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zeit

The Live Roleplay Magazine

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ConQuest 2011

Gods and gladiators

Odyssey

Explaining larp

Leaving Mundania

Kings of the night

Vampire Make-up

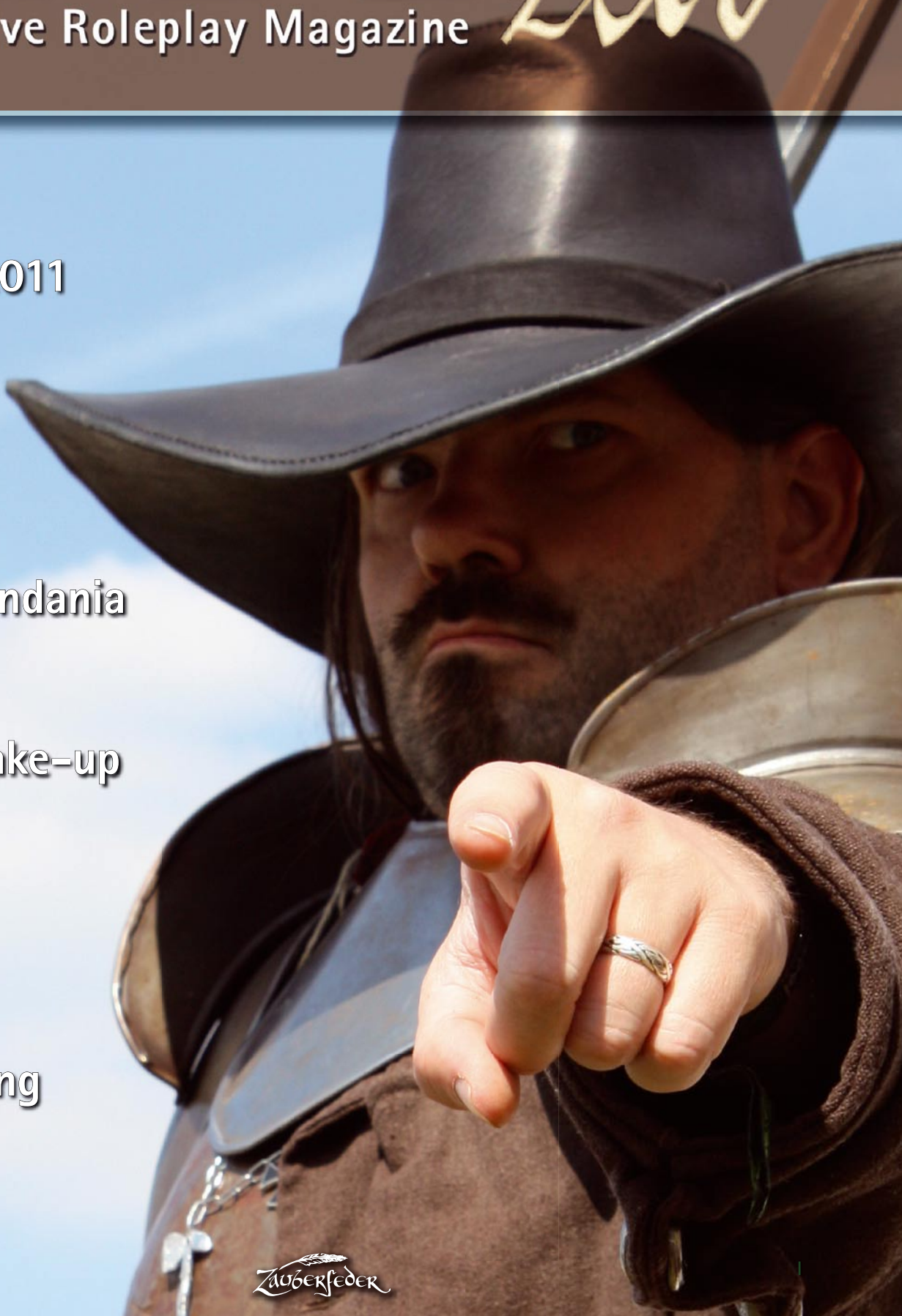
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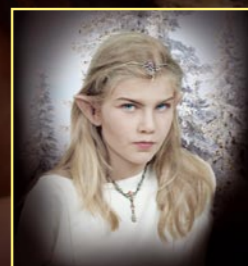
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Editorial information

Publishing Company



Witzlebenstraße 2
D-38116 Braunschweig
+49 (0) 531 208 27 16
www.larpzeit.de
info@zauberfeder-verlag.de

Editor in Chief
Karsten Dombrowski

Art Director

Christian Schmal

Layout

Heike Philipp

Authors

Carola Adler, Karsten Dombrowski, Gregor Knape,
JP Kaljonen, Jesper Kristiansen, Matt Pennington,
Johanna Raekallio

Special thanks

Nathan Hook, Diana Trubetskaya, Slava Rozhkov

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Cover

The Cover shows Christian Schmal as Witchhunter Friedmann von Gerstorf. Picture taken by Karsten Dombrowski at ConQuest.

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The Grand Expedition

Anyone can join ... except for demons and the undead

The big German larp games *Drachenfest* and *Conquest* every summer not only attract thousands of German fans but also a lot of participants from all over the world. Of course going to a larp in a foreign country is a little bit more difficult than visiting a game next door. Language issues, a slightly different larping culture and logistics need to be considered. But don't worry; there are groups like *The Grand Expedition* who are glad to offer support. Our editor Karsten Dombrowski spoke to Richard Wynne about the idea and how you can join.

LARPzeit: What is the Grand Expedition? And how did you get the idea?



The Grand Expedition is an International group of English speaking live action role players originally brought together to help experience *Drachenfest* and *Mythodea*.

I went to these two larps in 2010 for the first time and had a brilliant experience. I decided I wanted to share that experience with other International players, so I put together a group in late 2010 to go back to Germany in 2011.

LZ: Is the expedition just a nice group for shared logistics or is there a common in-game story behind this?



Rick: We are a combined band of several mercenary companies, at least on paper. My character Zeno Sidonius has a magical map that allows him and his ship to travel between Realms. With this map he's scoured the ports of many worlds for cut-throats, gentlemen and mercenaries in order to build his Grand Expedition. But the companies fell apart and by the time the Expedition arrived at *Drachenfest* the group had become a fellowship of adventurers, more like a family than a company of soldiers.

LZ: How many participants took part? And how did you manage the logistics?

Rick: We had a great many people sign up for the Expedition but about half actually made the trip, thirty in total. They came from America, Britain, Denmark, Israel, and Australia. Managing logistics has been done mainly through the Internet: Facebook, our website forum and most particularly Skype. These tools are what really allowed us to coordinate the resources needed for the trip.

LZ: Although *Drachenfest* and *ConQuest* are both big larps with several thousand participants, both have very different game concepts (PvP at *Drachenfest*, NPC driven story at *ConQuest*). Did your idea work on both games similar?

Rick: The Grand Expedition has a very flexible structure. *Drachenfest* and *Mythodea* were vastly different experiences but our group dynamic, both in character and

out of character worked great at both events. We were more of a cohesive group at *Drachenfest*, with a much more militant feel, whilst at *Mythodea* we took a more individual approach. This allowed our Expeditionaries an opportunity to explore more and enjoy the amazing entertainers in town. Both sets of game organizers were incredible when it came to making us welcome and helping us to fit in. In fact everyone has made us feel very welcome.

LZ: Your plans for 2012? What's new? How many participants do you expect?

Rick: For 2012 we have built on our strengths and look to improve the experience of the Expeditionaries. We are going to expand our group identity as merchant-adventurers to try to do more in-character crafting and trading at the events. We currently have around 60 members signed up, but I've found that only about half of what sign up actually attend so I expect to be around the same size as last year, perhaps a little larger. We have people signed up from even more countries this time including Brazil, Belgium, Slovenia, Switzerland, Iceland, Sweden, Ireland, Croatia, and New Zealand.

LZ: Are there things or ideas you dropped after your experience in 2011?

Rick: In 2011 we brought our own tents. To cut costs we are planning on renting tents in 2012. This should give us more resources to invest in decorating the camp for a more immersive environment. We've also moved away from the idea of having matching livery colors. We didn't really achieve that goal in 2011 and given the nature of our group now I don't think it's necessary any more.

