUTH

In the myriad realms of imagination
there are an infinite number
of worlds to be discovered.

BESM SECOND EDITION
helps you explore
them all.

BIG EYES, SMALL MOUTH

The multi-genre
anime and manga
role-playing game.



ORIGINS AWARD NOMINATIONS
FOR BESM SECOND EDITION

BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF 2000
BEST RPG GRAPHIC DESIGN OF 2000

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When I first published *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* (FIRST EDITION) in time for GenCon (August) 1997, the term Tri-Stat System did not exist. The game simply became known as *BESM* and was a modest hit at the show: I sold out of the 125 copies I brought with me. Soon, the buzz about this new anime game made its way around the industry, and I started to see some decent penetration into the gaming distribution market. “Cool,” thought I. “This is fun.”

Fast forward to the GAMA Trade Show in March 1998. Marcelo Figueroa of *Shadis Magazine* told me that *BESM* was nominated for the 1998 Origins Awards in the Best Role-Playing Game category. I was stunned, naturally, but I also became much more confident in the company’s ability to survive — at least for a little while. *BESM* didn’t win, but that didn’t matter. The industry took note of the little 96-page book with hardly any rules.

Fast forward again to December 1998. The *Sailor Moon RPG and Resource Book* was released with a red, triangular logo on the back cover that read, “Tri-Stat System.” The game mechanics had a name, and a fan-following soon developed. “This is awesome,” thought I. “Much better than chemistry.”

Now it’s July 2000. GUARDIANS OF ORDER, INC. is a 7-person company with both Canadian and US offices. The game that started it all has been revised and expanded. It may seem odd that this 288-page, 100,000-word book is actually a SECOND EDITION of the first tiny one, but we are giving fans what they want. Magic has been greatly revised and explained in detail, but the original version is still there. Options for mecha creation have been increased dramatically, but the original material remains. Character creation has been retooled and reorganized, but it is not really that different from what I first published three years ago. *BESM* SECOND EDITION is not about making the game better than the first book; it’s about giving players more options. In the two mammoth chapters on character creation, I think you’ll agree that you now have all the options you could want.

The SECOND EDITION of *BESM* is very special to me because it represents the origin of the company and how it has changed and grown over the past three years. At times, it is unsettling that David now knows more about Tri-Stat — the game that I created — than I do. I certainly wouldn’t change this, however, since he has taken my original vision and transformed it into something much bigger. David has been the creative driving force behind Tri-Stat’s progression, and I think that he has done a wonderful job. Tri-Stat is no longer my child alone; it belongs to the company.

Thank you all for supporting us over the years. GUARDIANS OF ORDER has received assistance from countless people, and the enthusiasm of our fans has driven us to be the best we can be. We hope that you enjoy *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* SECOND EDITION, and continue enjoying it for many years to come.

Mark C. MacKinnon

July 2000

NOTE CONCERNING REVISED EDITION: This version of *BESM* is not substantially different than the standard SECOND EDITION, but instead repackages the entire book in a more compact format. Some minor errors have been corrected, and a little material has been added, but the two books are identical at the core.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS ANIME?

Anime is the accepted term for animation from Japan. It has garnered much more respect in its native country than North American cartoons have in Canada and the United States. One reason for the popularity of anime is its diverse subject matter, ranging from fantasy and science fiction to romantic comedy and horror. While North American cartoons tend to be written for younger audiences (with a few exceptions), anime includes many shows aimed explicitly at teenagers or older viewers, and this in turn permits more sophisticated story lines and a wider array of genres.

Another factor in the appeal of anime is the ongoing multi-episode story arcs that are a common feature of many live-action TV dramas. A show can tell a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end rather than simply present a series of disconnected episodes that lurch onward until cancellation.

Science fiction and fantasy fare very well in anime. Freed from the budgetary constraints imposed by the high cost of live-action special effects, coupled with a willingness to tackle stories that appeal to older viewers, many shows bring fantastic visions to vivid life. Alien invasions, world-shaking sorcery, transforming robots, super-powered heroes, demonic monsters, obsessively-detailed military hardware, and realistic depictions of life in space are all a part of anime. Characters in these shows are often larger than life: angst-ridden, utterly clueless, burning for revenge, or hopelessly in love.

ANIME ORIGINS

The first anime series produced in Japan was *Tetsuwan Atom* (1963), created by Osamu Tezuka and his animation studio, Mushi Productions. Later, this series became popular in the West as *Astro Boy*. From the 1980's through the 1990's, anime has improved in both sophistication and quality, with series like *Space Battleship Yamato* (1975, space opera), *Urusei Yatsura* (1981, alien girlfriend comedy), *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979, military drama), *Macross* (1983, science fiction soap opera), *Sailor Moon* (1992, magical girl drama) and *Ranma 1/2* (1994, martial arts comedy) exemplifying particular genres. A major breakthrough came in the early 1980's, when direct-to-video (OAV; Original Animation Video) anime releases caught on, allowing production studios to produce shows aimed at smaller niche audiences or older viewers in a much greater diversity of genres. The legacy of this "OAV boom" (and the rise of specialty cable TV) was a renaissance in original television anime in the late 1990's, of which the most influential series was the mecha-conspiracy saga, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1996).

In North America, relatively few anime-derived series were translated and adapted for television in the 1970's and 1980's. Most of those that did appear were heavily altered, often losing those Japanese elements (such as a continuing story arc) that made them interesting in the first place. Notable exceptions were *Star Blazers* (1979, the U.S. version of *Space Battleship Yamato*) and *Robotech* (1985, a compilation of *Macross* and two other anime shows), whose adaptations left their story arcs largely intact. The fandom that developed around these shows was sustained by various comics, books, and fan activities and helped fuel the first anime-inspired giant robot board games and RPGs. In 1986 and 1987 the first American anime magazines appeared. More and more Westerners became active in the distribution of Japanese language or fan-subtitled tapes, as fans became aware of the "OAV boom" taking place in Japan. Successful comic book translations of high quality Japanese manga (such as *Akira*, *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Nausicaa* and *Appleseed*) and the theatrical release of the *Akira* motion picture captured new fans.

In the late 1980's, a number of American companies began releasing quality subtitled and dubbed translations of anime releases, including some of the best of the then-new science fiction OAV series like *Gunbuster* (1988) and *Bubblegum Crisis* (1988). In the 1990's, the growing popularity of anime allowed companies to release longer TV series (notably *Ranma 1/2*, one of the first successful non-mecha series in America) direct to video. In 1995, the "impossible" happened when the magical girl show, *Sailor Moon*, began appearing on North American television, the first *shojo* (young girl) anime to do so. Its success has added a new generation of young female (and male) fans.