

TACTICAL ANALYSIS AND VARIANT:

# STARSOLDIER

## Doctrine, Tactics, and Capabilities

by Steve List

One of the most difficult things to do when confronted with a new game system is to get a "handle" on just what it is that you should be attempting to accomplish each Game-Turn. Reading the rules and the player's notes is of course a necessary first step, but it usually doesn't provide enough of a feel for what you're supposed to be doing. *StarSoldier* being one of our more exotic new games, it's probably fortunate that Mr. List has written the following.

—RAS

As the designer points out, *StarSoldier* is derived from *Sniper!* and *Patrol*. But beyond that, don't lean on the family tree. The conditioned reflexes for those games are not too applicable here. The similarities are viable only to the extent that *StarSoldier* is a si-move game in which the counters represent individual "men." The turn sequence seems fairly standard in that units conduct direct fire and launch missiles, resolve effects of direct fire, move, and then resolve effects of missile fire. What is new is that each of these activities consumes "Task Points," of which each individual has a limited supply each turn. He can do anything he wants as long as he has the points to spend on it, while damage to each individual is quantified by reductions in his Task Point Allowance. He is not "dead" until his TPA falls to zero, and short of that, there is the possibility of recovery to full original efficiency.

The importance of terrain varies. In the previous games, it was something to be lived with and died in. But *StarSoldiers* seldom die; they just fade away. Terrain can be traversed easily or with difficulty. Troops can be in Ground Mode and pay full movement costs; but in return they get defensive benefits and full countermeasure efficiency. Troops in Airborne Mode at High Altitude can see virtually anywhere and move freely, but get little defensive strength from thin air and suffer from halved efficiency for countermeasures. The compromise is to be Airborne at Nape of the Earth. This does nothing for CM efficiency and cuts down the Line of Fire, but allows full airborne mobility while gaining the defensive benefits of terrain. (Of course, the Rame love to be at NOE.)

In brief, if you don't need to move around, go to ground and get full CM. Otherwise, stay at NOE. High Altitude buys you nothing but visibility, generally not desirable in that anything you can shoot at can (and probably will) shoot at you. Line of Fire is not so important anyway, as the bulk of the damage to the enemy will be done by Launched

### STARSOLDIER TASK CHART [from rules]

| Code | Task Points Expended | Description   |
|------|----------------------|---|
| [MV] | varies               | <b>Movement</b> , hex-by-hex, across the map. Task Point expenditures vary with the terrain and movement "Mode."                                    |
| [GD] | 3TP or 0TP           | <b>Grounding</b> . The act of converting to Ground Mode (the Star Soldier equivalent of "hitting the dust").  |
| [NE] | 3TP                  | <b>Nap of Earth</b> . The act of moving to Airborne Mode from Ground Mode, only slightly above the terrain surface.                                 |
| [HA] | 3TP                  | <b>High Altitude</b> . The act of moving to Airborne Mode from Nap of Earth at a higher altitude (about 5 km).                                      |
| [LP] | 3+TP                 | <b>Launching a Guided Positron Bomb</b> toward a specific target hex.   |
| [LM] | 3TP                  | <b>Launching a Free-Flight Missile Cluster</b> toward a specific target hex.  |
| [DF] | varies               | <b>Direct Fire</b> aimed against a specific target hex.   |
| [RF] | varies               | <b>Restricted Fire</b> aimed at a specific target soldier.  |
| [OF] | varies               | <b>Opportunity Fire</b> pre-allocated with no specific target, in the anticipation that one will present itself sometime during the Movement Phase. |
| [CM] | varies               | <b>Counter-Measures</b> . A variety of techniques carried out to confuse Enemy detection efforts, in order to weaken or prevent attacks.            |
| [SE] | 1TP                  | <b>Search</b> a particular hex; see Case 13.43.   |
| [TR] | 3TP                  | <b>Transport</b> a wounded Soldier or non-combatant; see 13.44.   |
| [LG] | 3+TP                 | <b>Launch Opacity Grenade</b> (Standard Game, see 18.0).  |
| [LH] | 3+TP                 | <b>Launch Homing Missile</b> (Standard Game, see 19.0).   |
| [LN] | 3+TP                 | <b>Launch Neutron Bomb</b> (Standard Game, see 24.0).   |

Weapons, with Direct Fire used to polish off individuals with badly reduced TPAs. Since no LOF is required for missile fire, hole up in mountainous or wooded terrain to avoid enemy DF and spend all your TPs on LW and CM. There are always exceptions to the rule. Heavy Weapon soldiers have doubled efficiency in direct fire tasks and are wasted if they can't employ it. A few of these soldiers with good fields of fire should be spotted around when available and plotted to use Opportunity Fire to swat away enemy busy-bodies at High Altitude trying to draw a bead on your missile launchers.

