

# Signs & Portents

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Now if your families are anything like mine, Christmas will have consisted of a lot of food, lots of laughs and the consumption of enough alcohol to bring down a few battalions of elephants! Yes my family likes to do it in style. This year was like any other. I awoke whilst it was still dark outside and proceeded to muck out stables and feed horses, with my mother begrudgingly “helping” whilst muttering to herself “merry bl\*\*dy Christmas to me!”.

This was followed by a trip to my dad’s house where my 88 year old grandmother told us how she used to love Christmas as a girl... and then she told us again... and again... and again... pretty much on continuous loop for an hour!

A short visit with my Aunt Rosemary and Uncle Nigel helped to get us in the party spirit, before we got to my Aunt Ann and Uncle Chris’s house, which was to be our base of operations from there on out. My other half and I were swiftly enlisted for veg peeling duty, however my uncle did his best to encourage us my constantly refuelling the wine glasses, allowing the activity to become more enjoyable by the minute!

After much merriment, and once everyone had arrived, we sat down to eat the pterodactyl that my aunt had clearly mistaken for a turkey and cooked to perfection. Once all had been eaten, and many had fallen asleep, including my other half who appeared to have been eaten by the sofa, my uncle and I sat down to commence our Christmas tradition... watching the Football Factory. Now many of you may be thinking “football hooligans... what’s Christmassy about that?”. Yet after a day that is so completely lovey dovey fluffy and cuddly, there really is nothing better than a bit of mindless violence on the telly... that and the fact that when you have been drinking all day that film becomes the funniest film you have ever seen! Happy New Year!

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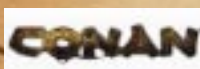
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Sample file

## Convention and Events Diary

### **WarpCon XIX**

University College, Cork, Ireland  
Fri 23rd - Sunday 25th Jan 2009  
[www.warpcon.com](http://www.warpcon.com)

### **Conception 2009.**

Naish Holiday Village, Highcliffe,  
Christchurch, Dorset, UK  
Wed 28th Jan - Sun 1st Feb 2009  
[www.conceptionuk.org](http://www.conceptionuk.org)

### **Conflagration 2009**

Queen Margaret Union, Glasgow,  
Scotland  
Sat 21st - Sun 22nd Feb 2009  
[www.conflagration.org.uk](http://www.conflagration.org.uk)

### **Leprecon XXX**

Goldsmith Hall, Pearse St, Dublin 2,  
Ireland  
Fri 27th Feb - Sun 1st March 2009  
[www.lepricon.ie](http://www.lepricon.ie)

### **Travcon 2009**

Redwings Lodge Hotel, Huntingdon,  
Cambridgeshire, UK  
Fri 13th - Sun 15th March 2009

### **Concrete Cow '09**


The Old Bath House, Wolverton, Milton  
Keynes, UK  
Sat 14th March 2009  
[www.mk-rpg.org.uk/Concrete\\_Cow](http://www.mk-rpg.org.uk/Concrete_Cow)

### **Salute Zero Nine**

ExCel, London, UK  
Sat 28th March 2009  
[www.salute.co.uk](http://www.salute.co.uk)

### **Dragonmeet Southwest**

The Croft Sports Centre, Swindon,  
Wiltshire, UK  
Sun 19th April 2009  
[www.mongoosepublishing.com](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com)



**Tentacles 2009**  
Castle Stahleck, Bacharach, Germany  
Fri 28th May - Mon 1st June 2009  
[www.tentacles-convention.de](http://www.tentacles-convention.de)

**UK GAME EXPO 2009**  
The Clarendon Suites, Stirling Road,  
Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK  
Sat 6th - Sun 7th June 2009  
[www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk](http://www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk)

**AmberCon UK '09**  
Harben House, Newport Pagnell,  
Buckinghamshire, UK  
Fri 10th - Sun 12th July 2009  
[www.ambercon.org.uk](http://www.ambercon.org.uk)

**Yog-Sothoth.CON 2009**  
University of Bradford, Student's Union,  
Bradford, UK  
Fri 10th - Sun 12th July 2009  
[www.yog-sothoth.com](http://www.yog-sothoth.com)

