

# GEAR KRIEG



## AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE WORDS FROM THE DESIGNER OLIVER BOLLMANN

Something new hit the e-bookshelves this month! *World at War: Gear Krieg* is meant as a supplement to Mongoose Publishing's core *Battlefield Evolution: World at War* rulebook and all of A.D. Publishing's *Vehicle Compendiums*. Now you can take your favourite pulp-full and superscience game and plug it into your WW II gaming experience. To celebrate this great new collaborative effort, *Aurora Magazine* sat down with the author of this new book, Agis Neugebauer.

**Aurora Magazine** - To get the gear rolling, please introduce yourself and your involvement with *Battlefield Evolution: World at War*.

**Agis Neugebauer** - Well, I am Agis Neugebauer from Berlin, Germany. I am 48 years old, married and an IT project manager in my real life.

For the last 20 years I was also deeply involved in tabletop wargaming. You can see the scope of my hobby interests when checking out my website. I was involved in testing and / or developing of games like *Warhammer 40k*, *Lord of the Rings*, *EPIC: Armageddon*, *Battlefield Evolution*, *Victory at Sea*, *Supersystem*, *Chaos in Carpathia*, *Secrets of the Third Reich* and *Incursion*. In 2008 I authored my first big published ruleset: *Battlefield Evolution World at War* which was soon followed with the *Pacific War* book also for Mongoose Publishing. I got even paid for it!

*Battlefield Evolution: World at War* started as an in-house project of Ian Barstow (a former Mongoose employee) in January 2007. He needed playtesters and I was one of them. The playtesting soon ran out of steam and no real testing was done over long periods of time.

Ian and I kept on working on it. Over the year 2007 I became more and more the driving force behind the project adding all the army lists and many WW II specific rules.

At the end of 2007 Ian was let go by Mongoose and many game mechanics Ian and I had agreed upon were suddenly obsolete as Matt Sprange jumped in and put everything on a short leash. His idea was a good one in retrospect: write one set of core rules that can be used on all *Battlefield Evolution* games, be it *Starship Troopers*, *World at War* or *Modern Combat*. The period specific rules will be handled in separate sections of each rulebook.

The published book was a big success for Mongoose and I got also contracted for the follow up book about the *Pacific War*. At the same time Mongoose released their Logo License concept (like the OGL for D20 RPGs) for *Evolution* games, which enabled me and Dave Robotham to found A.D. Publishing, our small 2 men game company. Since November 2008 we have published 6 pdf books via the Wargames Vault, one of them is *Gear Krieg*.



**AM** - Clearly something about *Gear Krieg* grabbed hold of your interest with an iron walker grip – what was it that struck you?

**AN** - 3 reasons: At the core it was the incredible good design, the very good background and a strange feel of political correctness.

The *Gear Krieg* walker designs look believable and carry a lot of the visual appeal of the armoured fighting vehicles of the WW II era. Just look at the Walküre and compare this walker design with a SdKfz 251, or the Uller compared to a Tiger tank. You can see that a lot of thought was put into these designs. These are not some Manga Mechs with German crosses over the hull, these are well researched and designed vehicles that really fit into WW II.

As far as the background is concerned... *Gear Krieg* was the first of the weird war settings that are now so on vogue and in my

opinion is still the best setting. I bought every *Gear Krieg* book as soon as it came out, so call me a fan boy! To now be able to add a bit to this wonderful game universe is both a blessing and a real challenge to me. All of the A.D. Publishing books are a true labour of love, but this book is even more special to me.

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Now to the political correctness: For most Germans WW 2 is the forbidden era to play. It is OK for an American to play an SS army, in Germany you can not even buy SS minis. They are cleverly disguised as "German Elite troops" etc. FoW has to cover all Swastikas in their publications, the list goes on... And to honest, it is perfectly OK when looking at the known historical facts. To play WW 2 you have to add a twist of unrealism, a twist of weirdness or pulpy super-science. It takes away the seriousness and suddenly you are more comfortable with it.

AM - Very nifty. Was there a specific impetus for you for taking the world of GK and implementing it in BE:WaW?

AN - As said above, I am a Gear Krieg fan at the core. I had some more unassembled walkers lying on the lead pile and suddenly an idea struck me: Why not write a rule adaptation for Gear Krieg? I approached Robert DuBois of DP9 and was amazed how forthcoming and positive he was about the idea. Soon the deal was fixed and I was writing away on the book.

AM - Ideas that pop up like that are great... Was it a pretty 'easy' thing to incorporate the new elements of GK into the BE:WaW system?

