

TRIBE 8 RPG 2ND EDITION PLAYER'S HANDBOOK QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Who did what in the new book, by way of introduction?

Matthew: Well, I'm Matthew Hickey and I did most of the development for this book, as well as focusing on the non-mechanical aspects of it, especially the metaplot. I also did the OGL conversion in the Bestiary, the new History chapter and the chapter for Weavers (gamemasters).

Nick Pilon (Nick) handled the new Capal setting and was one of the two SilCORE mechanics specialists. He also wrote the Alliance of Man chapter and was the primary editor of the book.

Larry Sayers (Larry) was the other SilCORE troubleshooter, playtester wrangler, conversion master (for the edition changes) and wrote the Character Creation, Rules and most importantly the Synthesis chapter.

Last, but by no means least was Alexander Freed (Alex), a first time member of our particular circle of insanity. Alex wrote the new Outlands chapter and was a key figure in defining Hattan, Rhanto and doing some reworking of the Boarhead Confederacy.

2. I've already got the 1st Ed rulebook and all the other books, then what advantage is there in getting 2nd Ed?

Nick: The new and rewritten setting, for one. We basically took the material from the later metaplot books and Capal, threw away the bits we felt didn't fit the "feel" of the setting, and then elaborated on what was left. The basics are still the same, but there've been a lot of changes.

One of the biggest changes, for fans of the old books, was the switch from first person to third person narrative. There were just too many complaints about the first person narrative making things hard to understand, and we wanted to fit in as much information as possible.

Larry: The 2nd Edition uses the new rules from DP9, and provides everything you need to play Tribe 8 in one place. From a rules standpoint, I believe that the clarifications and additional playtesting has really helped make the game more solid. Furthermore, you can now create Keepers, Squats and Serfs who are fully supported by the rules.

3. Are my 1st Ed books compatible? How much material in 2nd Ed is re-used from 1st Ed supplements and how much is new?

Nick: Very little is reused from 1e supplements. Almost none, in fact. Your 1e supplements should still be useful to you if you want to run a Vimary/Prophecies/Liberation-era game, as that's what the information in them was geared towards. It probably won't be as useful for a 2e Capal-era game, except as a historical reference for where the assorted cultures "came from." Some (the Joanites) are closer to what they used to be than others (the Yagans).

Larry: Since most of the 1st Edition books contain background information, and not rules, your current collection will be a very useful reference in running a 2nd Edition Cycle even if you play further down the metaplot. For example, the various “Word of” books have a wealth of detailed information we could not possibly get within our word count, and still apply in the default Capal setting.

As for new material, I might have started with the equipment list I collated for the 1st Edition Player’s Guide. Other than that, it is all new content or Tribe 8 specific adaptations of the Silhouette Core rules.

4. What effects will there be if I convert my 1st Ed character to the 2nd Ed rules? Does 2nd Ed reward specialists (with Complexity levels) more than generalist PC’s?

Larry: We have provided guidelines, and I will likely provide a more detailed article on the website if possible, but the most important thing to remember is that the spirit of the character is more important than the numbers.

In some cases, your character will seem more effective, and have more options. In other cases, such as the generalist, you may feel constrained by the addition of Complexity.

Nick: There won’t be many effects - aside from slightly increased point totals, an altered perk/flip framework, and complexity, things are pretty much the same from a stats point of view. You will have to think a little when converting, and might have to do some tweaking to make the stats match the concept, but its not too hard. Even Complexity doesn’t really make that much of a difference, not the way Larry uses it.

5. Will there be sufficient additional information to change the default settings for social status and perks/flaws to allow a Vimary campaign? I know there will be a Vimary appendix, but with the changes in status of the fallen and various tribes there would have to be significant changes to character creation to make it smooth.

Matthew: Yes. The 1st Edition Conversion Appendix does contain the perk/flip information to alter the social status levels.

Larry: Primarily the setting is more limited in the pre-Capal era and the translation consists mostly of removing the socio-political (the Castes) facets from character creation. Furthermore, character types such as Squats and Serfs are less viable in that era, but your Weaver may have other opinions on the matter.

6. Is it safe to let my players read this book if they have not yet reached Liberation?

Matthew: Define “safe” – it gives a history update from the point of view several years after Liberation, so it does mention events that happen in that storybook. There is a sidebar (two actually) that go on to explain how the history as presented in the book is simply the history of the setting “as is”, without any involvement of the player characters. So they will learn that the default assumes the Good Guys won (yay!) and that Mek and other notable ‘canon’ NPCs died in the battle, but there’s enough wiggle room to handle that. In general all the Capal setting needs is that the Alliance of Man win the day as a unified whole.