LZ: What is the "Wayfarers' Arrival" at the *ConQuest*?

Rick: Live Adventure came up with the idea of a new camp for *Mythodea* to help players get involved in the plot, since after so many years its gotten all a bit complicated. Since they were particularly interested in getting more International players they contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in helping set up the camp as a game master. I was pretty excited about the idea as you can imagine.

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DRACHENFEST

July 24th to 29th 2012

Drachenfest is based on one easy principle: The players form groups in separate camps and are lead into battle by mighty Avatars to honour dragons and other gods. This simple concept is perfectly suited for the player versus player focus of the event. Whilst there are skirmishes between the camps and sieges it also allows for cunning diplomacy and crafty traps. On Saturday evening the game culminates in an epic battle with thousands of participants.

www.DRACHENFEST.INFO

The Live Adventure team are very professional and I loved the idea of learning from them skills I could take back to British larp event organizing. Its been a process of evolution as we work out exactly how the Wayfarers' Arrival will work, but essentially its a home for International English speaking players. Whereas the Mercenary camp has a strong population of International French speaking players, we will be looking to organize more as a camp of adventurers rather than companies of mercenaries. I like to think of the Wayfarers' Arrival as

the kind of place players can come to if they are unsure which camp best suits them, perfect for a first ConQuest, and whilst here players from other camps will visit and try to recruit them for their camp for the next year.

LZ: Assuming I (or some of our readers) want to join the Grand Expedition? Who is welcome? What are the requirements? Where do I apply?

Rick: The Grand Expedition is a fairly inclusive group. We have a broad range

of experience, from new players who have never larped before to experienced players who have many years gaming under their belt. We have good and evil, weak and strong. Pretty much anyone can join our fellowship, if they speak English, except for demons and the undead. All we require is that you take our Mead Oath and agree never to betray a fellow sword-brother or sword-sister of the Expedition. You can apply by contacting me at romeowhiskeyone@hotmail.com or our website www.thegrandexpedition.org.

CONQUEST

August 1st to 5th 2012

The ConQuest game concept is based more on cooperation among the more than 5,500 players against an epic threat of about 1,500 Fulltime NPCs. The players need to solve complex puzzles, explore the mysteries of the fantastic continent Mythodea and wage huge battles. Whatever they do - this directly influences the story and future of Mythodea, to a good or a bad way.

www.LIVE-ADVENTURE.DE



Kings of the night

How to transform into a vampire

Make-up guide by Gregor Knappe (www.maskworld.com)

Preparations

You'll need the right latex prosthetic pieces, Mastix spirit gum, Mastix remover and make-up to create your vampire face. With liquid latex, you can make the transitions practically invisible. Of course you have to include vampire fangs – either as individual canines that go over your own or as a row that covers all of your front teeth.

Find it all in the new Vampire Deluxe Mask Kit from maskworld.com!

For all make-up and special effect work you need a clean working area and a mirror. Good light and warm water also contribute to good results. In addition to the list above, you will need: a small scissors (nail scissors), make-up brushes and sponges (although you can also use your finger), a kitchen roll or some make-up towels, and a few cotton buds.

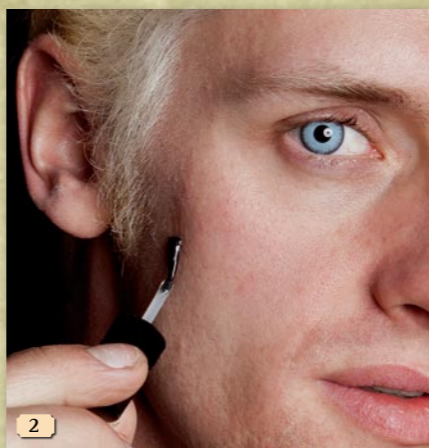
Applying the latex pieces

PICTURE 1: While standing in front of a mirror hold the cheek pieces up to your face. Their curved shape was designed to fit your face – take your time and find the best position for them on top of your own cheekbones. Remember the places where the latex pieces touch your skin.

PICTURE 2: Apply one latex cheek piece at a time. Brush Mastix spirit gum onto your skin only at the places where the cheek piece touched your skin. Use a thin coat of Mastix but make a thick outline. Do not fill the outline with spirit gum – avoid brushing spirit gum onto places where the latex piece does not touch your skin.

PICTURE 3: Roll a cotton bud over the spirit gum. This removes any excess spirit gum and presses it more firmly against your skin. When the Mastix forms threads and the cotton bud lifts up your skin, it is time to apply the cheek piece. Place it on the Mastix outline and press it firmly to your face. Repeat with the other one.

PICTURE 4: Hold the forehead piece to your own forehead. It has to be positioned above the root of your nose and the latex upper eyelids have to be above your eyes. If the latex piece covers your eyes use the



nail scissors to make the arcs to the right and left of the latex piece nose somewhat higher. Remember the places where the latex forehead touches your skin.

PICTURE 5: Brush Mastix spirit gum onto your skin only at the places where the forehead piece touched your skin. At first only apply Mastix to the upper edge that follows your hairline. You will apply the eye sections in the second step. Use a thin coat of Mastix but make a thick outline. The outline should be approx. 2-3 cm wide; you do not need glue for the middle of the forehead piece.

PICTURE 6: Roll a cotton bud over the spirit gum. This removes any excess spirit gum and presses it more firmly against your skin. When the Mastix forms threads and the cotton bud lifts up your skin it is time to apply the forehead piece. Place it on the root of your nose first – this is the most important gluing point on the prosthetic piece. Slowly roll the forehead toward the top until the edges touch the gluing surfaces. Correct the angle of the forehead as required and press the upper part firmly to your face.

PICTURE 7: Now close your eyes and check to see where the lower edge of the forehead piece touches your skin. Glue on the latex piece below your eyebrow – not on the movable part of your eyelid. Lift each side of the forehead piece to make it easier to brush on the Mastix spirit gum. Only apply the Mastix to the places where the forehead piece touched your skin. If it is easier you can close your eyes while applying the spirit gum. Do this and then roll a cotton bud over the spirit gum in this step as well. Keeping your eyes closed, press the prosthetic piece firmly in place. This is the only way to make sure the gluing edges are at the right place.

PICTURE 8: Remove the excess Mastix from your skin. The easiest way to do this is with a cotton bud that has been dipped in Mastix Remover. Afterwards dab Horror Skin liquid latex along the edges of each latex piece in turn (see figure) to even out the transitions from the latex piece to your skin. This white liquid becomes transparent when it dries. Allow the Horror Skin to dry completely before continuing. If you are pressed for time use a hair drier to speed up the drying process.



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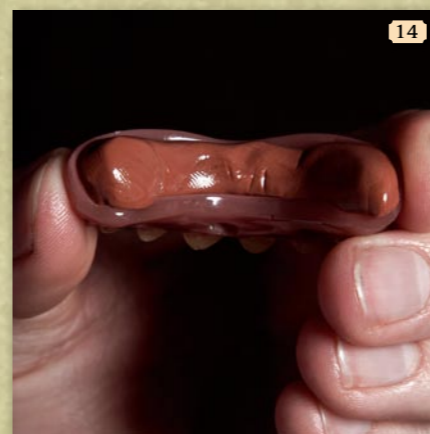
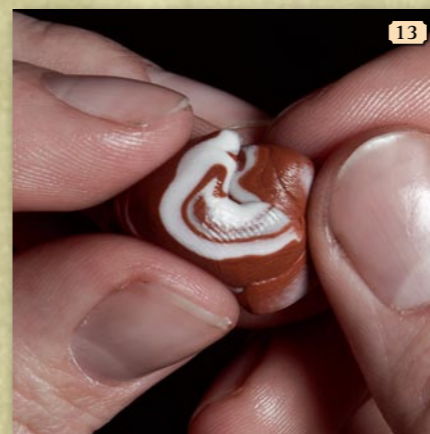
PICTURE 9: Horror Skin is easier to apply make-up to if you put powder on it first.

PICTURE 10: Use the make-up in four skin tones included in the kit to match the latex pieces to your own complexion. If you only use the lighter tones, your vampire face will have a typical pale complexion. Do not forget to apply make-up to your own neck and ears to make the transformation look as realistic as possible.