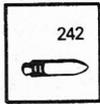
For defensive purposes, mountainous and urban cover are the strongest. Next best is organic cover (woods); such terrain will craterize from missiles, but as long as it lasts it will protect you from missile near-misses, besides giving a decent defense strength. The other terrain (rough, clear, crater and lake) should be used only when nothing else is available, while being on the ground in clear terrain is justifiable only if you really need the CM efficiency or can't afford to fly. A final note: anybody who relies on terrain and CM to protect himself from the Xenophobes and their neutron bombs deserves to be vaporized. These bombs don't care what kind of terrain you are in, and CM can be overcome by shooting a lot of bombs in your general vicinity in the hope that at least one will scatter into your hex. If that happens, there is no chance of survival.

Terrain is not the only aspect of the game that can be approached in a variety of ways; weapons can as well. Rules permitting, every soldier has every type weapon at his disposal—not being stuck with a machine pistol when he needs a grenade launcher, in effect. So what weapons are best? As noted, HW units *per se* are most efficiently used for the various direct fire tasks, but that DF is not in itself decisive. Neglecting for the moment support platforms and the orbital stuff, consider the "man-carried" ordnance available.

### DIRECT, OPPORTUNITY AND RESTRICTED FIRE

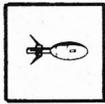
Except for a Rame Killer Swarm, the largest attack strength which can be generated for direct fire is 24 (6 TB x 4 Efficiency), and this is unlikely as it leaves the firing unit with no TP for self protection. Practically, an expenditure of 3 or 4 TP will be more common, so figure 12 or 16 factors for Rame or HW units, 6 or 8 for others (except the Xenos, of course). As a typical target, take a soldier on the ground in the woods at a relatively short range of 15 hexes, with a total CM value of 4. His defense strength will be 3 (woods) +2 (range attenuation) +4 (CM) = 9, making him

impervious to the weaker fire, and leaving the Rame HW attack at a differential of 3 or 7 respectively. Seven is not a bad differential. There is only one chance in 36 of the target escaping any damage, and one chance in six of killing even the hardest species in the game. Three is not so good. While there is still a chance of killing any possible target, the target is much more likely to be unharmed and more likely yet to be only moderately hurt. To achieve this modest result, the none too numerous Rame/HW unit must expend at least half its permissible TPs and place itself in a position where it is also vulnerable to fire. The primary use of DF should be to keep your opponent honest by causing small but annoying TPA losses. Direct fire cannot become decisive until your units make themselves vulnerable to counter-fire. Such use should be delayed until the enemy is unable to exploit this vulnerability against you.



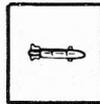
### HOMING MISSILES

These are cute little gadgets, probably the most effective weapon in the game. To defeat them requires large TP expenditures for CM and defensive Opportunity Fire, and unless it catches you in decent defensive terrain, it will likely do a lot of damage when it hits. These are also the only weapon other than forms of Direct Fire which can hit a moving target. They can also be deployed as mines, but a word of caution is in order. Remember the definition of "acquisition horizon" and the TPA of 6 the missile has. Don't place it where it could acquire a target too far away to reach, or which is likely to be moving away at the time of acquisition.



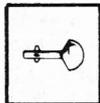
### GUIDED POSITRON BOMBS

Another handy item. These can only be fired at specific locations and are thus useless against targets on the move. But whenever you see an enemy soldier in Ground Mode, chuck a few in his direction and he is unlikely to move in the next phase.



### FREE FLIGHT MISSILES

Unlike positron bombs, these are limited to a range of only ten hexes. In general, they are not as good as positron bombs either, but if the target is expending more than 5 TP's on Countermeasures, a free flight bomb is more likely to get through.



### OPACITY GRENADES

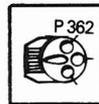
These are not a weapon *per se*, but in the right circumstances might be invaluable. They can

be used as a "smoke" screen to shield an otherwise vulnerable unit from direct fire. But, like smoke, it is a passive device and can only be effective when circumstances and the enemy are accommodating.