Nick: What it really comes down to, in my opinion, is how much you trust your players and how good they are at keeping “in character” and “out of character” knowledge separate. Some people just aren’t good at that; others are very good at it. It also depends on how closely you want to stick to the “canon” Liberation storyline. If your players think they know what’s going to happen, you can take advantage of that to better predict their actions and thought processes and keep them on their toes. After some judicious rewriting, of course.

7. Complexity- I liked the simplicity of the 1st Ed. rules set. Why are you making it more complex with a 3rd axis of skill and another calculation to slow down combat and opposed skill tests?

Larry: The short answer is because it is part of the Silhouette Core rules, which is the basis of Tribe 8, 2nd Edition.

Complexity is a good, but underutilized concept in the Silhouette Core rules. One of my goals were to make it worth it for most players.

A few things should be kept in mind. First, Complexity is capped in Tribe 8, so you will not see the wild variance between Complexity levels that you see in the more cinematic games. Second, as you design and develop you character, I hope that you play to the limitations of your character’s Complexity ratings. I tried to create a rules environment where the player would be encouraged to select the appropriate tools and actions for your character’s abilities. Finally, Complexity applies in very specific circumstances, and the modifier doesn’t change.

Nick: Note, first, that a Skill Complexity of n is exactly equivalent to a bonus of $n-1$ to your roll, and a Task Complexity of n is exactly equivalent to a penalty of $n-1$ on your roll. So it’s not /that/ much more complex.

Secondly, it adds a lot to the game, especially since the setting of Tribe 8 is fairly low-tech in general, but has a high variation in the complexity of devices and tasks. The way Larry’s written it, it gives the Weaver an easy way to highlight the difference between simple Tribal/Squat solutions (water wheels, mills, forges, horses, that kind of thing) and Keeper artifacts and technology.

8. How much space have you devoted to Synthesis in this edition? How have you improved the advice on using Synthesis?

Nick: Quite a lot... I remember that chapter well from my editing of it. Larry’s got a lot of rules material there and a good deal of advice on using it. His use of Complexity is especially good here; as it lets you better understand what you can and can’t do with Synthesis. And for those worrying about the “feel” of Synthesis getting lost in all these revised rules... I think the fluff on that will be enough to keep you happy. When writing it, I tried to pick out the fundamental essence of Dream. I think I succeeded pretty well, especially given the space constraints.

Larry: That chapter is larger than the rest of my writing combined. While I do not know the word count on the other chapters, I believe it is one of the largest in the book.

The two largest changes are the concrete examples of using Eminences, which are intended to inspire not limit, and the codification of the other “powers”.

Additionally, I tried to streamline Synthesis and close many of the loopholes that had the possibility to derail games. The goal was to give the players a quicker more unified experience.

9. Does this book finally reveal the truth about the Guides? Cross your heart and swear to God? Are Guide creation rules included so my PC can become a Guide in training?

Nick: Matt would've killed us if that was what it took to include this material. ;)

Matthew: No swearing (or judicious use of murdering co-writers) needed – it's there in spades. The Guides are explained; the mechanics of the Three Gifts (the Old Arts, the History and the Future) are all there with extensive advice for the Weaver on how to use them and how to avoid abuse of the Gifts.

10. I'm interested in using the meta-plot beyond Capal. Does this book describe the events, personalities and locations to get the PC's to the Third City and the victorious fulfilment of Joshua's Prophecy? Are any previous metaplot elements (such as Elatha) retconned?

Matthew: Chapter 10 is devoted to the whole metaplot and how to use it in your game (and how to put it in a headlock until it cries uncle or throw the whole thing out completely). The Tribe 8 metaplot is divided into 5 story arcs. The Tribe 8 library of 25-some books cover the first two arcs, Children of Prophecy and Conquest wherein the Fallen come together, start along the path of their destiny, and start the Second Liberation. Chapter 10 outlines this in detail and then picks up where the last storybook, Liberation, left off. The three remaining arcs are Legacies, Spirit Dance and Restoration. Also in the chapter is some prequel information: answer big questions that were never explicitly answered in previous books, like what are the Z'bri and the Fatimas, why did Joshua die, what are the circumstances around Mary's death and Agnes birth, etc.

Nick: Elatha was, strangely enough, NOT intended as a metaplot element, or so the author tells me. Matt's still managed to work him in somehow. ;)

Matt's covered everything else, so I'll jump in and say that personalities are the one thing that might've gotten the short stick in this book. We wanted to be able to pack in as much “meat” as possible, which means that there's few or none of the NPC writeups that filled the sidebars of previous books. We are, however, planning to release a bunch of signature/sample NPCs (among other things) on the web as bonus/promo material for the book.