PICTURE 11: With a darker skin tone you can create shadows in your vampire face and give it depth. Use it to emphasize the sunken cheeks beneath the latex cheek pieces, the eye sockets, and the temples. Vary the intensity of the color and mix the tones to achieve a natural effect.

PICTURE 12: Dab the prominent places on your individual vampire face with the lightest color in order to emphasize them. Gently glide across the latex pieces to avoid pushing them inward. Use the dark and light colors to make your creepy vampire face 3-dimensional until it has a distinctive expression.



Fitting the teeth

While standing in front of a mirror, place the row of fake teeth over yours and check their position. When you are fitting them you will hardly have any time to correct their position, so practice putting on the fake teeth in one smooth movement. Do not begin to make the impression until you have a feel for positioning the row because you will have to work quickly.

PICTURE 14: Quickly shape it into a long roll and place it in the shell of the fake teeth. Press it into the shell until two small beads of the putty emerge from the holes.

PICTURE 15: Now press the fake teeth onto your own teeth in one quick movement. Do not wiggle them and do not shift the teeth to correct the fit. Push the teeth as far upward towards the back as possible - when your canines bump against the plastic of the shell you have the best position. Adapt any protruding putty to your palate by pressing it toward the shell with your tongue.

PICTURE 13: Remove the two components of the silicon putty from their packages and make sure you have it all. Quickly knead the two components together. This should take a maximum of 10 seconds. The putty does not have to be a uniform color: it is OK if some white is still visible in the red.

After Gregor Knape graduated as a certificated make-up artist in 2000 he has worked both freelance and contracted on international movie and TV productions as well as on numerous stages all over Europe. Since 2004 he has been a product designer for www.maskworld.com and has designed latex pieces, dental prosthetics, wigs, beards and masks for larp and the stage.

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DUBLIN2

EU's asylum policy in miniature

The *Dublin II* regulation was implemented in 2003 to integrate the EU's asylum policy and prevent abuse of asylum procedures by multiple applications. However for refugees this policy causes a wide range of exploitation and human suffering. The Helsinki based visual artists Johanna Raekallio and JP Kaljonen wanted to criticize the regulation and make visible the mechanisms and faults of it with the larp project *Dublin2*. The artists saw this medium as a perfect tool to encourage people to empathize with the daily life of asylum seekers to make visible a specific part of reality which a regular citizen is unlikely to have access to. The first run has been in the summer of 2011 in Helsinki with a second planned run that will take place this summer in Stockholm. In the following article the artists present their idea.



have arrived to an EU border member state. The refugee players live in a self-formed camp and manage their everyday life as best as they can. The larp about everyday survival in a foreign country either with a very small chance to get one's asylum application handled or to be considered an illegal migrant from the beginning. Paperless status forces people to do work in the gray market from farming to prostitution.

The camp is sited next to a border area from which many of the refugees are planning to move forward to the inner Europe. Crossing this EU's inner border is normal to EU citizens but to a refugee is a dangerous and an extremely expensive move. In fact for a refugee there is no legal way to cross at all. In the game the border guard players are controlling the area and capturing every illegal crosser.



Our larp illustrates the functioning and practices caused by the Dublin II regulation as well as shedding light on conditions of refugees who have entered Europe. Participants can expect a more or less realistic setting which takes the players to the Southern-European migrant jungle of a barren refugee reception / detention center and to the interrogations of different officials. The extensive

background research on the game's theme creates a simulation where the participants can empathize with asylum seekers journey from a tarpaulin camp to the hearings of immigration officials. For the border guard players the larp is a dive into the puzzle of everyday morality challenges, loyalties and hierarchies.

In the starting scene people from different Asian and African countries



They also collect people's fingerprints, take asylum requests and are responsible for the pre-investigations, custody and deportations of the illegal migrants. In game the control is very visible in the cityscape.

Encounters with passerby

Dublin2 is mostly about empathizing and intervention. By taking the reality based roles of asylum seekers in the settings simulated in the larp the players get a chance to study the refugees' backgrounds and empathize with their daily life.

There were real life actors from lawyers to NGO's who work with migrants as supporting characters to make the experience as truthful as possible. The game world can be seen as a simulation of reality and represents the EU's asylum policy in miniature. The players can experience the Dublin II limbo between the EU countries when they look for safety and starting place for a better life. As the game is played in a public space these mechanisms and conditions are also revealed to the public.

Interaction with the citizens is part of the game mechanics. The players experienced interesting encounters with passersby who played along within the offered framework as well as encounters with people who are just interested in what is going on or want to have a talk about the game's theme. For those who aren't familiar with the Dublin II regulation watching the game or meeting with players can offer new insight to the

subject. In these cases the players can choose whether they stay in the situation in game or switch to off game.

The larp also included journalists, who can visit the game for a reportage or participate to it as a journalist-, an asylum seeker- or a border guard character. By encounters with the citizens and participating or visiting journalists, the problems of the Dublin II regulation are then taken to the public debate

The first run

Considering *Dublin2 Helsinki* was our first live role-play ever it worked out quite well. We are very proud of all the details we designed for the game but there was not enough time or resources to make every single one of them work in practice. This is one of the reasons we are happy

we can make things better next time. We could have had more players involved but since we organizers were not known in the scene we had difficulty to find enough people, especially for the borderguard roles. From those who came we got good feedback.

Most of the players camped in the city centre both nights – remember the whole concept was developed before the Occupy-movement. The game got a lot of attention in the media and also from people who were passing by. Many wanted to know what was going on but others started to play along. One random non-player even took the role of a lawyer and negotiated his client out of lockup. Some of the players got tips on how to proceed from real life asylum seekers who happened to pass by.

This kind of experimental game in public is challenging for the players. As we were on a summer weekend in the middle of Helsinki there were also people passing by who had been drinking. There was some disturbing behavior by the citizens, mostly the humorous kind that broke the spell but also some negative shouting passersby. This came from people who thought the players were actual foreigners and it actually kind of fitted to the setting as sad as it was.

We had a lot of publicity mostly in the Finnish media related to the first event. In addition people in the field of visual and other arts have been interested about the concept. One funny extra have been the discussion about the concept on the internet which have been somewhat intolerant.





Next stop: Stockholm

Dublin2 Stockholm is an advanced version of the Helsinki project. The game will be played in the middle of Stockholm during 48 hours. For the asylum seeker players there will be camping in a public square for those who dare. You can also organize a place for yourself and sleep off game. The border guards will have an ascetic office. They have to take care of the border and organize their shifts so that some can rest at night while others at the day time. Food for the asylum seekers players will be simple as we follow the refugees diet and the players will be able to find it and eat in game.

Leaving temporary from the game will be organized so that it doesn't disturb those who want to stay in-game the whole time. You can also switch off game and eat extra if you don't want to play hard core. There will also be a social space for relaxing and other off game issues.

In *Dublin2 Helsinki* only players from Finland participated. Now there will be

both more volume and internationality in the Stockholm version. We expect people especially from the Nordic countries, but players from all countries are very welcomed. The game in Helsinki included 39 participants. The Stockholm's game is planned for 70 players and on top there will be different supporting characters from organizations working with migrants to journalists and lawyers.

About the artists

Johanna Raekallio is oriented to participatory, site specific and video works. She makes works to be shown in galleries, art halls, and museums as well as urban and natural environment.

JP Kaljonen works in the field of social and participatory art dealing with themes related to cultural interaction. He has worked with different communities in Europe and Asia and exhibits his projects both in art institutions and public places. In role-playing his background is in tabletop games.

In *Dublin2 Helsinki* there was also a third organizer *Haidi Motola* who is a photographer and visual artist. She works with themes related to identity and belonging and her works are often balanced between fiction and documentary.

Because *Dublin2* is reality based and not in any settled playing context we don't have a fixed playing style. This makes the larp easily approachable for participants from different countries. We are planning pre-game workshops in Sweden and possibly also Denmark. Participating to these workshops is not obligatory but it would be great to have as many of the participants there as possible.

The language between the players that don't share a common language will be English. The character briefs and the game material are in English as are all the information provided in our website.

