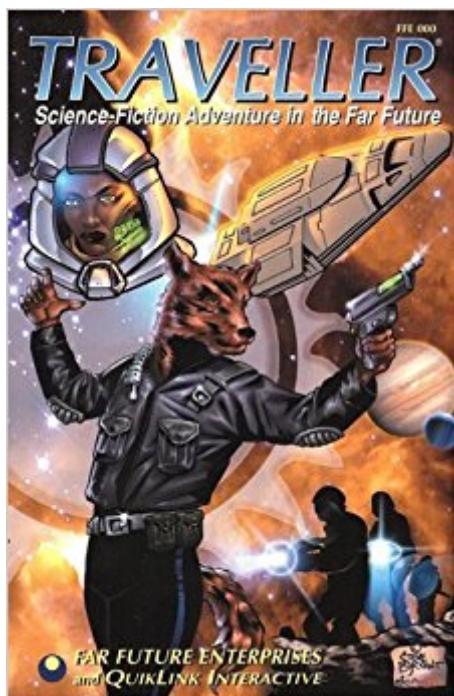


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Classic Traveller Reprint: The Basic Books (1-3)



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Customer Reviews

Back in the day (I assume, as these games were born a few years before I was), there were only two real contenders in the RPG arena. At the beginning, the two 20-ton gorillas in the room were Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson's Dungeons & Dragons family of games (including OD&D, AD&D, and even the D&D-derived Gamma World), and Marc Miller's Traveller. Of the two, AD&D has not been reprinted, instead being suffered to be repurposed into edition after edition taking it further from the parent game. Traveller was undergoing the same fate until the current rightsholder, Far Future Enterprises, realized something: There do exist people who want to play the original game as it was originally presented. And thus, they went about re-publishing the original three booklets (what old-timers apparently call the "LBB"s or "Little Black Books") of the original Traveller game as published in 1977 in a convenient one-volume book. What do you get? A slim book with a newly-commissioned cover (I've seen the original Traveller covers, and I prefer them for their minimalism) that holds reprint copies of the three original booklets, plus a new short story and some rather crowing sales figures (if I'd had my druthers, I'd have jettisoned the publishing figures, as 99% of the audience is probably not going to care overmuch). Book 1 is the basic character creation and personal combat rules. Character creation is a game in and of itself -- your character actually starts play with at least one and usually more terms of military or merchant-marine service under his belt, that is if he doesn't die in character creation. Yes, it's one of the rare games where you can have your character be killed, and not had a chance to play him. Here you also get the hang of skills (the task-resolution system is fairly easy, once you get to know it). The character record system is elegant, to say the least: This is a typical Traveller character: John Sample Age 32-4

terms-Navy75A6B9Jack of Trades-2 Vacc-Suit-1 Pistol-2. That's it. Unlike the increasingly voluminous character sheets for the D&D games, you can literally record your character's stats on an 3x5 index card in Traveller. Book 2 takes your characters to space. Here's where me and the book part ways slightly. In a couple of sections of the book (in-system interplanetary travel and building worlds), you are expected to do advanced algebra, mostly to hit the "highly scientific" feel of the game. While I have no doubt that these are real formulae that can be used to precisely mirror apogee or deceleration or atmosphere envelopes or what have you, it's daunting to us, the math-challenged. Also, ship construction is a fairly confusing and arcane process. Is it any coincidence that GDW back in the day had ready-made ship modules for sale? Finally, character advancement is stuck in the back of this section, where it seems a bit of an afterthought. Wouldn't it make more sense to place it with the other character-based sections in Book 1? Book 3 is everything else: Worlds, Adventures, Equipment lists (describing everything from a cutlass -- don't laugh, in space, you probably would not be shooting off pistols in a thin-hulled ship -- to high-powered lasers) and a small bestiary. Psionics is also here, for those who use psionics in their games (I usually don't, so I really can't comment on this section). This section has a fairly good amount of everything, including generating merchant revenue for players (who are probably running cargo while not adventuring to pay off the bill for their spaceship -- that is one of the assumptions of the game). Editing was clean, and the book's printing was crisp. If only the layout could have been better and some of the rules not so maddeningly math-dependent (though these are sins of 1977, not 2007), I'd give it a head-over-heels 5 stars for nostalgia value alone. But as it is, these head-banging flaws led me to knock a star or two off.

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