

## The New Look 'White Dwarf' – October 2012

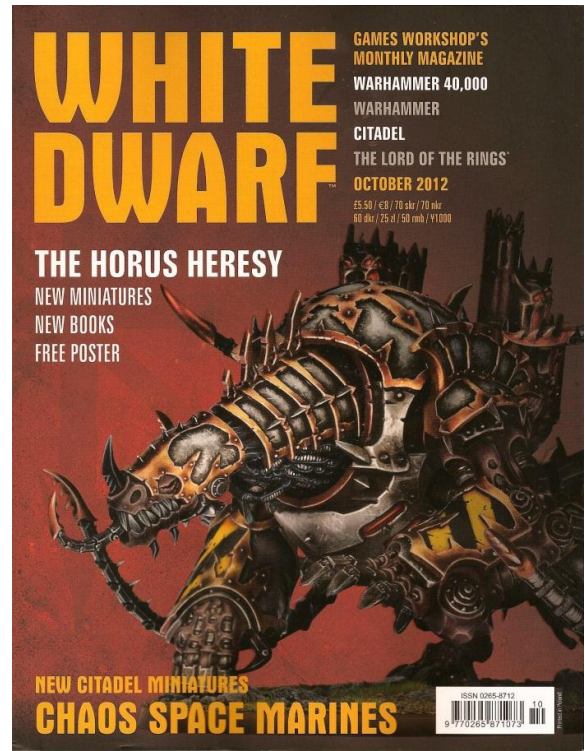
### Review by Jonathan Aird

If you started with *White Dwarf* at issue number one then you'll have seen a lot of changes over the years. From its "professional fanzine" origins it rapidly evolved --at issue seven it gained a colour cover. It thickened over the years with a seemingly ever-increasing page count. The games in vogue changed from "Dungeons and Dragons" to "Traveller" to "Runequest" and onto "Call of Cthulhu." Figures became an increasing concern, there was a touch of wargaming as well as role playing and then there was the biggest change of all – everything not Games Workshop or Citadel Miniatures was banished. And through the years that have followed, there have been revamps and rebranding, different styles and different writers. A golden period of the "fat dwarf" saw "free gifts," such as cardboard terrain or complete mini-boardgames that helped to make the magazine tempting beyond the now core GW readership. That era passed, and I have to admit that I have gone from an every-issue buyer to a few a year to just at Christmas to not at all. Yet,

having seen the publicity round this latest relaunch, I was tempted to try a sample issue again – it promised new things, it promised extras and ... it was to be bagged. There it sat on the shelf, the magazine and something else in the bag with it – a game? A card terrain piece? Then the siren song began. "Don't I look nice?" the half obscured cover seemed to say before following this first query with a string of interrogatives. "Aren't you curious to see what this is in the bag? Don't you want to know what new features there are in the magazine? Don't you realise I am to all intents and purposes an all-new magazine with unlimited potential?" Folks, you have two choices when a magazine talks to you – get help or buy it so it'll shut up. I chose the latter.

So, having paid the new price of £5.50 and ripping the bag open what did I find in the October 2012 issue (issue numbers are so passé!)? The initial impression of the new *White Dwarf* on that first flick through is that it is very much like the old *Dwarf* that I had found I no longer needed! If anything there is now even more colour, even more photographs and, as a result, quite a lot less text. Even on the relatively text-heavy pages, there are large empty spaces – an article by Jervis Johnson, for example, looks as if he came in about 300 words under his quota, there's just a big gap at the end of the page! We'll return, by the way, to this rather odd article later on. Not, then, an impressive first impression – what does a detailed study reveal?

To get that enticing bonus item out of the way first – it was a poster of artwork from the new WH40K "The Horus Heresy" book – nice enough, I suppose, but not the sort of thing I want decorating the house. Something of a disappointment to find that this bonus item was just a bit of advertising material for a new product. Then there's the thorny issue of the expanded page count –



now up to 150 pages. Of this, however, around 40 pages or so are clear adverts, including an exhaustive list of GW shops and stockists running to a full 10 pages – is this going to be in every issue? On top of this there are around another 20 pages of “infomercials” – they look like articles but really are just recycled blurbs about products and latest releases. This leaves at most about 90 pages of gaming “meat” in the magazine.

The articles in this issue mostly link into the theme of “The Horus Heresy” and include familiar items, such as after-battle reports and collecting guides, as well as descriptions of what’s new. There’s also a history of “The Horus Heresy” from an initial, almost throwaway, remark many years ago to being a central feature of the WH40K universe. Further WH40K support is provided by a kit bashing article on the new Ork aircraft models. There’s also a long and detailed Warhammer battle report, and really, that’s about it. Some painting tips, pictures of nice terrain (but not even a how-to-make article to go with them) and so on which pad out the remaining pages. Probably the most interesting piece in the magazine is “Blanchitsu,” a profile of GW’s visionary artist John Blanche. And, despite its name appearing on the cover, there is nothing (other than a few figure photographs) on GW’s “Lord of the Rings” games at all. Even the pages of glossy photos are a bit of a letdown in places – a new style policy is in place requiring virtually all figures to be shot against a red background, and it just doesn’t work very well for a lot of them.

And then there’s Jervis Johnson’s thoughts on gaming – which focuses attention onto army lists at some length and frequent repetition, using that well known hammering-home-the-point style – “tell them what you’ll say, say it, tell them what you just said.” In this case, what Jervis Johnson is interested in is how army lists can stop someone from buying stuff from GW. The army lists say you can have only one Maulerfiend? Then you’ll never buy two, will you? At one point, he summarises the hobby as being basically the collecting of stuff – the games, he posits, are a secondary consideration against the “collecting stuff” imperative. Not a view point that I can fully share, but it does reflect the GW ethos of fantastic painting and beautiful terrain. Jervis has a solution to the tyranny of army lists -- buy them, build your armies to them, then buy all the other stuff you want and play games where the participants agree to ignore the army lists. Not rocket science this – the solo player is doubtless already familiar with the concept of playing an unbalanced game.

Overall I’d have to acknowledge that I feel as if they got me again. The relaunched *Dwarf* is just the same old *Dwarf* with a fresh lick of paint. With the reduced word count, it reminds me more and more of a style or fashion magazine – all it needs are adverts for clothing and watches and those little fold-out aftershave samples. *White Dwarf* remains then a long advert for all things GW, and sadly has nothing really new to say to the more general wargamer. If anything, it is even more inward looking than before. Pretty as it unquestionably is, I’m not even sure I can honestly recommend this as an essential purchase even for dedicated players of GW’s games – and how bizarre is that?