Dublin2 Stockholm has an age limit of 18 years for the participants because the character briefs and the setting can include violent elements. Otherwise *Dublin2* requires only a good will to make a great game. The registration will open soon at <http://dublin2.fi>.

At the website you'll also find background links for the game's theme, instructions how to subscribe to the newsletter and in due course information about the different characters and the game world. Information about *Dublin2 Stockholm* are also posted to a facebook group.

Text: Johanna Raekallio, JP Kaljonen
Pictures: Haidi Motola, Mikael Kinnanen



Braies and Hose

Difficulty: Beginner/Intermediate

Down with your trousers!



Clothes in fantasy larp should stand out from everyday clothes as much as possible, especially the clothes for legs which offer some good ways to break from the 'classic' trouser cut. The pair described in this article achieves this and gives the feeling of being dressed right from your underwear upwards. As a bonus it even has a touch of historical correctness.

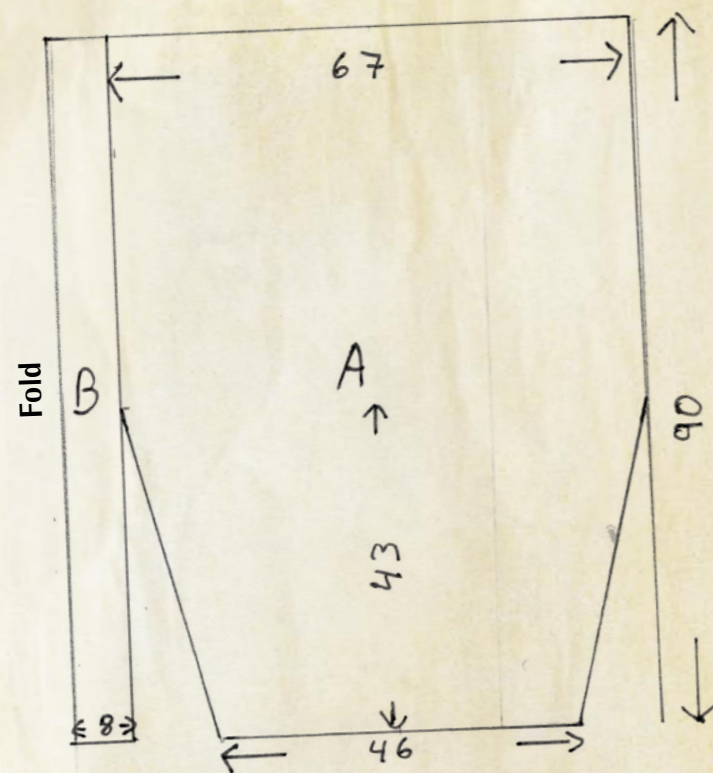
The Braies or Bruche (from Middle High German: bruch) are wide pants made of linen or other natural fiber, which are held by a cord or tape bandage. Their origin is unclear but they have been worn as underwear and part of pants for centuries with variations. The sewing instructions provided in this article give a widely used simple pattern. By the way: With a slightly further cut you can also use it quite well as pattern for viking trousers.

At the cord of the braies the hose are attached with two additional cords. These usually consist of a coarsely woven and lightweight stretchable wool fabric. Under a long tunic in winter they offer good protection against the cold and in summer or next to a warm fire they can be rolled down below the knees and fastened there with cords.

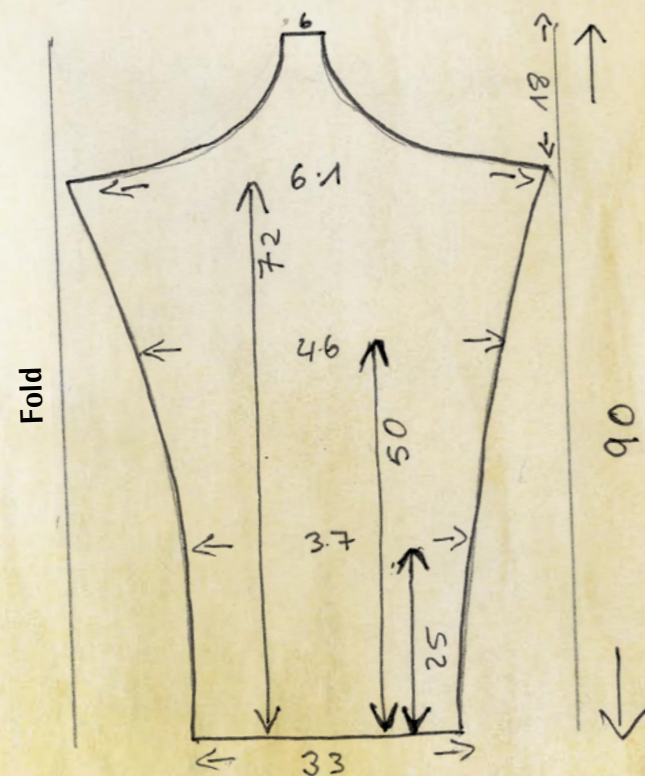
Unlike in many historical examples I have attached no foot in this pattern.



Braies



Hose



since otherwise the hose would need to be washed after each game. This would be no problem for cotton but woolen fabric suffers from frequent washing.

Conversion

All measurements are given in centimeters.
1 centimeter = 0.39 inches

Pattern

Draw pattern pieces A to C on paper tablecloth (easier if the tablecloth has a geometric pattern) or wrapping paper. Special pattern paper is softer and thinner, but also more expensive. A seam allowance of one centimeter has been taken into account for each seam in the pattern. The braies shown here are calf length and pattern needs to be extended if used for long pants.

Material

Make sure that the wool for the hose is slightly stretchable. If it's woven very firmly the fabric should be cut diagonally to the weave by laying the pattern piece diagonally on the fabric to give a certain stretch ability. This does require more fabric so use the pattern to check how much is needed when buying it.

Equipment

- Sewing material
- 90 cm natural colored linen at least 150 cm wide
- 90 cm, wool at least 130 cm wide
- Two cords 40 cm long each and one cord 150 cm long

Cutting

For the cutting the fabric is folded along the long side so that the linen has a 75 cm width and the wool a 65 cm width. This means only having to cut out the parts once instead of twice. Put the pattern parts on the fabric and fix them with needles then cut them out from the fabric.

ATTENTION: Part B is cut on the fold (the outer edge of the folded side of the cut). Unfold it afterwards.

The upper edge of the braies is fastened with the cord (as with a belt but without loops). This is historically documented, but very uncomfortable. If you prefer a more comfortable



way, sew loops on top of the quarry, or fold the fabric into a drawstring, as found in modern trousers.

Sewing

Pin the parts you want to sew together straight side facing. If your needles are pinned in right angle to the seam you can slowly sew with the sewing machine over them without

having to remove the needles beforehand. Please note that all seams should be finished with a zigzag stitch (tight along the outside edge of the fabric) otherwise the fabric unravels and the seam opens up gradually.



Braies

PICTURE 1: Pin the insert firmly to the two legs. This is a little complicated and requires concentration. First you mark the center of the insert at 45 cm on each side with a pin and also mark the legs (front and rear) at 45 centimeters with needles. Now fix the insert onto the front right leg up to the mark then fix the remaining 45 cm of the insert onto the right rear leg. Repeat as described at the other side of the insert and the trouser leg. To be on the safe side fix the two legs together at the inner sides. Now check if your braies look like a pair of trousers. If all parts fit sew otherwise remove the needles and put them together once again.



PICTURE 2: Double fold the edges of the legs and seam. Repeat as described with the upper edge.

Hose

PICTURE 3: Sew together the first hose at the side seams. Then seam its lower leg ends. Fold the edge only once to avoid a thick seam.

PICTURE 4: Seam the upper end after a double fold but leave out the six centimeter wide tip. Fold this tip twice after hemming, creating a three-centimeter wide tunnel. Fix this tunnel with a seam and run one of the short cords through.

Repeat both steps with the second hose.



Carola Adler has been designing and producing clothes for more than 25 years. A couple of years ago she founded AdelundVolk, where she offers individual costumes (fantasy and historic) for her customers

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INNERSUIT

600 swords for Greenland



with their own culture. Responsible for the project is the renowned cultural institution NAPA, the Nordic Institute in Greenland. As larp experts the crew of the Copenhagen based Rollespilsakademiet (Roleplaying Academy) was hired which is well known in Denmark for large-scale larp projects for children and youth. Further support came from the Danish larp weapons manufacturer Palnatoke.

