

Mutant Memories

By Matt Forbeck
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It was Bob Watts who first introduced me to *Mutant Chronicles*, the roleplaying game that provided the background for the *Doomtrooper* and *Dark Eden* collectible card games and the *Warzone* miniatures game. That's the real Bob Watts, then-president of Heartbreaker Hobbies, not "Big Bob" Watts, his namesake in the game.

This was back in '92 or '93, when I was still a rookie game designer. I'd worked with Bob back when he'd run Grenadier Models and edited some projects for him there. When he started up Heartbreaker, he set himself up as the American publisher of all *Mutant Chronicles* products, starting with the *Blood Berets* board game and the RPG.

The original *Mutant Chronicles* roleplaying game was written in Swedish and translated into English before being published here. That's because the original publisher was Target Games AB of Stockholm, then the rough equivalent of Milton Bradley in Sweden.

Target wanted to be an international powerhouse. It struck deals to have its games made in several different languages. Because of that, they wanted their future products to be created first in English. Lots of translators across the globe can speak English, but precious few know Swedish as well. It made sense to start with the most common tongue and then make all the translations from there.

To manage this, Target needed an English-speaking game designer. They asked Bob about it, and he asked me if I wanted a shot at it.

Opportunities like that don't knock too often. I kicked down the door and beat it near senseless until it stopped thinking about running off.

When I got my first copy of the RPG, my jaw dropped. Paul Bonner's cover hooked me, and the rest of the book reeled me in. A stylish, dark, mystical future with daring heroes, big guns, and demons from beyond: What's not to love?

I wrote *The Brotherhood* and *Capitol*. Then we hauled in Bill King, my roommate from my days at Games Workshop. He wrote most of the books from there, and I edited them, including *Warzone*.

To me, that was the Dream Team of miniatures game design: Bill King (now writing novels for Games Workshop and living in Prague), Henrik Strandberg (now a senior producer for Atari), and me (still plugging along—see www.forbeck.com for details), all under the auspices of Fred Malmberg (now running Conan Properties International and Paradox Entertainment) and Bob Watts (who's just left another company he founded—Sabertooth Games—after selling it to Games Workshop). Toss in artists like Michael Stenmark (now with idolFX) and Paolo Parente, and an all-star sculptor team of Mark Copplestone, Phil Lewis, Tim Prow, and Kev Adams, and you just can't beat it.

We were riding high. At one point, there was even a *Mutant Chronicles* movie in the works, starring all the favorite heroes: Mitch Hunter, Big Bob Watts, Valerie Duval, and Max Steiner. Pressman Films put millions of dollars into preproduction and the script, and they even lined up Ben Kingsley to play one of my favorite heroes, Crenshaw the Mortificator. But like many things in Hollywood, it never came together.

Target eventually bought Heartbreaker, putting everything under one tent. The company fell apart a couple years later after overextending itself in other markets. There was fear that the games might languish.

That's where Thom Talamini and Excelsior came in. Thanks to Thom for stepping forward and retrieving *Warzone* from the rubble. I'm thrilled to see someone pull out that bolter, dust it off, check the action, and then keep on firing. It couldn't be in better hands.

That's one of the great things about games like *Warzone* and stories like *Mutant Chronicles*. Once they're out there, they can't ever really die. As long as someone somewhere keeps playing with them—like you, with this spanking-new edition—they're still kicking. And the memories, they never die.

— Matt Forbeck, June 18, 2004