
On my Bookshelf: Jabberwocky Madness

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Okay, so that's not really the title of a book. This time I will be discussing two old D&D modules called EX1:Dungeonland and EX2:The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror. And for those few who are not familiar with these modules, they are Gary Gygax's adaptation of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll.

It's time to brush off these classics and consider creating a one-shot evening of Mad Hatter mayhem as a break from your regular campaign setting.

Just in time for the 2010 release of Tim Burton's Alice in Wonderland. I've been seeing the movie posters all summer at the cinema and they've really got me buzzed. Which of course got me thinking, Wouldn't it be fun to run an AiW game, just for an evening?

Remake #94

The new Alice in Wonderland movie is actually a Walt Disney production, which somehow seems to conflict with it being a Tim Burton film. But looking at the movie posters makes it pretty obvious that this isn't your father's Alice in Wonderland. Definitely not for the rugrat crowd.

With Johnny Depp playing the Mad Hatter and Helena Bonham Carter as the Red Queen, this latest version of the classical books looks too intriguing to pass up. The posters seem just odd enough to make it seem worth taking a look.

There's a creepy feeling to the images that set a tone to the movie. Honestly, when I first saw the Hatter poster at the movie theater, I thought it was from some slasher film. I passed it a number of different times before seeing the Alice in Wonderland reference.

Gary does Alice

Flashback to the 1980's when Gary Gygax writes Dungeonland. He had previous adapted Alice in Wonderland to one of the levels in his Castle Greyhawk dungeon. It wasn't hard to flesh out what he had written and create the module. He followed this soon after with The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror module.

If you take a step back and look at the original story, you'll see that Wonderland lends itself quite easily to D&D play. Lots of crazy characters and twisted creatures. Maybe Carroll was just a bit ahead of his time.

Alice's adventures even lend itself through to a good old fashioned dungeon crawl. In the books, she stumbles from one area to the next, some times on purpose, some times unknowingly. Odd people and even odder creatures populate the lands. Does that scream D&D or what?

Gary did a selective look at the books but it is obvious to anyone familiar with the story where you are. The opening scene where eating the bread makes you shrink while the potion makes you grow is a dead give away to most people.

Each of the creatures have been adapted for the modules. Some were granted new stats as per new new creatures, while others have been adapted to existing ones. For example, the Mad Hatter is a monk while the Cheshire Cat is a sabertooth tiger.

Old Style Maps

The modules each come with 2 major maps along with some minor complementing one. As per the style at that time the maps are simple and functional as opposed to artistic or detailed. It would be great to see what a Dundjinni master could do with these maps.

And It's Completely Free

Probably the best part of running a AiW game is that Wizards offers both modules as free downloads on their sites. Check out this WotC page to download the full module with maps. I compliment WotC on providing a whole selection of older modules for free. After download the AiW modules, take a look at the other free modules available.

Now I know what you're thinking, these are first edition modules and you don't have enough time to convert all the stats to 3e. Well there are actually a couple of conversions available. Check out this conversion at Ekkaia.org or this one at ENWorld. And a quick scan of the boards show that a number of people are discussing the conversion 4e.

It's All been Done Before

Maybe you're thinking that half your players have already played these modules and it won't be much of a challenge to them. That's where your best DMing skills come into play. Whether your players have played in the AiW world before or not, why not make some changes

Maybe the Cheshire Cat is actually a harmless tressym or maybe a modified displacer beast. Instead of hags, the red and white queens could be high level wizards or high priestesses or one or each.

Tweedledee and Tweedledum are conspicuously absent from this adaptation. One idea could be to have them as a two-headed ettin that is literally a wandering monster.

There are sections of the stories that totally missing and could easily be added. Most people haven't even read the books, just seen the Walt Disney cartoon or one of the TV incarnations. But each adaptation is different and missing something.

The maps are limited and could easily be fleshed out with missing elements or areas. One area doesn't have to lead to another, even if it is in the book. After all, this is your own adaptation of the classics.
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