

Featured Gaming Company: Catalyst Game Labs

Written by Francis Horton

A powerful new force has swept into the world of gaming. Catalyst Game Labs emerged in the summer of 2007, ready and willing to do anything to keep the hobby alive. The new gaming company has been working hard to make their mark with gamers old and new. Not only have they brought several refreshing new games to the table, but they have also reinvigorated classic role-playing game titles such as *Shadowrun* and classic miniatures titles such as *BattleTech*. Catalyst is now preparing for the release of several diverse new games while working to revitalize several fan-favorites that have fallen by the wayside.

Upcoming Releases

Catalyst is currently preparing to launch *EclipsePhase*. This exciting new role-playing game offers a streamlined d100 system, allowing players to jump into the action without being burdened with complex rules. The game is set as a transhuman conspiracy game.

Transhuman games blend technology with human biology.

Characters have the ability to modify their bodies genetically, upload their memories to a network, upload their consciousness/mind into entirely new bodies called 'sleeves', and link into wireless grids using major advancements in biotechnology, nanotechnology and artificial intelligence.

The setting offers a vision of humanity that is unable to handle

their powers or control their creations, leading to near extinction by rogue sentient artificial intelligence. Players are thrust into a world filled with factions working for and against the existence of transhumanism, and they must fight for their very lives against the horrors being wrought upon them. The full color core rule books are slated for sale in early of 2009.

Not all of Catalysts new releases are so brilliantly dark, however. On the lighter side is the game *Paparazzi*, designed Adam Jury, the head graphic designer at Catalyst.

Paparazzi is a card game that allows players to throw themselves into the world of overly annoying photographers who hound celebrities and betray one another for coveted photographs. Players compete against each other to grab the best (i.e., controversial) photos of celebrities. *Paparazzi* is slated to be released in the Spring of 2009.

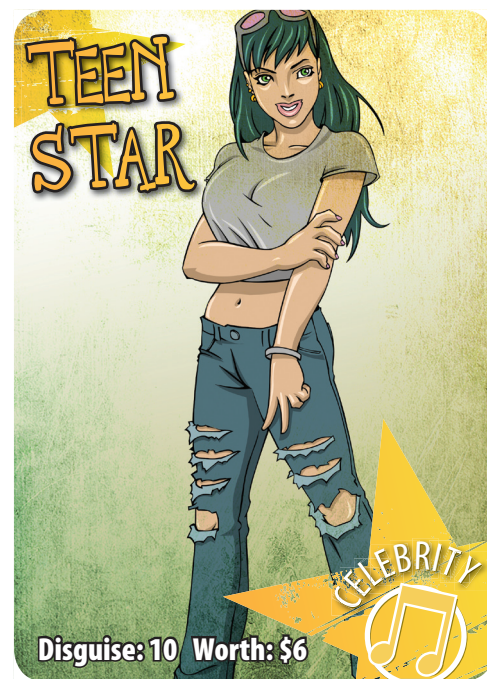
Although *Paparazzi* will be Catalyst's first foray into the lighter, more humorous side of gaming, it will definitely not be their last. *Ooze the Cook*, a game best played with a group of friends and plenty of beer, has players take on the roles of slime or jelly monsters. Each player must attempt to eat as much as they can at a local tavern until someone is big enough to eat the patrons and cook. At this time, there is no official release date set for *Ooze the Cook*.

Oldies But Goodies

In addition to these much anticipated releases, Catalyst is also picking up the slack where other gaming companies are waning. WizKids, a company owned by Topps and most notable for Clix collectable miniatures, recently ceased production of its gaming line. In an offer to WizKids to purchase certain intellectual property rights, Catalyst has stepped up to ensure games such as *HeroClix* will not fall into extinction. In an announcement made by Loren Coleman, the majority owner of Catalyst Game Labs, Coleman expressed confidence in Catalyst to both manage and invigorate these games. He stated: "We will bring the same excitement and care to the *HeroClix*, *Pirates* and other WizKids' brands as we do to the franchises we created." Negotiations are pending.

Additionally, Catalyst has been working hard to bring new life to two long-standing fan favorites. Since FASA ceased operations in 2001,

its classic role-playing games have bounced around through different developers insistent on keeping the original fan favorites available to the public. WizKids bought up the rights to *BattleTech* and *Shadowrun* after FASA closed their doors. From there,



One of the *Paparazzi* game cards designed by Adam Jury ©2008 Catalyst Game Labs

the licenses were acquired by FanPro, the company for which Jury freelanced before taking a permanent job at Catalyst.

"*BattleTech* and *Shadowrun* have a history with a lot of fans," said Jury, who expressed the long-standing loyalty of many hard-core fans. New editions for the two classics are always being designed and written to keep the franchises alive and in a constant state of growth. Catalyst is not content, however, with just releasing and updating the classics. It has also been procuring writers to develop new novels to further expand these settings. Accomplished writers of the fantasy and sci-fi world such as Stephan Mohan, Mel Odom and Michael Stackpole are taking the original FASA setting and developing it into complex worlds in which gamers can immerse themselves.

In the fast-paced world of gaming, fans and collectors are constantly looking for gaming companies to meet all of their needs, including purchasing new releases as well as acquiring their favorite classics. As evidenced by these efforts, Catalyst Game Labs is successfully aiming to provide fans with everything they need under one roof.



One of the *Paparazzi* game cards designed by Adam Jury ©2008 Catalyst Game Labs