### NEUTRON BOMBS

These are the only Launched Weapons available to the Xenophobes, and they can be used by no other species. They are also the most powerful weapon in the game, since they destroy anything they hit and turn even mountains into craters. Similar in use to positron bombs, they are more likely to scatter. As noted, the only defense against them is to avoid being where one lands, and this means moving a lot since the Xeno will probably saturate the area and hope bombs will scatter into occupied hexes.



### SUPPORTING HEAVY WEAPONS

Chief among these is the Support Platform. This can be thought of as a tank, but it is functionally just a StarSoldier who is nearly invincible, always stays at High Altitude and possesses a Direct Fire weapon of 24 strength points which costs no TP to fire. Beyond that, it's not so special. Obviously, the Support Platform should be used in the DF role, while doubling as a missile launcher.



### HUMAN ANDROID STARSOLDIER

Orbital weapons are also available in the form of explosive and opacity bombs and laser barrages. Except for the increased scatter potential of the bombs, these are merely super-powerful forms of the weapons discussed above. Like artillery or close air support in a conventional game, they can become overpowering and take all the "fun" out of combat. Androids are not really weapons, but inorganic StarSoldiers. They are a liability in combat in that they have no extra abilities to compensate for their inability to recover from damage, and so depress your preservation level. In most circumstances, don't use them if you have an option.



### HUMAN STARSOLDIER

### HUMAN HW STARSOLDIER



What about the "men" who wield these weapons? Each of the four species in the game has some weakness, but most have a particular strength to make up for it. The Humans, for example, have a mediocre TPA of 9, which means they cannot expend the maximum of 6 TP in each Stage of the game turn. Likewise, their Efficiency Rating of 2 is good but not great. Their strongest feature is the Recovery value of 3, a full one third of the TPA. By avoiding further damage or stunnings, a Human can in one stage recover a

significant part of its lost TPA and rally from near death in three. When fighting non-Humans, this allows him to cheat a little and devote fewer TP's to defensive measures than he might otherwise, in the expectation that any damage suffered will be of short duration.



### L'CHAL DAH STARSOLDIER

The L'Chal Dah have the maximum TPA of 12, and an Efficiency of 2. This allows them to match a Human task for task and then some, and it means they can take more damage before being killed. The weakness they are stuck with is a low recovery rate of 1, which means the extra TP must be devoted to defense to avoid damage in the first place. Once one is seriously hurt, the advantage of a greater TPA is gone and he is of little more value than an android.



### RAME STARSOLDIER

On the surface, the Rame are in poor shape with a TPA of only 6, even though they have an excellent Efficiency of 4 and a reasonable Recovery rate of 2. The Rame do not come in Heavy Weapons versions, either, so the Efficiency of 4 is the best they have. But they have an ability which transcends that; they can form a "Killer Swarm" that is in effect a single soldier with a TPA of 18. In each Stage of the turn, one member of the Swarm can use all 6 TP for offense, while the third splits his to provide CM in each stage. Or, as a maximum effort, a Swarm could generate up to 72 strength points of DF in a single stage. Of course, if the Swarm is to move, each member must expend TP for the task, somewhat reducing the group total for other uses. The Rame also possess two other tactical advantages: they are always in Command Communications and their CM Efficiency is halved when on the ground, rather than when Airborne. In most situations, to be at NOE is the strongest defense posture they can take.



### XENOPHOBE STARSOLDIER

Xenophobes have absolutely no redeeming virtues, which may make it hard to find anyone willing to play their side. They have a reasonable TPA of 9, but Efficiency and Recovery rates of only 1. They are defensively weak and unable to generate much Direct Firepower, and then have only one Launched Weapon to use. Of course, that one is the redoubtable Neutron bomb; but to be at all effective, it must be used en masse.

One of the most attractive aspects of this game is the variations in the combatants themselves. When you attempt to out-guess another species, it is not enough to know what you would do in his shoes. First, you have to figure out if he is even able to wear shoes.

## Expanded Capabilities

Scenario 31.0 of *StarSoldier* sets up a unique situation in that it is the only one representing combat between two intelligent species which have never encountered each other before. Unfortunately, much of the flavor of this type of combat is missing in that each player knows the full capacities of the other; the unknown has been defined in the rules.

The purpose of this article is to provide a system for players to use in secretly generating the species capacities and deciding what weapons will be available to the StarSoldiers they will use. Guidelines are included to keep each player in the dark as much as possible to preserve the groping nature of this situation. While the rules below are intended specifically for scenario 31.0, they can obviously be extended to any situation the players may desire.