11. I've heard there is a Final Curtain Call section in the book- who does it cover?

Matthew: The Final Curtain Call is a two-page summary of all the major players, places, civilizations and factions in the Tribe 8 setting and what happened to them by the end of the Restoration plot arc. That is,

what happens to them if the metaplot unfolds EXACTLY as written, and is a virtually impossibility since the moment you involve player characters and they become the center of attention, these potential futures will change. Don't think of those two pages as a straight-jacket – think of it as the ending of a story – not the story you're telling with your players, but one almost just like it. If you are just reading the metaplot as one long example of how the Tribe 8 story could go, it's the final chapter.

As for who gets a mention in the Curtain Call, here's the list: Agnes, Baba Yaga, Capal, Dahlia, Eva, Hattan, Joan and Tera Sheba, the Liberated Serfs, Luther Boarhead and the Boarhead Confederacy, Magdalen, the Olympian Keepers, the Oneida, Rhanto, the Sanjon Keepers, the Sea of the Lost, the Cult of the Liberator (Children of Lilith), The Eighth Tribe, The Guides, The Z'bri and finally, Vimary.

12. Do you have any recommendations for props, maps, documents, background music or other gimmicks that I can use to improve our T8 game?

Matthew: I don't know about the others but I used a lot of music – not necessarily during the game (I find it too loud and disruptive), but when I do my prep work before the session. Sort of like a soundtrack. Most of the metaplot in the book was written while listening to a mix of VNV Nation and Peter Gabriel's Story of OVO.

Larry: While I completely agree on the music (and often I use appropriate videogame soundtracks), many people overlook the playing environment itself. Cover the digital display on your stereo. Lower the lights and use candles (but don't strain your eyes). Create hand-outs that look like they came from that time, which the Map Pack was great for.

13. Who is your favourite NPC and favourite villain in Tribe 8? Did you do right by them?

Nick: Favourite NPC? Hard to say. I've always thought Lilith was really cool, but I also liked Mek the Jacker and Deus the Poet. Favorite Villain is definitely Tera Sheba. She's just so much fun to hate, and so great as a plot-mover!

Matthew: Fav NPC and Fav Villain are the Guides as a whole and Tera Sheba. Both have been used badly in the metaplot and they've never really been developed – what makes them tick, why have they done (or not done) things at specific points in the metaplot? I hope I've given each a certain degree of humanity and opened a possibility of salvation for each.

14. I know there have been alot of talk here and other places about how complexity will figure into Synthesis. Is synthesis still workable if we choose to omit complexity from our campaign?

Nick: Yes, though it'll probably take a bit of work. Note, as I said above, that Complexity is mechanically equivalent to a bonus/penalty, so you could translate the Complexity thresholds into roll penalties pretty easily.

Larry: Yes, here are the “rules”: Add the Complexity level of the task to the Threshold. You can even make a quick-reference chart for play.

This results in higher thresholds than 1st Ed, but conversely the skill itself is much cheaper to buy.

The second modification is to learning Aspects. It is incumbent on the Weaver to keep in mind that Complexity 3 Aspects represent guarded or secret knowledge, and should be role-played appropriately, with or without using the Complexity rules.

15. Do you have any tips on running a successful T8 campaign?

Nick: The usual. Stay flexible - your players are going to do things you aren't going to expect. Make the plot revolve around your players - no-one likes being spectators. Give them a good villain, one they can REALLY hate, and use the setting to your advantage.

Larry: Get the players involved! Their characters MUST drive the story, and each player should feel like her character contributed to the overall Cycle. The corollary to this is if a character dominates a play session, set up something to get the spotlight on the other characters as soon as you can.

Change gears if it isn't working! You may have planned on the Cell going on the crusade to put down a Hive, but that doesn't grab the players, while they are hooked on the politics in the Factory while bartering for equipment for that crusade. Hey, it's time to start thinking about the Keepers, Tribal interactions and who wants want...

Matthew: I try and answer this in the book but above all remember the following: get them involved, make the metaplot a story about them, make it mean something to the players, and don't be afraid to sit down and put yourself in the position of the NPCs – the best way to understand why things happen (or how best to have them happen) is to sit down and put yourself in their headspace.

16. What IS NOT in the 2nd Edition Tribe 8 Player's Guide that you wish could have made it into the book? I'd ask that of all three of you separately.

