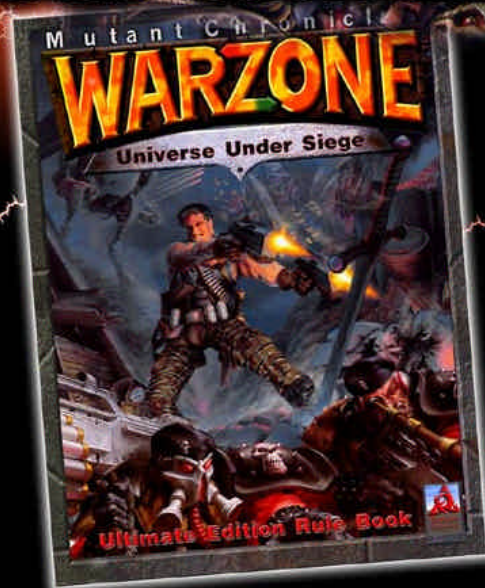


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Greetings everyone. The following is a quick twenty question interview that I conducted with Thom Talamini, head honcho over at Excelsior Entertainment. It's all about the upcoming release of **Ultimate Warzone** and hopefully sheds a bit of light on the changes in store for the game and its players.

1. Why an 'Ultimate' edition of Warzone? Couldn't you have just picked up where 2nd edition left off?

In reviewing the IP we felt that the Second Edition of Warzone, while a balanced and good game on its own, was not the game it should have been. The key-missing factor was the omission and amendment of its extensive, rich background. The background of the Mutant Chronicles is one of very dark techno-fantasy extensively developed over years of work and one that we did not feel was accurately portrayed in the second edition of the game. The direction of the new design studio in Scotland at the time seemed to have a different vision for the game; one that we feel did not capture the original IP. In the Mutant Chronicles we have a wonderful RPG with great depth that spawned mass-market games, comic books, a series of novels, a hugely popular CCG and a variety of supplements that all served to develop the concepts and backgrounds of this unique setting. I have had the privilege of knowing some of the games original designers and consider our role as more akin to stewardship than revision.

Our number one concern and focus has been to stay true to the setting as it was developed. While we will of course add to this IP, we felt that we needed a solid foundation before we could even undertake such an endeavor. To that end we had to assemble all references from this setting into one concrete "bible", which did not exist before and once armed with this, update and polish the setting of the Mutant Chronicles. The Ultimate Edition then is one where we have painstakingly researched all prior setting background and blended it with a more enjoyable game mechanic.

2. Will Ultimate Warzone be as massive of a tome as the 2nd edition Chronopia rulebook? Hardback or Softback?

Yes, it will easily be Chronopia's size. It needs to be considering the depth of material and the fact that there are over fifteen army lists available. It is softback.

3. I've heard rumors that every miniature produced for Warzone, either edition, will have a place and rules in the ultimate edition. Is this the case?

Yes, it is, though let me preface this by stating that some models need to be resculpted before they are released again. If however you have an older version of the model that you painted and liked, you may of course use it.

4. How will hand-to-hand combat change in the ultimate edition? In 2nd edition it was a rarity to get even dedicated hand-to-hand troops into a position for them to go to work.

Fair question. In Ultimate, there are several issues that make a CC trooper effective. The first is speed.

- CC troopers often tend to be faster on the field (often with lesser armor though).
- CC weapons are quite effective now as well, with excellent damages and special features. Like Chronopia you also add your strength to the weapons damage rating.
- In Chronopia we have a DEF score that simulates a CC troops parrying ability while in Warzone we have a Special Ability called Close Combat Training that effectively does the same thing in Warzone.
- In addition to transports for moving troops, we also have the return of smoke grenades that allow for CC troops to move with better survivability.
- Lastly, there are spells (both in Art, Dark Symmetry and KI) again that can help relocate troops quickly. In some respects CC is every bit a real threat now. Sure you can shoot them (maybe), but God save you if they close and now they will.

5. What's the status of the Cartel in Ultimate Warzone? In 1st edition you could field Doomtrooper pairs, Agent Squads and squads from other Corporations, but they all but disappeared from 2nd edition?

