Beat: Entertainment

Gaming Icons

Ernie Gygax and Benoist Poire

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USPA NEWS - Ernie Gygax the son of legendary Gary Gygax shares his thoughts on gaming, adventures, and more. Discover that Ernie and his partner, the wily, Benoist Poire are bringing to the gaming table. Their company GP Adventures is a return to Old School gaming and a tribute to gaming legends.

Doing interviews on Skype is always interesting. You see, I do not own a camera so I get you see my subject while hiding my own image during the interview. The subject of the interview is often animated and today was no different. I logged into catch Ernie Gary Gygax and we spoke for some time while waiting for his partner to show up. During this time Ernie was playing with his dog, throwing some kind of doggie toy, while regaling me with stories of his childhood. The stories were quite enlightening and helped me to gain an understanding of the man. I have met many in the gaming world who are complete gaming snobs.

I honestly expected Ernie to be one of them. He is after all, the son of Gary Gygax and essentially gaming royalty. Instead what I discovered was a very cool dude that was open to conversation about damned near anything. It was a real joy speaking with him candidly about so many different subjects. Eventually Ernie´s partner in crime, Benoist Poire, made his appearance and we got started. During the interview the two players took turns answering questions.

Many of those questions will never make it to print but the core of what the interview was about is here for your inspection. When an answer was very specific to one person or the other I shall notate it as such but the vast majority of the interview was conducted in a manner that either Ernie or Ben seemed to play off of each other and to give the answer as a single unit instead of two separate entities.

What makes your adventures different from other publishing companies out there?

They are a continuation and an addition to the shared experience of the game built by TSR in the 1970s. We do not intend to recreate Temple of Elemental Evil or Keep on the Borderlands for the Nth thousand time. We´re not in this to make copies of the great classics that already work for the game. We exist to create new classics, some of which are directly inspired from early playtests of these famous TSR modules before their publication, some other which are brand new, and add to it all in order to bring that 70s tradition of tabletop gaming in to the 21st century.

Would you say your products are geared more towards veteran players or new players and how so?

As far as the referee´s experience is concerned, this depends on the module. Something like DU1 Marmoreal Tomb of Garn Pat´uul is geared at introducing players and referees to the world of the Hobby Shop Dungeon. Something like DU2 Haunted Halls of the Beggar King is trickier to run, however, because it is a fully populated bandit lair with a lot of moving parts and variables to it. But always, always, our modules leave room for the players´ and referees´ imaginations to breathe life into them. These are but words on paper without people playing these things.

As such, these modules are actually very welcoming to new players and newcomers to tabletop role-playing. We would not have it any other way.

This is actually what our logo, an homage to the Gygax Kaye collaboration that started it all, actually means: that the key to the fulfillment of game´s promise is our own imaginations, we gamers, that without enjoying the games, making them our own, and using them as a vehicle for our own dreams, exploring our own realms of make-believe, all this would be without soul and fun and pointless to play, really.

The two camps of role playing are story vs action. Where do your products fall in regards to story telling and ROLLplaying?

Neither here nor there. We have a tremendous amount of background surrounding our adventure locations, our dungeons, our

encounters. We want to provide the detail and richness and depth that players might desire, but in such a way as as to be adaptable and discarded if need be, and to make sure that the action of the game is dictated not by a script on the page, but by the players´ own decisions carrying various types of consequences in the game. You are not guaranteed success in our adventure modules, but neither are you doomed to fail.

Tell about your products that are coming soon

The 1st is DU1 Marmoreal Tomb of Garn Pat´ull which first appeared in some detail in Gygax Magazine Issue 3 . The official module has much more detail and expands on what appeared in Gygax magazine. The second is DU2 Haunted Halls of the Beggar King, a full bandit lair, very difficult. Just the kind of module that GM´s always hope to see but no one ever actually makes. The third is GB1 Murder at Sundermeyer An action packed dungeon with a murder mystery and a cool and interesting suspense story. We might actually kickstart the dungeon and setting as well. This way people can use the setting or just modify the dungeon for their own world.

So these products are not just made for 1st Edition Dungeons and Dragons but can be used with other systems as well?

Absolutely. We put together the canvas which you as a player can use as a guide to lead your party to adventure. The dungeons are old school. They are designed to give direction and lots of background but the story is up to you. The gaming system is up to you as well we did a conversion to Call of Cthulhu and that went over very well. Other systems just require innovation and imagination, something that most gamers do not lack.

The interview went on for some time while we spoke about other things like video games and Ernie´s children´s book, Sammi-Zowa vs the Dueling Dragons. I plan to read the childrens book sometime soon and shall write about it at some point in the future. In the meanwhile I suggest you check out GP Adventures and discover some truly old school gaming. These are the kinds of adventures I played as a child and I am glad to see that someone has taken the time to continue making such great stories. Finally I had to cut the interview short as wife interrupted to inform me that my dog had escaped and I had to go recover it before it vanished into the wildness forever. So with much anguish I said my thanks and good byes and closed the session.

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