Scenario 31.0 is as written except that rule 31.32 is deleted and 31.2 is modified as follows: The Alpha player may select a force composed of units whose total "Specific Tactical Value" (defined below) is no more than 120. The Bravo player may select a force limited to a total STV of 100. In addition, he may spend up to 4 of his 100 points for Homing Missiles to be used as mines at a cost of one point each, if such weapons are available to him. Either player may make use of such missiles as launched weapons, if they are available to that player. The Preservation Level for each player is 60% of the total TPA of all his units (except for certain androids—see below) plus a modifier for any support platforms.

### GENERATING SPECIES CAPACITIES

**TPA:** Roll three dice; halve the total, dropping fractions, and add 5. This will result in a value between 6 and 14. If the TPA is greater than 12, then that species can expend only up to 7 TP in either stage of the game turn.

**Efficiency:** Roll one die; halve the result, dropping fractions. However, no species can have an efficiency of less than 1, and if the TPA as determined above is 6, that species may add 1 to its efficiency rating as well.

**Recovery:** Roll one die; halve the result, rounding fractions upward.

### AVAILABILITY OF STANDARD WEAPONS

Roll one die once for each item listed to see if it is available.

**Die**

**Roll**

**Needed Weapon**

- 1-3 Homing Missiles
- 1-4 Guided Positron Bombs
- 1-5 Free Flight Missiles
- 1-4 Opacity Grenades

### AVAILABILITY OF STANDARD FEATURES

- 1-4 Support Platform
- 1-5 Heavy Weapon Star Soldier
- 1-4 Android Star Soldier

### AVAILABILITY OF SPECIAL WEAPONS AND CAPABILITIES

- 1 Neutron Bomb
- 1-2 Expendable Androids
- 1-2 Self-repairing Androids
- 1-2 Airborne CM Efficiency
- 1-2 Group Mind 3
- 1-2 Telepathic Command Communications
- 1-2 Telepathic Attack 1,3
- 1-2 Clairvoyance 1,2,3
- 1-2 Prescience 1,2,3
- 1-2 Telekinesis 3
- 1-2 Teleportation 3
- 1-2 Telepathic Immunity

The *Specific Tactical Value* for a standard StarSoldier is the sum of the TPA, Efficiency, and Recovery Rate. From this subtract one for each Standard Weapon which is *not* available. Add one for each Special Weapon and Capability which *is* available. For example, for Humans, the STV is  $9+2+3=14$ ; for the Rame  $6+4+2+(2)=14$ ; for the Xenophobes  $9+1+1+(1-4)=8$ .

The STV for a Heavy Weapon soldier is the Standard STV plus the Efficiency value. For Androids, it is the standard STV minus the recovery rate and minus any special capabilities with the numeral 3. If the player has self-repairing androids, he may subtract only the difference between the android and organic recovery rates. The STV for a Support Platform is eight times the standard STV.

### DEFINITIONS OF SPECIAL CAPABILITIES

**Expendable Androids:** These androids have no regrets about being munitions; as a result, damage to them does not reflect in the player's Preservation Level, nor is their TPA included in determining that level.

**Self-repairing Androids:** These are more "alive" than the usual androids and have a recovery rate of 1.

(Note that a player can roll the die for only one of these android types, not both).

**Airborne CM Efficiency:** Apply rule 23.2, that is, the Efficiency rating for CM is halved while in Ground Mode and normal while in Airborne Mode.

**Group Mind 3:** Apply rules 23.1, 23.3 and 16.22. Units may form Killer Swarms, share CM and are always in Command Communications. Note that only the latter provision applies to androids. These may never take part in a Killer Swarm or share CM in any manner with other units.

**Telepathic Command Communications:** Apply rules 23.3 and 16.22 only. Note that if a player has Group Mind, he has this capability as well.

**Telepathic Attack 1,3:** Each soldier may attack one or more enemy units by telepathic means. For each 2 TP expended by the attacking unit, the target unit is deprived of the use of one TP for that Stage, though its TPA is not reduced.

**Clairvoyance 1,2,3:** Each soldier can pick a single enemy soldier or Killer Swarm to investigate. The opposing player must then reveal what tasks that soldier/swarm is plotted to do, if it is in Command Communication, if it is an android, and if it has suffered a reduction in its TPA. He need not tell how many TP's are to be expended on each task or by how much the TPA has been reduced.