For us the Cartel has evolved into a capable and sinister entity, able to field small forces and draw support from the Megacorporations yet treading a thin line between functionality and obsolescence. In Ultimate you will be able to take Cartel squads and individuals to fill Consultant/Advisor slots in your army. If you opted for a Cartel only force, you would have some access to certain Grunt Units from the Megacorporations as well as the Doomtroopers within each.

6. What's the status of the Dark Eden armies in Ultimate Warzone? They seemed to be second fiddles in 1st and 2nd edition, especially since their mounts never materialized.

Well, I can certainly see why you would say that. We do not feel this is the way to incorporate these troops either. They are rich and interesting on their own and with the storyline focus on Dark Eden, they have become more prominent. Their stats and powers have been amended and will make them viable options for both filling Consultant slots or for fielding on their own with Megacorporations in the Consultant position.

7. We've seen pictures and read text relating to new races in Chronopia. Are there plans for any new Corporations or Dark Powers for Ultimate Warzone?

While we are not adding new Megacorporations, we will expand the presence of smaller subsidiaries on the game by developing their units and specialists. An example of this would be House Salvatore for Bauhaus, Kogami Kieretsu for Mishima, and such. In addition we set the stage for Freelancers, Independent Corporations to be useful in the game.

One of the exciting aspects for me is the introduction of the Apostate, disenfranchised former Brotherhood members of various ranks and power who have fled the ranks of the faithful and seek to discredit their former comrades as evil and corrupted. Being a Brotherhood groupie, examining small cracks in their sterling armor with rumor and innuendo has been very exciting.

There are new forces under Valpurgius' command as he sets up bases on Dark Eden in a bid to curry the favors of the Dark Soul and perhaps become the next Apostle, and the return of former Capitol War hero Lt. General Robert Johnson who has resurfaced on Dark Eden allied with Valpurgius. We have also added many personalities for the other Apostles as well.

8. Will Ultimate Warzone support large armored vehicles like the Bauhaus Bully and Grizzly or does the scope of the game really not go beyond stuff like the Bauhaus Skimmer and the Cybertronic TA-6500?

The main focus of the game is skirmish level combat. We have however introduced vehicle rules that allow for progressively larger vehicles to be fielded. Some of the larger items are sub licensed to Armorcast, but they are fully usable in the game. The books focus though is smaller vehicles.

9. Will 'Forces of War' (2nd edition style) where one army is features or '... of War' (1st edition style) where each army gets some new stuff be coming out after the Ultimate Warzone rulebook or will it stand alone with no expansions?

We will continue with supplements as there is a lot we could not print, but the format will be a more cosmopolitan style where we focus on an "issue" or planet and present the forces that are there, both dominant and otherwise and new options for each Megacorporation. By doing supplements in this manner we make a product that is useful for each player and maintains a balance of power amongst the gamers.

10. Some of the older Brotherhood miniatures have, well how can I be delicate about it, rather large somewhat bulbous heads. Any plans for re-sculpts of them or any other figures?

I suspect you are referring to the Elite Trooper Sgts. Not too subtle Mark, though I don't think this vagueness fooled any old timer. Yes, these will be redone though the first priority is to fill holes.

- 11. 1st and 2nd edition Warzone both had a plethora of special abilities, but 2nd edition lost a bit of the custom army feel, like being able to buy a Hero a Gehenna Puker or Nimrod Autocannon just because you wanted to being some extra special lovin' to your enemy, as you could do in 1st edition.**

Customization is a tricky issue. It has been my experience that allowing customization even with good rules simply breaks down the inherent strengths and weaknesses of troops. I have developed open-ended games before, even played a few others, and the min/max abuse I see even in a well-designed game is staggering. We could not return to this in UWZ.

Knowing this however, I like the idea of tweaking your models in some way. What we have done is strike a balance between open ended and closed by creating Load Outs that are available for certain troops and for certain weapons. By closely regulating small option packets, we could be assured that the units in the end would retain their designed flavor.

What's the status on special abilities and custom character load-outs in Ultimate Warzone?

As for Special Abilities, we have added many more than there are in Second Edition, lost some others that were there and set up special character load-outs for certain models.