Matthew: A billion things and nothing. More information (a map?) of Hattan, maybe a page of hooks/hints at what else is going on in the world (other settings, like Reign of Fire-esque situations in the UK and Road Warrior/Blood of the Heroes in Australia) and ... if I had really sat down and wracked my brains a bit more on Guides and heartstones – but the focus of the book, hell the whole story/setting (as I was reminded at one point by Larry), is the 8th Tribe and not some gaggle of misguided neurotic nutters given a copy of “Omnipotence for the Complete Idiot”.

Nick: I wish we'd had space for an adventure generator and a bunch of SEED-format campaign seeds. Either that, or more setting material and a few sample NPCs. In general, though, I'm quite happy with the book. I think its both a great second edition for fans of the first, and a great introduction to the game for people taking a first look.

Larry: I echo Matt's sentiment. Given another 100 pages and 6 months to playtest, I would gladly add more details on bartering, politics, group-level play, mass combat, spiritual warfare, advice on how to change and/or throw out rules and much more. The problem is once you see the potential; you realize how much could be done with this setting and these rules.

But on a more concrete level- I wish we had space for more NPC's, factions and locations. That does more to inspire me than anything else when planning a Cycle.

17. What did you like working on the most when writing the book? What the least?

Nick: Hard to say... I enjoyed both of the chapters I worked on, and I enjoyed the editing work I did. Space considerations were indeed a pain, but they also forced me to be less wordy.

Larry: I have to answer Synthesis for both. While it was a lot of fun taking the wealth of information and hammering out a system for Synthesis, I always had to question if this was staying true to the feel of the game. Also, there was a huge number of elements that I knew would not make it in the book due to time or space constraints, so I spent some time agonizing over what to include and what to cut.

Matthew: Getting right into the guts of the story and the setting, especially the societies (that's the sociologist/political scientist in me). Also, trying to wrangle the Guides into something understandable and yet consistent with their portrayal so far in the story.

18. What type of support can we expect from you guys for the Tribe 8 setting?

Nick: I am, of course, on both rpg.net and the Tribe 8 Mailing List to answer any questions. I might do some more online material, if people express an interest.

Larry: I will be hanging around the usual online venues ready to answer any rule questions, give advice, or explain what I was thinking when I designed a particular rule. I would also consider posting some of the alternate (house) rules for things like Complexity, Mass Combat and Character creation. There are also plans to release alternate settings, new and old NPC's, and more as time goes on.

Matthew: Well, Nick and Larry have pretty much covered it. Characters, more nifty rules and an alternate setting for the most part.

19. Also, what's next for Tribe 8 2nd ed?

Matthew: Honestly, I don't know. There are still a lot of things we can work with out there. I can tell you what I would like to do – storybooks like the old Heavy Gear metaplot, a character compendium converting established NPCs and giving examples of PC groups from different stages of the metaplot. On a total vanity wish side I would like to flesh out the post-Restoration Tribe 8 setting.

The real answer depends entirely on the sales of the book. This is the truth of it. If enough people want more then we will make more.

Nick: I'll agree with Matt on wanting to flesh out the post-Restoration setting. I'd also like to do something exploring the River of Dream and the spiritual/mythological aspects of the game more, and a more in-depth look at the societies and cities/settlements of the setting. One thing I wouldn't do is cover the rest of the world - I like it that most of the planet's a blank slate for Weavers and players to use as they see fit.

Larry: Hopefully, a vibrant community of gamers who we did right by. Additionally, I would like to see DP9 continue to support this line, whether it be in print or on the web.

20. Any other projects on the horizon, either for DP9 or someone else?

Nick: Yes... Quite a few. None that I can talk about, though. ;)

Matthew: I've got one ongoing other project and have had offers for more. At the moment I want to recharge somewhat – maybe get back to doing RPG book reviews, but there will definitely be more from me in the future. I have a couple of setting ideas that I'd like to see in print.

Larry: Not really. While we are gearing up to get some community support out there, I have no RPG related projects on my plate at this time.

21. Anything you would like to add to this interview?

Nick: I'd like to thank Marc Vezina and the Tribe 8 community for getting me interested in the game in the first place, and Marc again for giving me a chance to work on both the second edition rulebook and the Player's Handbook. And Robert Dubois, for helping us handle all the stuff that happens after the book gets written.

Larry: I really appreciate the support of the community. There are a lot of fans out there, and I hope I have done something they can enjoy for a long time to come. I have to especially thank my playtesters and fellow writers, who somehow managed to put up with my cantankerous nature. Finally I want to tell all the players: "Go have fun!"