The idea was quite simple: Lars and Anders flew to a settlement, met with the teachers at the local school and explained to them the concept of larp as an educational tool. Afterwards they organized with assistance by the teachers a larp for the children.

This game was kept simple as well: The *Innersuit* (hence the project name) are a tribe from the Greenlandic mythology living between the rocks and the sea. Its most important feature is that they have no noses. They are considered very dangerous and sometimes come into conflict with humans. Now it seems they have struck again. All animals had disappeared and an NPC, the Great Hunter is trying to convince the Greenland people to go to war against the *Innersuit*. But it turns out that they are innocent and that the Great Hunter was in truth an evil shaman.

The game setting was chosen so that the kids could address their mythological and cultural heritage. There was also no shortage of humor and fighting; Anders and Lars had not brought all those swords in vain. After a final debriefing with the teachers they went by plane, boat or dog sled to the next town.

Greenlandic reality rarely cares for detailed plans as Lars and Anders learned as soon as they arrived. The fjord to which



they should travel was frozen so instead of a short boat trip they had to change plans and take a several-hour dog sled ride. Other obstacles during their trip were translation difficulties or even schools that had quite simply forget that they would come. The most bizarre experience for the two adventurers has been a flight that was supposed to go only from one city to another in Greenland but due to bad weather they were redirected to Iceland where they were stuck for three days. In Greenland such problems are solved with much patience and improvisation. Fortunately Lars and Anders had enough of both in their luggage and could rely on excellent local support.



All in all the parties involved draw a very positive conclusion about the start of their project. As expected Greenlandic children and young people had as much fun in beating each other with swords as Danish ones. The cultural aspect also was not neglected. *When the Innersuit project came to Greenland, there were places where the local kids thought that Tupilaks, small carved figures made out of bone, were just something that tourists bought. Now they know that the Tupilaks were*

spirits summoned by Greenlandic shamans, says Claus Raasted. And they even had fun while learning that fact. Whether from these beginnings an independent larp culture will develop remains to be seen.

But what's next? Currently the Roleplaying Academy is working on a documentary of this project, which will soon be released in three languages (Greenlandic, Danish and English). Chances are good for the project to be continued this year and to get extended to additional communities in Greenland, maybe even to the Faroe Islands and Iceland.

*Text: Karsten Dombrowski
Pictures: Rollespilsakademiet*

The time has come ... larp has reached the far north or more precisely Greenland. Last year the Danish larpers Anders Berner and Lars Munck visited several schools in East Greenland and the Greenland capital of Nuuk as part of the *Innersuit* project - with 600 sponsored larp swords in their luggage. They traveled a total of 10,000 km by plane, boat and dog sled and introduced more than 1,000 children and young people (and their teachers) into the larping hobby.

What may seem a little bit bizarre at first glance actually has a very serious background. In Greenlandic society generally and in particular among the Inuit there are huge social problems such as high unemployment and widespread alcoholism. Victims are young people who often suffer from lack of perspective, abuse, violence and depression. As a result Greenland has one of the highest suicide rates among young people worldwide. The reasons for these conditions are varied. Claus Raasted who is one of those responsible for the project puts it as the following: *It's a country where the sun doesn't show itself for a lot of the year and on top of that it's being dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century - without necessarily having fully adapted to the 20th yet.* The larp project should bring change into their everyday life and show the children and young people how to deal in new ways



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ATELIER FANTASTIC ART

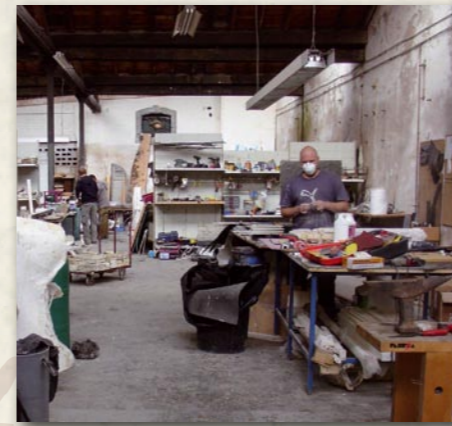
Anything that can be made from latex



Whether it's weapons, helmets, masks or complete monster costumes – since thirteen years *Atelier Fantastic Art* from France has produced anything that can

be made from latex. The company started as many larp outfitters all over the world: the founders originally had been just players (and sometimes organizers) that

discovered a deeper love for building latex weapons. At first they simply produced weapons only for their own needs, later for friends and ultimately for customers.



As there was literally no competition in that particular business area at that time in France and thanks to some government subsidies *Fantastic Art* developed quickly.

In the field of larp weapons the company tries to combine its experiences with the many different playing styles and safety standards of various European countries. The aim is to build weapons that cover a broad spectrum of customer needs and still focus on quality, durability and aesthetics. The foam weapons for example are welded without adhesive, only by heat and pressure around the core rod.

The success of *Fantastic Art*, especially in the early years is based on many volunteer supporters from the larp scene as well. Even later the scene was always very important. For instance several difficult orders for special larp purpose helped to refine the techniques in areas such as modeling, mold design or color scheme. This experience benefits the company until today, for instance in the implementation of big show costumes in the professional field. Because even so foam weapons, like core-free throwing daggers, and small latex accessories like elf ears make most of the production line – for the actual revenue that keeps the company going *Fantastic Art* now produces large, custom-made latex costumes for professional shows and other events. Here unlike in the area of latex weapons, *Fantastic Art* in France still has very few competitors to face. The best-known customer is likely to be the computer game company *Blizzard*, for which the studio in recent years created several large costumes for their marketing campaign.

Nevertheless, the passion for larp and the enthusiasm for unusual fantasy designs is still there. The artists of the company therefore hope to continue getting unusual requests from the larp scene. Even crazy ideas can be implemented ...

Text: Karsten Dombrowski
Pictures: *Fantastic Art*

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CONQUEST 2011

Clash of (larp) cultures

Big larps with several thousand players often bring very different gaming cultures and ideas from several different countries together. But how does it feel being a foreigner on such a game? We have asked the Danish larper Jasper Kristiansen to describe his impressions and experiences at the German larp ConQuest.

Once again I decided to spend a week of the summer holidays at the enormous German larp *Conquest*. This is beginning to be more and more of a tradition, as this is the fourth year in a row, and I'm not planning to stay away next year. For even though the experiences and impressions differ widely from what I know from Danish larps, the *Conquest* keeps talking to the fantasy-fan deep in my heart.

This year I've been asked by LARPzeit to give a description on how Mythodea (as the larp is commonly referred to in Denmark) is perceived from a foreigner's perspective. I know that I won't be able to cover the opinions of other gaming cultures than my own, so please, do not blame any of the French, British, Belgian, Dutch or one of the other dozen nationalities present each year for these words. I'm sure that we all have widely different ways of larping.

Wednesday morning, 07:11

After a bit of detour (yeah, we got lost), we arrive at Rittergut Brokeloh, the location of the game. Five cars and a van have been driving all night, since we left



Copenhagen around midnight. As always, I'm amazed by the sheer numbers of cars on the parking lots. I imagine that whole legions of cattle are homeless these days as around 7000 nerds crowd their home around the old Brokeloh manor.

The size of the event is one of the main things that set it apart from Danish larps. The largest larp I have attended in Denmark was around 600 participants. So in many ways to me this event resembles a music festival more than a larp ... sort of a "Roleplay-Roskilde". Only three hours 'till the check-in opens. Then off to the Fire-Camp (our faction) to put up our

tents, a small nap and then the gangwars, the plot-solving and the victories on the battlefield waits. Oh right, and the good german beer ...

Wednesday evening, 19:24

I've just come back to the camp, after an hour of investigation around a great, golden, floating crystal in an eight meter wide crater. How awesome is that? The only problem was that nobody really had the interest or time to include us in the *why* and *how*, so now we know something of importance (and are 40 manapoints

down, due to massive use of the *Detect Effect*-spell), but we don't know what to do with it. Damn...