Also, there were some metal figures, like the Ducal Militia and Ducal HMG team that were produced in very limited quantities a few years ago. Any chance of them coming back soon?

Actually these are both back out and have been available in March, April and May respectively.

- 12. Will the core units of the 2nd edition box game (Imperial Regulars and Bauhaus Ducal Militia) be available for Ultimate Warzone in plastic or are they being re-sculpted in metal?**

Both are being redone in metal though we will keep offering them in plastic.

- 13. For someone looking at Ultimate Warzone as his or her very first foray into Warzone why would someone want to jump in with both feet?**

I can conceive of four reasons why a player would want to jump into UWZ with both feet. The first is the game itself. I am confident they will find this game to be an amazing amount of fun that simply keeps showing new levels of play time and again. It is easy to learn, complex to master and unravels a seemingly endless series of ideas.

Secondly, I consider the background and "fluff" to be a major issue every bit as important as the game mechanics. The setting will draw players in and captivate them with a rich tapestry of detail and personality rarely seen elsewhere. Of course, it has had a decade of development.

Thirdly, a player will find a massive breadth of figures available to support their hobby with newer ones coming all the time. The history of this game has put Excelsior ahead of the production curve from a player perspective and affords them.

Lastly, you can't beat our pricing. You can collect multiple armies and still have a social life, feed your family and go to the movies.

- 14. How has the background of Ultimate Warzone changed or evolved since the release of 2nd edition Warzone?**

The second edition took some liberties in terms of history that we felt was unnecessary and have removed these. The background we have cultivated is one that is drawn from all the previous resources and tied together into one nice packet. We have also added some additions to the background to fill in some logical issues and provide launch points for others. One of the pivot points in the new edition is the role of Dark Eden in the system. It has been brought into prominence because of its strategic position to Luna and the activities of both Valpurgius and the Overlord Mishima. We have explained space travel and expanded mans penetration of space as well.

We have evolved the story to a point where the Dark Legion has only just resurfaced to a universe that had largely begun to doubt its existence. We find the Brotherhood being proven correct and the Megacorporations faced with a threat they had hoped long since removed.

- 15. Could we get a new sculpt of the Venusian Marshall, please? The current one is ok if you don't mind him riding around on a pony. ;)**

Ouch. If you look carefully at Paul's concept art you will notice that the horse he is on is in fact fairly small. The reason for this is the type of horse the Venusian Marshall's use, an offshoot of the Albanian Mountain Horse noted for its surefootedness (if not stunted) over rugged mountain terrain. That said, not anytime soon though we will eventually provide an alternate mount.

- 16. What army (or armies) do you favor/play in Warzone?**

I prefer to play Brotherhood or Mishima most. This is based purely on fluff and personal likings. I also very much like the Tribes now, who have a fair amount of options and expanded powers.

Most of the time I play an army that no one else at a tourney or demo wants to play so I have developed a fondness for all of them to some point.

If I ever play the DL, I have found I really like armies of Semai and Demnogonis.

- 17. Have the rules from the many issues of 'Chronicles from the Warzone' be integrated into Ultimate Warzone?**

Actually I think they are, though they have been amended to fit the EGS. So much has been done I can't remember which ones right off the top of my head.

- 18. Will a campaign system be included with the Ultimate Warzone rules?**

A limited one will be included. A full campaign system would easily be another book (hint) so we have given the reader some guidelines to starting out.

- 19. Are any new large monster-types on the horizon for the various Dark Legion forces?**

Since you qualified this to "larger" I will say yes. The first is a resculpt of the Behemoth, who I always felt could be done differently. Additionally we have concepts for the Algeroth Juggernaut, the Violator of Demnogonis, the Pschotron of Muwahje, and the Soul Mirror of Ilian (not quite a monster but a large model). We can't talk about what Semai has coming though; I could be killed.

- 20. If you had to sum up in one sentence, what's the most significant improvement and reason to play Ultimate Warzone?**

You're kidding right? Seriously, the most significant improvement to the game is the return of its unique flavor combined with a superior game mechanic. Wow, I can't believe I actually answered that question in a sentence.