**Prescience 1,2,3:** This is similar to Clairvoyance, but the only information given is what hex the soldier/swarm is plotted to occupy at the end of the movement phase.

**Telekinesis 3:** This allows the player to use mental influence on material objects. He may modify by one in his favor all die rolls for scatter/interception of all launched weapons he fires or which are fired at him. This requires no TP cost.

**Teleportation 3:** In either stage of a game-turn, two or more units may cooperate for teleportation. A unit must expend one TP for teleport movement, which allows it to move anywhere on the board to the same hex and altitude as the friendly unit aiding its movement. The moving unit may continue moving normally after teleporting. The aiding unit must expend at least one half of the normally allowable TP's in the stage (i.e., half of the 6 TP's most units can spend) for each unit it assists, and it can spend TP's on no other activity but CM in that Stage. If either the moving or aiding unit suffers a Stun or TPA loss as a result of direct fire in that Stage, the teleport is aborted.

**Telepathic Immunity:** All forms of telepathic activity indicated by the numeral (1) above are useless against units with telepathic immunity. The telepathic player need not be informed of this, however. He can go on making telepathic attacks fruitlessly without being told they have no effect; but if units investigated by Clairvoyance or Prescience fail to do what they say they will, he should catch on. However, all androids automatically possess telepathic immunity, and only Clairvoyance can distinguish androids from organic units.

**Explanation of numerals:**

(1): This capability is useless against units with telepathic immunity as explained above.  
 (2): These particular abilities (Clairvoyance and Prescience) require considerable effort. The investigation performed applies only to the first Stage of the game turn, but the performance of the task requires the full turn to complete and recover. The investigating unit must expend at least one-half of its full strength TPA in the first Stage, and all remaining TP's (and at least one) in the second, so that a unit whose TPA has been reduced to half or less its original value cannot use this ability. The investigating unit cannot expend TP's for any other purpose in that game turn; and if, due to a combat result, it cannot expend at least one TP in the second Stage, it will suffer "psychic shock." As an example, a unit whose normal TPA is 10 has been reduced to 8. To use Prescience, it must expend 5 TP in the first Stage and the

remaining 3 in the second. As a result of combat in the first Stage, it suffers a TPA loss of 6. Since it could safely lose only 2 of the 3 TPs it had available for the second stage, it is affected by psychic shock for the next 4 game turns. The effect of psychic shock is that the unit is treated as if it were dead; it cannot expend TP's or cover TPA losses. It will not suffer any additional TPA loss, however, unless it is attacked after it has gone into shock. Note that a unit may be able to use both Clairvoyance and Prescience, but not in the same game turn. If only one player's units has one of these capabilities, he need not plot the activities of his units until his opponent has done so and he has conducted his investigations. If both players have one of these abilities, then both must plot all their activities, then each investigates. At that point, each player may change the plot of one of his units for each unit of his that used a telepathic investigation. He may not change the plot of any of his own units which either were investigated or made an investigation. (3): Androids may not possess any of these capabilities.

#### MISSILE WEAPONLOAD LIMITS

StarSoldiers presumably are not pack horses and do not carry an indefinite number of

expendable weapons. The cover art suggests this is the case, so I propose the following load limit: 18 points for a standard soldier, 24 for an android or Heavy Weapons soldier, and unlimited for a Support Platform. Each Homing Missile or Neutron Bomb counts as 3 points, Guided Positron Bombs as 2, Free Flight Missiles and Opacity Grenades as 1. Soldiers/platforms can transfer as much ordnance as they want between themselves by each party expending one TP while they are in the same hex at the same altitude at the same time. A soldier may also take whatever he wants from a friendly soldier/platform by expending 2 TP, if they begin the movement phase in the same hex at the same altitude. In this case, the giving unit need expend no TP, and could even be dead. A record of what each soldier carries can be kept on paper or by placing an appropriate marker on the unit's TPA track.

#### TACTICAL SECURITY

Since this is the first contact between aliens, neither player should know what the capabilities, capacities and weapons available to his opponent are, at least not until they have been used against him. Players should not be allowed to see each other's TPA tracks or be told when a unit dies. Dead units should

be left on the board in the same location they occupied at the time of demise. (This makes playing dead a legitimate tactic). The only way to determine if a unit is really dead is to conduct a Search Task in its location.