One thing that we learned on the first year we visited Mythodea was that it really takes effort if you want to be included in the plot solving and doesn't speak/understand German very well.

Friday afternoon, 18:54

I'm sitting with my back to one of the big palisade walls next to the main battlefield. I'm soaked with sweat (who made me put on my gambeson in this heat?), my heart is pounding and I've just emptied my second bottle of water. This is a great battle, and in 30 minutes time when the healing potion has done its work I'll be heading back into the fray.

The large scale combats at Mythodea are one of the main attractions for most of the Danish players I know. We all come from a larping culture where the battles are fast and hard and therefore generally only last for a couple of minutes. But Mythodea presents an environment full of targets, and a rules system that give players a lot of hitpoints (compared to Danish standards). All this allows for a lot longer battles than we are used to at home.

On the other hand, the fighting culture of the Danish larps and Mythodea are different in lots of unwritten ways, and it took us some time to learn that. I can only imagine how frustrating it most have been for the 2-handed hammer-wielding NPC to fight a giddy Danish youngboy, clad in easy-to-get 15 hit points, not at all interested in epic moves but only in dealing as much death as possible in as little time as possible. Unfortunately the "fight slowly and wear armour"-style of play was not described beforehand so we got ourselves a lot of critique before we found out that it wasn't the *written* rules we were breaking but the *unwritten* ones. And that is one of the places that Mythodea lacks in including foreign players. Gaming cultures varies widely across Europe, and assuming that so many people considers the same things *the right way to larp* seems a bit naive. .

Another thing I've noticed concerning the combat this year is that the gamemasters seems more focused on us fighting *theatrically* than *safely*. I cannot count the number of times I have been

tackled by a very big platemail-clad guy, even though I'm wearing next to no armor and no helmet.



Saturday morning, 10:15

I've just come back from a rescue mission at the Earth camp where the undead forces had defeated the followers of the element Terra and taken their camp. Now I'm enjoying a cup of coffee in the sun, while I'm looking at some of the crazy costumes one finds at Mythodea. On my right side a chaos sorcerer is talking to a darkelf and what seems to be some sort of Twi'lek (the race from Star Wars) inspired girl. On my left side in the old and ruined temple of Ignis there is a duel between a young repainted guy and the always awe-inspiring *Hand of Ignis* in his foam-and-latex-and-dreadlocks-made-of-yarn suit. Not long ago we fought *Argus*, the *Sharuh'n'ar* (fondly known among the Danes as *Mr. Mythodea*) for the legs of the *Xerikan* (just as fondly known as *Lord Megatron*). Both of them are ridiculously impressive to look at. Mythodea has always been a place for crazy-cool costumes and monsters. This year there is a blue dragon with skulls and spikes and a Dutch fire-turtle named Sam! What's not to like? And this year is even the most modest in new and impressive latex-suits. As a foreign participant these visual centerpieces are great, for even though we may not understand what Argus is saying we are never in doubt that he is the main bad guy and is a villain to be feared.

Sunday noon, 12:52

All the cars are packed, and we are ready to begin our trip home to Copenhagen. Everyone is tired and happy (Except for Martin, who got stung on the inside of his cheek by a wasp. He is just tired) and people are already discussing what to play next year. A major wish seems to be NPC for the *The Ratio* (a faction of the evil *Forsaken*) if it becomes available, but Orcs or "something in the Air-camp" is also rated high.

It has been the same every year since the first. Once you have visited Conquest of Mythodea, chances are good that you will be back to see the crazyness again and again. I know I will.

*Text: Jesper Kristiansen
Pictures: Live Adventure*

For more information about the ConQuest see the article *The Grand Expedition* on page 4 or visit the games website www.live-adventure.de.



LEAVING MUNDANIA

"Explaining the hobby in a way that my grandparents could understand"

Larpers are misunderstood ... at least that's what New Jersey journalist and lit-mag editor Lizzie Stark thinks. But instead of just complaining about this fact she wrote a book about the hobby, trying to explain its fascination to a mainstream audience. LARPzeit editor Karsten Dombrowski asked her about her motivation, findings and weird experiences during her expedition into the realm of larpers.

LARPzeit: Let's start with the basic: What is your connection to the hobby of larp?

Lizzie Stark: I'd never larped – or even gamed – before writing *Leaving Mundania*, but I knew about the hobby from a friend who kept falling into living situations with larpers. Now, I've spent a couple years on my local scene, reporting, watching, playing, and running games.

LZ: What is Leaving Mundania all about? And why did you write it?

Lizzie: The book explores the diversity and vitality of larp as a hobby and medium that is still emerging. I tried to look at larp from a variety of angles -- in addition to playing and running games in the book, I also profiled larpers, from a hard-boiled detective who keeps his pastime secret to a dad who ran his kids through *Dungeons & Dragons* modules with morals in lieu of bedtime stories. I



watched the US military train its soldiers through larp and dug up similarities between larp and Tudor pageantry.

I wrote this book because larp is fascinating and misunderstood.

It's fascinating because larp requires face-to-face meetings, an increasing rarity in this digital age, and because people create their own culture and their own narratives during games rather than relying on a movie or book to deliver entertainment to them.

Larp is misunderstood, in part because it's cloaked in jargon, and in part because it's got a geeky image, at least in American culture. I wanted to explain what was compelling about the hobby in a way that my grandparents could understand.

LZ: After writing the book: Did you get a deeper insight into the larp scene in the US? Is there actually something like "A" scene?

Lizzie: The US is a huge country with many small larp scenes, and I couldn't possibly have covered all of them. I did most of my reporting on my local scene, which includes New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, although I interviewed folks from other parts of the country.

Generally speaking, vampire and boffer campaigns are the most popular sorts of game in the States, though they are far from the only games played. Places like Boston, DC, and Los Angeles have healthy theater-style scenes, for example. There's relatively little formal communication between regional scenes, each one of which has its own lingo, gestures, favored formats, and so on. That seems to be changing thanks to domestic email lists, but it's doing so slowly.

LZ: Your expeditions for this book led you to many places and many people. What has been the most funny or weird experience?

Lizzie: Getting whammed with boffers notwithstanding, visiting the Fort Indiantown Gap National Guard training post was probably the strangest thing I did. The simulations that the army runs create amazing immersion. At Fort Indiantown Gap I saw a fake town, complete with secret passageways, built and used for training. The medical simulations created amazing immersion. In addition to lights, makeup, sound, and scenery, they actually had smell generators wafting scents like sewer and burning diesel into the training facility.

LZ: Apart from this book you blog about larp, do lectures at conventions ... do you have a mission?

Lizzie: Other than to get other people to run the games I'd like to play? It's

an exciting time to be on the US larp scene, just as it's really beginning to be aware of other larp traditions. I'd like to be part of that, helping communicate among the many smaller local scenes, and encouraging people to try games that are outside of their usual sphere of comfort.

LZ: What's next? Do you have plans for more larp projects? Or are you already working on them?

Lizzie: I have an idea for my own one-shot larp, based on the hour-long high school dramas of my childhood, like *My So Called Life* or *Beverly Hills 90210*. In format, it'll be tightly structured and won't involve many (if any) NPCs. I've never designed a game before, so it should be a fun challenge.

In *Leaving Mundania: Inside the Transformative World of Live Action Role Playing Games* Lizzie Stark picks up a heroic stand against the bad reputation of larpers as *jobless misanthropes living in their parents' basements* and being so geeky even other geeks look down on them – not in the form of a boring PR text, a scientific research or an angry manifesto but in a style that conveys the thrill and emotion of this hobby. Starting with her first larp experience and reflections about her expectations, insecurity and desires, the reader follows her into a world of *make believe on steroids for adults*. Like a 19th century explorer on an expedition into unknown lands she dives into the tradition of larps at big geek conventions, hides from goblins in "classical" boffer larp madness and visits institutions, that use larp like techniques for training purposes. A



LEAVING MUNDANIA

Inside the Transformative World of Live Action Role Playing Games

LIZZIE STARK

May 2012

long the way she manages to explain the language and hidden rules of US larpers and discusses a huge spectrum of subjects: ranging from problems of in-game economy up to in- and of-game racial issues. She also portrays several different individual players and what larp means to them and their life. This includes drama, gossip and human tragedy, but also emotional and inspiring stories.