**Constitution 2009**  
New Hall Cambridge, UK  
Fri 31st July - Sun 2nd August 2009  
[www.constitution-con.org.uk](http://www.constitution-con.org.uk)

**Gen Con UK 2009**  
University of Reading, Berkshire, UK  
Wed 2nd - Sun 6th September 2009  
[www.horsemenevents.com](http://www.horsemenevents.com)

**Furnace 2009**  
The Garrison Hotel, Sheffield, UK  
Sat 10th - Sun 11th Oct 2009  
[www.rpgfurnace.com](http://www.rpgfurnace.com)

**Ludicrus '09**  
Kesgrave Community Centre, Ipswich,  
UK  
Sat 5th - Sun 6th Dec 2009  
[www.ludicrus.org](http://www.ludicrus.org)

More events will be added to this list on a  
monthly basis as they are confirmed

# Press Play

## DVD Reviews for Gamers

By Bryan Steele

Hello and happy New Year, your gift...another edition of *Press Play*, DVD reviews for gamers by a movie-loving game designer! This month we are looking at four drastically different movies; one childhood favourite, one that was a late night choice to satisfy an urge for *brains*, one that is amongst the most quotable in gamer-moviedom and finally a movie that made a man's career and showed that horror and sci-fi can still be married successfully after *Alien*.

Game playing or designing requires new and interesting ideas and movies often help me come up with mine. I hope that by looking at these DVD reviews you might find a few new ideas of your own!

### The Press Play Gamer Rating System

**1d4** – Not a DVD I enjoyed or recommend; definitely not a worthwhile rental.

**1d6** – A rather negative experience with a few shining moments; rent it if you are bored.

**1d8** – The average movie-watching event. Rent it, watch it, and buy if you like it...but probably do not buy it without watching it first.

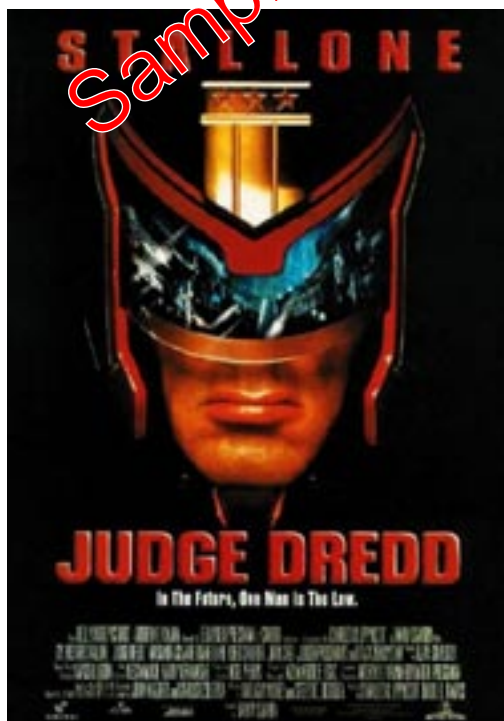
**1d10** – I liked it and found it inspiring in some way for my gaming; an overall enjoyable experience. You should really go out and rent this DVD if you are fan of the genre.

**1d20** – This was a great movie and I highly recommend it to anyone reading this column. You may as well go out and buy it, because I think you probably will after you see it anyway.

**1d100** – Why are you still reading this? Go and get this movie!!!

### Judge Dredd

Hollywood Pictures



While our *Gangs of Mega-City One* and *Judge Dredd RPG* are currently out of print, new futures for the license are on the horizon so I dug out this classic from 1995 and dropped it into the player – reminding myself how much I enjoyed this film. Sylvester Stallone gets a rough wrap for his portrayal of the Judge himself but I ask anyone to say they think of anyone else when they read the old comics and come across that stiff chin and *winning* personality. Stallone did not win any Oscars for his portrayal of Dredd – but I think he was perfect for the role.