To further obscure things, a player may use any type of counter to represent his soldiers, such as an android for a regular soldier. The correct unit type must be recorded on paper (i.e., the plot sheet) however. Also, "IND" markers should be placed on the unit TPA track rather than on the board. How is the other guy to know who is in Command Communications?

As can be seen, use of these rules requires that players have enough decency to avoid cheating. Hopefully, the uniqueness of going up against a totally unknown foe will be so attractive that no one will feel the need to win by foul means.

#### SUGGESTED TASK CODES

TA: Telepathic Attack; TL-M: Teleportation-Movement; TL-A: Teleportation-Aiding; CV: Clairvoyant Investigation; PS: Prescience Investigation; TR: Transfer of Ordnance.

## Starship Trooper/Starsoldier

[continued from page 6]

Naturally Android death would count less. (Xenobhobe scenarios are fights to the death, and Preservation is ignored.)

Tacked at the end of the rules is the *StarForce* Link, which enables owners of that game to play out their strategic battles on a tactical level. This can be a very time-consuming thing, and most people probably won't try it more than once. I guess if the link were not there, though, people would complain. It involves 100,000-Soldier Strike Commands, small portions of which are represented in three *StarSoldier* scenarios, in representative actions. If one side has 80% casualties in the three scenarios, 80,000 men of each Strike Command are considered casualties. Obviously it would be almost impossible to show every one of the circa 10,000 battles fought for the planet. I say *almost* because it would be feasible to begin such a series with the understanding that it would be completed by your firstborn male child, but otherwise it would be a joke to think about. One *very* nice part of the Link game is that if one side inflicts too many civilian casualties, the Telesthetics Guild may end the war, rendering the killers the losers regardless of the strategic situation. All things considered, *StarSoldier* is physically attractive. The counters are very nicely detailed. The map is mediocre, though the urban hexes are very imaginative, resembling Tinker-toys. But Simonsen outdid himself with the cover illustration. After months of bad-mouthing the *Starship Troopers* cover RAS was determined to best it. RAS came up with a striking shot of two Human StarSoldiers being attacked with what are either

bolts of concentrated high energy or very large Jell-O molds.

There is a third tactical ground game I mention out of fairness. Attack Wargaming's *Rift Trooper* is essentially *Starship Troopers* with the names changed. It is physically not bad (for Attack, that is) and there is some effort made to make the game different and futuristic. Effort, I said; not success. It has a passable cover sheet, and that is the extent of what I'll say about *Rift Trooper* except that it has three maps and the tunnel combat rules *could* be worse and it is ridiculously overpriced at eight dollars. And it came *before* the AH *Starship Troopers*, so claims of plagiarism I've heard from customers are groundless and unfair.

Both *Starship Troopers* and *StarSoldier* have virtues and flaws. Both games are worth owning if you're an SF fan, and even if you're not—for variety's sake. But two things are very clear: *StarSoldier* is an innovative game and *Starship Troopers* is not. *Soldier* is science fiction and *Troopers* is just a 20th Century land game with funny silhouettes on the unit counters. *Soldier* may not be a "great step forward" in game mechanics in the sense of the *Kursk* or *Panzerblitz* systems that begat so many other games; the mathematical mechanics of *StarSoldier* have few applications elsewhere, as the designer states, and I agree. Which is fine. There's nothing wrong with the "cold bath" method of design, forsaking convention. It is risky, but for every innovative bad game (*Combined Arms*, *Kriegspiel*, *Dixie*) there is an innovative good game (*Frederick the Great*, *Terrible Swift Sword*, *StarForce*). Science fiction is an innovative genre, at least when it's good. A

science fiction wargame *must* be innovative to be good. The customers seem to agree. The designer must be, to some extent a *science fiction writer*, inventing situations and solutions with as much imagination as possible. It's best when the science fiction is custom-made for the game.

SF wargaming is in good shape today and looking better all the time. Metagaming Concepts, the first all-SF wargame company, is surviving and turning out some good games, as well as publishing far and away the best science fiction wargame 'zine I've seen. (Send a card to Metagaming at BOX 15346, Austin, TX 78761 and they'll send you an issue. Tell them where you heard of them.) SPI is cranking out SF at a healthy pace, *Outreach*, *After the Holocaust*, *StarSoldier*, *BattleFleet Mars*, all within a very few months. And there will be others. After fifteen years of almost no professional science fiction wargames, it is a pleasure to see them coming at last. As long as the designers remember that science fiction is different, and must be treated differently, we might see some of the best wargames ever.