If you want to know why US policemen better keep their hobby larp secret, what impact D&D like adventures instead of classical bedtime stories have on future gamers and which similar troubles today's larp organizers share with the organizers of larplike court games for queen Elisabeth I. ... get this book.

STEFFEN SCHNEE
READY FOR BATTLE

MAKE YOUR OWN CHAIN MAIL ARMOUR



Whether it is for larp, theatre production, living history event or other related hobbies, with your own hauberk, coife, trousers or other chain mail objects you are ready for battle. But how do you create a custom-fit pattern for your own chain mail? What needs to be considered while making chain rings? And what are the best techniques for weaving thousands of rings together? These and other questions will be answered by the author step by step and with fully illustrated instructions. The reader learns the practicalities of how to transform a roll of wire into a chain mail armour.

COST OF LIVING

Big Brother gone wild



How does it feel to live in a city that is owned by a media broadcasting company? More than 500 participants of the Russian larp *Cost of Living* in July 2011 got a little taste of it. The game was organized by the group *Stairway to Heaven* and set sometime in the not so distant future when mankind has settled on the couch to dive deeper and deeper into dreams of reality TV.

New Venice

The story in short: The largest show in the world and biggest hit (at least right now) is *New Venice*. A city, where everything is covered by video cameras and everything that happens is transferred into one of the several TV channels of the broadcasting company *Lifecost-TV*. The main driving force for personal success of its inhabitants is their personal *rating* by the TV audience. Everybody's personal value is determined by a simple formula: higher rating means a better life. So the message is clear: Do you want to live well? Surprise a worldwide audience with sex pictures, radical art or political extremism. Even

murder is a proper way to increase your rating, because in court *Lifecost* videotapes are not considered as proof of a crime. Of course one *could* choose to live an ordinary, boring middle class life instead ... but the glamour of this city is tempting. In its shining streets, many pleasures are waiting: a sauna, strip shows, wet t-shirt contests, disco, cockroach races and even a gay club (that gets bombed every single night by nationalists or religious extremists).

Not enough *thrill*? There is also the *Running Man Show*, where convicted criminals are forced to run for their lives through the city. They are hunted by professional killers all for the entertainment of the viewers (how much the company controls everything in *New Venice* is revealed when an ambitious politician who wanted to restrain the *Lifecost* show is coincidentally convicted for a crime and sentenced to this fate as well).

With the end of the game getting closer, the story gets a dramatic twist: The TV company threatens to cancel the show and move to a couple of other cities. *New Venice* soon will sink into inconsequential obscurity. Only the citizens with the highest rating will be transferred into a new show. This leads not only to increasing efforts to gain fame but also to several 'tactical murders' of people with higher rating.

All in all the story made for a very fascinating game with a pessimistic but quite interesting approach towards postmodern society.



Living cameras and sexproof tags

How did the game mechanic of the rating work? In the absence of an actual TV audience of millions of people it was the game masters task to document and evaluate the activities of the participants. For instance there were a lot of Field-GMs acting as 'cameras.' If they saw a spectacular action they noted this and the number of players involved and passed the information on to headquarters where it was incorporated into the ratings. In addition participants could also document their lives themselves in a specially created Wi-Fi network. A micro blogging program developed for this game made it possible for everyone to spread news, rumors and comments, but also to upload photos. Again the more spectacular the contribution was the higher the gain in rating. In order to simplify the work of the GM there have been several key words with which the contributions were tagged e.g. #Sexproof for 'sex photos.' These were of course not real sex photos but the act was symbolized



in a predetermined manner (clasped hands). The whole system was very well received by participants as demonstrated by the high frequency of contributions during the game (an average of around 4.5 postings per minute). To create the illusion of an omnipresent TV station organizers also put up their own television studio, where game master could record news and then screen them on several public screens. The Wi-Fi network unfortunately proved to be not stable enough to stream directly to the several hundred mobile devices of the players.

Wi-Fi in the middle of nowhere

The project put the organizers into a huge logistical challenge. The game took place in the middle of the forest, about 40 kilometers away from the nearest town. The city was simulated with a lot of tents and the power grid to which each institution could be connected was produced by a 75 KW generator brought along for the game. Even a stable Wi-Fi network for the more than 500 participants was built in this middle of nowhere (an area where there is no mobile reception). Each participant was expected to bring on his or her own devices (smartphone, netbook, pad etc.) participate in the 'online life' of *New Venice*.

*Text: Karsten Dombrowski
(with a lot of help from*

Diana Trubetskaya and Slava Rozhkov)

Pictures: Stairway to Heaven



GEEK SEXISM



They might prefer big guns and swords over fancy dresses in their games but Ann ...

Hardcore feminists sometimes *really* can annoy us (just to be clear: "us" includes males and females alike and "feminists" includes both gender as well) with lengthy lessons about gender neutral language and angry talks about ... well ... men. But that should be no reason for looking away, when harassment and discrimination is happening, especially not if it takes place in our own gamers backyard. Ann Kristine Eriksen and Nynne Søs Rasmussen tell us about their bad experiences on the annual Danish roleplaying convention *Fastaval* and what they are going to do about it.

LARPzeit: You and some of your friends recently started a campaign against a special kind of sexism at the Danish game convention Fastaval. What is it all about? And why do you think it needs to be addressed?

Ann Kristine Eriksen: Let me first explain that the sexism we are talking about has nothing to do with the convention as a whole but with a certain group of people: The cleaning crew also known as the *Dirtbusters*, mostly male but occasionally female. They are more or less a *Fastaval* institution and have been an integral part of the convention since 1995. Being the cleaning crew can understandably become a somewhat tedious job and so they have for their entertainment taken on characters and do the cleaning as a kind of all-weekend larp at the convention. But the culture they developed for their characters and as a group is very sexist. They often shout very ugly things at girls (preferably some slang for vagina), they have been known to break into the girls locker room while people were showering and in my opinion they show in general a terrible attitude towards women. They use their characters and the larp as social alibi to justify the sexism like *Oh no it wasn't me ... my character did it. You know I was only kidding*. These people are volunteers. They work like crazy during the entire convention and they do a job which most people don't want to do. But is it ok to trade cleaning for sexism? No!

Nynne Søs Rasmussen: Two years ago I attended *Fastaval* for the first time. My first encounter with the *Dirtbusters* was being surrounded by ten of them while I was walking alone. They weren't aggressive or anything, it was clearly a joke ... to see if they could freak out "The new girl". But it's still not ok! The next day I wanted to take

a shower and was met by some of them in the girls' showers room where they had a camera man following them around. Again it weren't like they were tearing off my towel or anything like that but still ... Another time I was asked if I wanted to get my breasts stamped with their logo. Of course if you say loudly *no* they will back off. But it's the language and the attitude that really gets to me.

LZ: What is it exactly, that makes behaviour like this "not ok"?

Nynne: I'm 25 years old and even though I haven't been much on Fastaval I have been larping for quite a while. I can manage to say *no* when I feel harassed. But right now we are accepting that young girls at their first roleplaying convention are experiencing similar episodes. And they might wonder: *Is it okay to say no, or is this just something I must accept to belong here?* And that's not okay. I think the cleaning crew is scaring off some young girls who could have the potential to become great players, organizers and friends but choose not to go or not to come back. And that's both unfair and a shame.

Ann: Sexism is *never* okay. It is never acceptable. Not in the "real" world and especially not in my hobby where I come to relax, see friends and have a good time. We should not stand by watching an environment to grow where women are singled out and harassed just for being women.

We have a very strict culture of social punishment in the Danish larp scene towards people who make degrading jokes about individuals of different colored skin or different sexuality and I don't see why sexist jokes should be any different.

LZ: Some people claim that "jokes" like these are not meant serious and integral part of a funny geek culture.

Ann: It's very simple. If I laugh at your joke I consider it being funny. If not I don't. I don't see that it has anything to do with geek culture. And trust me on this one I'm a geek myself. In any culture whether it's larp or sport you have to respect the people you are interacting with. I wouldn't advocate for banning jokes and I try not to judge what other people consider funny but I will use my right to speak up when my gender is used as a negative word in my presence or if I find that people are being sexist.

