

Feature



Military Costumes Inspired by Role Playing Games *Larry Dixon*

In an earlier article, a well-known artist described his work as a fantasy illustrator. Now he discusses military themed costumes inspired by illustrations for role-playing games (RPGs)

I've been working on RPG illustrations for a number of years, and I really enjoy the challenge of coming up with costumes for characters that fit in to all these worlds. Since many of these games are quests of one kind or another, it's not surprising that many of the illustrations I do include characters in armor and military themed costumes. The range and number of costumes I've done seems pretty incredible to me when I look back on them.

To give you just a taste of what RPG costumes are like, I'll talk about two illustrations I did for one called "Dungeons and Dragons" or D&D as most people refer to it. D&D is a fantasy RPG originally published in 1974 that was designed by Gary Gygax and Dave Anderson. It's the

grand-daddy of all RPGs, and the franchise has just kept going ever since.

Each player takes on a specific character, and the characters embark on imaginary adventures within a fantasy setting. A Dungeon Master serves as the game's referee and storyteller, while maintaining the setting in which the adventures occur.

A hallmark of D&D is the rule books and magazines. Things started out with just a simple rule book, but a whole range of publications has grown up around the game. Full-length articles often appear now, with detailed



Detail of the armored characters from "The 4 Paladins".

illustrations of characters and story settings. The two illustrations I'll talk about come from these.

The first illustration is called "The 4 Paladins." It's a digital painting that I did for an article in D&D v. 3.5, featuring four new prestige classes. I really had a good time with the detail work in this one.

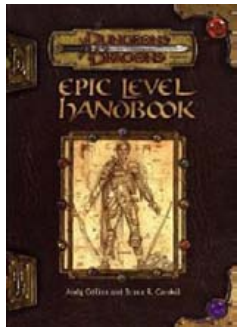
When I thought about the types of costumes for this story, I wanted to have a different style for each species that appears in the illustration. I also didn't want it to look like it was lifted directly from a Medieval museum, or from *Lord of the Rings* for that matter, so I mixed it up a lot.



"The 4 Paladins" digital image created for D&D v. 3.5.

One of the characters, for example, had more heavy plate, but with a lacquer finish that you'd never find on the real thing. Another had lots and lots of overlapping plates. I tried to think about the characters as real people in a real world, and kept it to where you could see their stuff in a fight, rather than being dress armor. It's very articulated.

There's an interesting story about this one. *Dragon* magazine paid me for a two-page, center spread feature they were going to do, and then they never used it. A game designer friend of mine back then even offered to write them an article to match it. Then the magazine went away. As far as I know, they still have the rights to use it. I'm happy to have the chance to share it now.



The second illustration is a very different kind of warrior that I did for the D&D Epic Level Handbook, of the character *Soveliss the Ranger* at 20+ level. It always feels like a privilege to paint one of the D&D Archetype characters.

This is one of maybe four depictions of a happy character in the entire core rule book set. Everybody else is intense and dark, and Soveliss is like, "Hi, I have a bow!"

Since this is an Epic Level, I figured that by this point, the only thing someone is going to care about is their magic items.



Soveliss the Ranger from the D&D Epic Level Handbook.

They will be getting into so much on a daily basis, that nothing they have will last. That's why I went with something incredibly simple, the D&D equivalent of blue jeans and a t-shirt. When you have ioun stones, and rings of protection, and boots of flying, why bother with anything fancy that's just

going to be sucked up into the next drek pit you're dropped into by your Game Master?

So that's it, two very different visions of characters that appear in RPGs. The first is a more traditional band of armored fighters, while the other is a lone warrior who travels light and fends for himself. I've enjoyed sharing two of my favorite RPG illustrations with you.

Now, let me encourage you to explore the amazing world of RPGs. Even if you aren't into playing games like D&D, you just might get your next costume idea from the wide range of military style costume illustrations, from a whole new generation of talented young artists, that appear in today's RPG rule books and magazines.

Larry Dixon has been an uncredited co-plotter or co-writer for many popular properties, bringing jovial and energetic approaches to collaborations. His cover-credited novels include the ever-popular Gryphon series, the Winds, Storms, SERRAted Edge, and Owl books with the mighty Mercedes (Misty) Lackey. Born to Run has been hailed as a "romp with a conscience," and The Black Gryphon has been critically referred to as "A modern classic," and is in its nineteenth printing. Larry is a sports car enthusiast, a storm spotter and a volunteer firefighter He can often be found rushing to the scene of any disaster where people need help. He married fantasy author Mercedes Lackey in 1992.