AN - OK, this may sound boastful or arrogant, but it was very easy.

To start the project I re-read my Gear Krieg library. I wanted as much info as possible to get a feel of the walker capabilities. Soon it became obvious that Gears are not invincible fighting machines. They are crude walkers that can reach combat zones that are normally only accessibly for infantry, but they are not tanks on legs.

The Gears are cramped, rely on crude computators and are difficult to maintain. However, their unique capabilities also gave them a unique role on the alternate history WW II battlefield. I needed some new traits to cover the unique abilities of combat walker. Soon the Multiple Movement System and Walker trait were created and testing could begin. The more we played the more everything fell into place.

The Battlefield Evolution system again proved flexible enough to represent even these units. A Ready Action to change Movement System, increased size to get better Movement in difficult terrain, no Multifire to represent the effect of the very small walker crews, walker assault for close quarter fighting etc. etc.

All in all, I am very happy how these units look and feel on the table while using the Battlefield Evolution system. Hopefully, these units give you a lot of fun and enhance your Battlefield Evolution: World at War experience.

Oh and I am already working on new traits like Overheating weapons, Guided rockets, Haywire rays etc.

AM - Do you have a favourite thing about using GK material in your typical BE:WaW game?

AN - I just love to see the DP9 miniatures next to "serious" real life units. I like the contrast, the weird feel.



AM - Indeed! The real and the unreal, as it were, acting together as though all was normal. Was there anything you couldn't fit into the GK supplement that you wish you could have?

AN - Not really, I am quite happy was we covered in the first book. As said above I re-read all my GK books. With a good feel of what these walkers can do and can't do, I had to decide about the scope of this book. It also became clear that it was not possible to squeeze every vehicle that is mentioned in Dream Pod 9's books into one supplement, especially "Fighting Vehicles of the Modern Age" is full of additional vehicles, too many for this supplement.

So I decided to start with the core units of the Gear Krieg rulebook. Units for which Dream Pod 9 also produce miniatures! This makes a lot of sense to me since we want to play with these cute little walkers!

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But we already have a healthy discussion about the next releases on the DP9 forum.

AM - Given that some might think GK crosses a line beyond the traditional wargaming foundation of historically accurate units, what's your pitch to inspire people into playing GK or the GK BE:WaW expansion?

AN - The main reason for me is the above mentioned "political correctness" and the possibility to play "What If?" games. You are not forced to replay the invasion of France for the n-th time with the same units over and over. You can do something new! In addition: The game is very easy on your wallet. Get yourself 2-3 walkers, 1 infantry platoon and some tanks and you have a decent army to start!

So we decided to keep the red frame on top of the used and wrinkled paper. We added a walker (the Thor), but used a photo and not a drawing. Since the book is not only covering German walkers we needed something for the other nations in the book. As an homage to the original art we used the Longstreet drawing and two real life medals to put something British and Soviet on the cover.

So all is a mixture of original material and our new input. Worked for me!

AM - With all of this work you do, what's your current gaming schedule like?

AN - 1 game per week! IMO the biggest mistake a game designer can do is to not play his games. The rest of my quality spare time goes for research, writing, painting the minis and photographing everything needed for the books.

AM - I would agree that playing games is vital. Anything else you'd like to put out here and let everyone know?

AN - Historical gamers can be incredible "rivet counting" and detail obsessed gamers. You can't believe how often I was flamed because there are no stats for the XXX (insert manufacturer of your liking) SMG or the lack of Grenades in the game! People are often overlooking that Battlefield Evolution is first and foremost a game and not a simulation. The abstraction level is pretty high.

I would like to see a more laid back attitude to gaming. It is our hobby and should not be a reason for bitching, yelling and heated discussions.



AM - The GK expansion book looks fantastic – a fine continuation of the graphic design standards of DP9 books. How did the look and layout come about?

AN - Thanks! 98% of the praise has to go directly to Dave Robotham.

He is in charge of the layout. We wanted a layout the would be recognizable as a Gear Krieg book but also keep the feel of our previous publications. So we took a serious look at all DP9 books and our layouts in the Vehicle Compendium books.

Let me explain it when looking at the cover of our Gear Krieg book: All DP9 GK books had the black background, the red frame and at least one walker or vehicle on the cover. All our books have the used paper look and at least 1 tank on it.

Each to his own and me to pulpy super-science gaming!

AM - Thanks a tonne for the interview, and for a great product that expands the breadth of GK!

You can find Agis' work at:

[http://www.agisn.de/html/gear\\_krieg.html](http://www.agisn.de/html/gear_krieg.html)