LZ: Are the people we are talking about "bad guys"?

Nynne: No, I think they are both intelligent and sensible guys, who are working very hard for the convention. Somewhere along the way they got stuck in this harmful "in-game" macho-culture. But I'm pretty sure I would love to have a beer with them at the bar if they are "off-game".

LZ: What is Fastaval doing against this?

Ann: Sadly the Fastaval organizers have been legitimizing this behavior for such a long time. They have become so dependent of the Dirtbusters, and the Dirtbusters have become such an integral part of the Fastaval institution the organizers seem to be afraid to sanction individuals of this group.



... and Nynne are far of from being hardcore feminist man eaters.

Nynne: There will always be individuals out there acting offensive but it is so much worse when they are an official part of the convention.

LZ: Do you think it is possible to bring a change? And how?

Ann: Basically it is not about rules and legislation. First of all it is about awareness and acknowledging the problem. Second it is about giving women and men the confidence to say enough is enough. We must learn to accept and respect each other's boundaries and we must learn to back each other up, when people are crossing the line.

Nynne: Of course things can be changed! I believe in a constructive dialog between the organizers, the cleaning crew and the people feeling harassed. If it can't bring the much needed change then Fastaval might need a whole new cleaning crew but first we should try to talk about the problems.

ODYSSEY

From the temples of Greece to the deserts of Africa



Odyssey is a live roleplaying game set in a mythical version of the classical world. Created and launched by the larp professionals of Profound Decisions in 2010, it's the newest large scale larp game in Britain. The organizers have been creating LRP games with hundreds of players for over a decade, so while the game is new it draws on a wealth of practical experience. Matt Pennington, Games Manager at Profound Decisions, describes the idea behind this game.

Odyssey is in many ways different to other larp games. The most important difference is the unusual setting, moving away from traditional fantasy worlds. Instead the nations of Greece, Rome, Persia, Egypt and Carthage struggle for dominance in a setting inspired as much by films such as *300* and as Homer and actual classical history. The second thing that makes Odyssey unusual is the clear focus on the action of the players. We as organizers are specialized in producing games where the players are in control of the world. Instead of battles

being set by non-player characters, our games use frameworks that allow the players complete freedom to choose who to fight as they seek to conquer. Odyssey is built around this belief that players are the focus, against a backdrop of gods, monsters, myth and magic. The stories players tell by their own actions are complemented by a strong team of writers who use all the levers of classical myth to make these stories bigger, more heroic. The goal is to make epics, to let everyone who wants to be become a hero.

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Who rules the Mediterranean Sea?

At the heart of Odyssey is the *Great Game*, the struggle for dominance over the lands of the Mediterranean. Success in the Great Game involves diplomacy, allegiances and all manner of devious plotting as well as careful use of magic and consideration of the words of the gods. The most obvious stage for the Great Game is a huge gladiatorial arena; a purpose-built construction where champions fight and the crowd cheers as the fate of nations is decided. The arena also provides an amazing location for anyone who isn't currently busy elsewhere in the game. There's always something going on; challenges between nations, gladiatorial bouts, monster fights or even classical plays.

In addition to the battles taking place throughout the weekend, the game features a great deal of politics as priests and warleaders plot who to attack and where, and philosophers wield the magic of the world. To support this the game also features other set locations, open only to those of the correct path. Priests are summoned to the Chamber of the Gods to explain their actions face-to-face, to explain why a city has been lost, or a report triumphant victory. Philosophers travel to the World Forge to perform powerful rituals and contest with each other for control of magic. The battles that take place in the arena are part of an interlocking system. Each element of the game affects and is affected by the others, and each character has their special place in the game.

An important game element are the coins, that are gained for in-game actions, from quests, or by victory in the arena. The careful allocation of your group's wealth is an important part of the game, as it can be spent in sacrifices to seek the blessings of the gods or given to philosophers to create powerful enchantments.

We're particularly proud of how good the game looks. The wooden arena seats nearly 200. There are no out-of-game



tents on the field, everything that that isn't part of the game experience has been banished from the field wherever practically possible. The eight page costume guide shows clearly what costumes are appropriate, and we've published guides to making those costumes on a tight budget. Everyone who plays the game makes a huge effort to outdo each other and have the best possible kit. Each nation is designed to look unique and the rules encourage everyone to dress appropriately. Romans in lorica, Greeks in breastplate, Persians in scale armour, Carthaginians in skins and Egyptians in banded leather. That said, it's a mythic setting, and sometimes we sacrifice history for something that feels right, and makes a great look on the field.

More information on Odyssey can be found at www.profounddecisions.co.uk/odyssey. The next games are running from June 29th to July 1st 2012 (*Crown of the Sphinx*), and from August 10th to 12th 2012 (*Queen of the Blood Moon*).

The path to glory

Each player chooses one of 5 paths: attendant, champion, philosopher, priest or warleader. The aim is for the game to give a place for every type of player and encourage players to use the path system to let the organisers know what they want from the game. There's politics for people who like political play, fighting for those who enjoy fighting, a world to be understood for those who enjoy an intellectual challenge, and deeply emotional moments for those who prefer it. The roles of the five paths interlock to give as many opportunities for meaningful roleplay as possible.

The *attendant* path is for those who low playing low-status characters, although it's also where you find the most unique concepts; theatrical impressario, or organiser of gladiatorial entertainments. Attendants can go anywhere, accompanying any character who will take them into their special parts of the game.

Champions will fight in bloody combat in the arena. Victory in these battles confers control over the wealth and resources of lands and cities, from the temples of Greece to the desert regions of Africa. Winning in the arena gives real advantage in later games: win the battle for a rich city and next event your group will gain its tribute.

Philosophers are the world-shakers of Odyssey. They study the way the world works, and twist it to serve the ends of their nations, or their own goals. As alchemists they pursue rites, potions and preparations that can change the nature of the world; and some are physicians who seek to balance and influence the



four humors of the body, healing the sick and wounded of their nation. At the Annual, great mysteries can be performed to strengthen whole nations or bring kingdoms low.

Priests mediate between mortals and the gods. The gods only rarely walk the earth themselves, instead priests are summoned to their divine presence to receive edicts and account for the behaviour of their fellow mortals. Each nation has its own pantheon of gods who fight their own battles through their mortal agents. Every pantheon has its unique character, built from the raw material of classical myth, with all the in-fighting between the gods you'd expect. Being a priest isn't about doing what the gods tell you - it's about balancing the conflicting dictats of an entire pantheon.

Warleaders are the politicians, the rulers. The game is designed to make them depend on their Champions, their Priests and their Philosophers. It's a leadership role, with many conflicting requirements and objectives to balance even outside the arena.

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These paths are not carved in stone. Any character can change path every event - as your character grows, you can change career, move from warrior to priest as your story develops.

Simple rules

The rules are purposely designed to be as simple as possible; global hits, no battlefield magic, only a few skills. There is a risk of death, but the game is structured to keep

player versus player conflict to the arena, where it makes a real difference to the world.

There is no character advancement in the rules. However, there's an enormous amount of progression in the system. Characters accrue exploits and legends with every event they attend, they play their part in other people's epics, and they change the path of the game-world. This means that whilst Odyssey supports regular attendance at events, it doesn't penalise more occasional players. Every significant

action in the game happens over the weekend events - there is no downtime or actions between events to consider.

That sums up the thinking behind Odyssey. It's a game about the stories people tell, about the characters they've played, and the moments they've experienced. It's primarily about the story, not the rules, about immersion not character statistics. It's a story-building machine.

Pictures: Chiara McCall, Chris Cox

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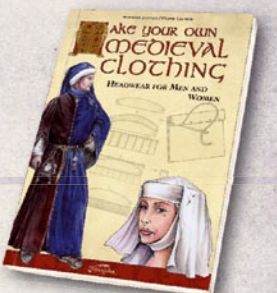
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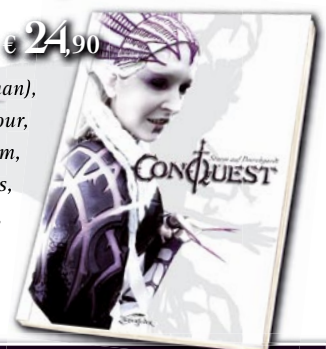


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