The movie itself is based around a decent plotline about Judge Dredd being framed for a crime that he did not commit and being sent off into a prison system filled with his own judgments. The transport ship runs into some trouble and the real test for Dredd begins. The movie is peppered with unexpected appearances from the 2000 A.D. comics like the Angel Gang out in the Cursed Earth and one of the best animatronics enforcer robots of its time or any other – a real testament to the non-CGI special effects at the time.

While I'm a big fan of 'buddy movies' and 'plucky sidekicks' in many films, I did not care too much for Rob Schneider's 'Ferguson'. I like the presence of a wrongly judged individual but I think he became too much of a constant reminder that Dredd has no sense of humour – by repeatedly slathering on Schneider's. I see the need for a bit of lightness in the dark and

gritty world of Dredd for a mainstream audience, although with newer, darker comic book movies doing so well lately (*The Dark Knight* or even *Blade* to mention two off the top of my head) I think a more action-y Dredd movie with a higher body count and more Judge action could have done well, too.

It may not be the greatest film ever made but it does reek of the sorts of things that make Judge Dredd the fun and interesting flick that it is. Every time I see it something inside of me wants to haul out my *Mega-City One* figures and see if I can't scrape up a game around here somewhere. Of course...now they stare up at me begging me to make some *Battlefield Evolution* rules for MC-1. But, with Matthew working on a new frontier for Dredd and the gang-lads, I foresee quite a few readers out there dropping this movie in their DVD players and yelling along with old Sly when he's standing out in the middle of that block war, 'I am...the law!'

**Gamer Rating:** 1d10

### An Alternative View

Contrary to my esteemed colleagues opinion, and despite my passion for all things Judge Dredd and Mega-City One, Stallone was so not the actor of choice to play Old Stoney Face. Watching him struggle through lines such as 'I. . .am. . . the. . .Law. . .' was just painful, as was the cringing removal of the helmet. Yes, I know it is mega-superstar Stallone, but the creep 'allegedly' read through loads of the comic strips to get the right 'feel' for the character, apparently missing that the trademark of Dredd never removing his helmet. And don't get me started on Hershey – kissing Dredd at the end? In the comics, that would have been quickly followed up with 'Soliciting a Judge? 12 years, creep!'

I have other issues too. The portrayal of Mega-City One itself just seemed a little off to me, with the city being interchangeable with that of, say, *Blade Runner*. There was just nothing 'Mega-City One' about it.

Don't get me wrong, it is not all awful – if you approach it as a generic science fiction film, you'll find it decent enough. However, for me, it loses points for attempting to replicate Judge Dredd, and missing the mark.

Matthew's Rating: 1d6



### The Neverending Story

*Neue Constantin Film*

Originally titled *Die Unendliche Geschichte* from the original West German screenplay, this 1984 classic fantasy/faerie tale was one of my favourite childhood movies. I remember seeing it at the very beginning of my roleplaying

'career' and I remember how much I wished that the stories I had read would come true. Of course, I was eight years old and thought that having dragons and goblins running around on Franklin Street would be great...but that goes to show why I ended up in this business.

I digress.

This movie is the ultimate child reader's dream – a storybook that, when read, comes to life around you. The story revolves around a poor bullied kid named Bastian (played by Barret Oliver) that decides to hide from the kids chasing him in an old bookstore. In the bookstore he discovers an old book, 'The Neverending Story'. Taking the book, Bastian begins to read the tale.

The plot of the movie is actually the plot of the book, as a great 'Nothing' is tearing away the storybook land of Fantasia piece by piece. The princess of this realm is sick and dying alongside her world and a young boy named Atreyu is sent off to fight and destroy the Nothing. Of course, as the story progresses the young boy Bastian finds his own name and experience appearing in what he is reading. The story was not just about the Nothing, it was about Bastian's belief in the story.

Essentially, for all of you *Glorantha* fans out there, I see this movie as a good way of looking on how Myth and Hero Questing works. It has to be strange for the Questors to work on the legends of *Glorantha* while being a part of what they were at the same time. Although perhaps overacted a little, Bastian's reactions to finding out he was in the story he was reading – while it was essentially writing itself with his decisions – were perfect. Anyone who is planning on running a *RuneQuest: Glorantha* game that might include some Hero Questing might want