

Introduction: Jonathan Thompson has taken some time out of his schedule to answer some questions about himself and his company Battlefield Press.

Thanks, Jonathan.

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Craig: Can you tell us about yourself?

Jonathan: I am 30, a single father with custody of a 6 year old, and I have a work background in Computer Technology, mainly in internal technical support for various companies as an on staff tech.

Craig: Can you tell us of your background in the gaming industry?

Jonathan: I have spent the last 22 years in the gaming industry, mostly as a consumer. I have only spent the last 4 or 5 on the publishing end, but I have been designing my own game systems and campaign settings for the last 15+ years.

Craig: Have you published anything since you have been in the "publishing end?"

Jonathan: Cityscape is our first, it is currently a little behind schedule. I should see it next month.

Craig: Other than the settings mentioned below, what other campaigns have you done or worked on? Have any good tips to pass along to people that might be trying to develop their own settings or games?

Jonathan: I ran campaigns for GURPS, Rifts, Palladium Fantasy, Star Trek, Star Wars (FASA and WEG), Earthdawn, and Battletech. I could keep going but we would be here all night. I am fond of games and gaming. Each one has its own unique way of doing things, some I liked, some I haven't, but they all were fun.

Craig: What games have you designed?

Jonathan: I designed the d20 rules for the Cityscape Setting; I also designed the settings for the Sherwood and Trius Campaign. They both will utilize the d20 system. I also wrote Pulp Fantasy and I am working on the adaptation to an RPG of Ted Numora's Luftwaffe 1946 (published by Antarctic Press).

Craig: Can you go in the background of Luftwaffe 1946?

Jonathan: It is an RPG (I said that in the initial answer <GRIN>) based upon the World War II comic from the Family of Altered Wars storyline. Check out their website for more information. Basically its WWII continuing in to 1946, the Germans and the Japanese have jet fighters, rockets, trips to outer space, and even a flying saucer makes an appearance.

Comment by Craig: Well, I mention to ask if it was a war game ;)

Craig: What are your views on current state of the industry?

Jonathan: I think that we all can make it, with the OGL its possible to start stepping on someone else's toes, but if we pull together and become more of a tight knit community I do believe we all will go a long way.

Craig: Who is the 'we' you referring to? Other publishers? Writers? Or are you talking about the smaller publishers?

Jonathan: "We" means small press publishers.

Craig: What current and or future projects are you involved with?

Jonathan: I just finished writing 'Terror of the Aztecs' for Avalanche Press. I enjoyed the project immensely and hope to do another one for them soon.

Craig: What is your relationship with Avalanche Press? Your company seems to be doing a lot of work with them.

Jonathan: It is a very good working relationship.

Craig: Can you give us some background on your own personal campaign(s)?

Jonathan: I have been running one campaign for almost 10 years. The Trius game started sometime in 1992 and is still going on with the same core players as when it started. I admit that we don't get together as much as we use to because of varying work schedules, but we do try to get together on a fairly regular basis and we continue right where we left off . . . thank God for notes :-D

Craig: Have you ever considered using Play By Email (PBEM) in your campaigns, as it's so hard together?

Jonathan: We considered PBEM but dismissed it immediately, it doesn't have the same feel to it and the campaign would suffer.

Craig: For the people not acquainted with Cityscape/Sherwood/Trius, can you give us some of the background of the game and system mechanics involved?

Jonathan: Cityscape is a multi-genre setting; it's a large city sitting at the focal point of time, space and reality. Everything can and does happen on a daily basis.

Sherwood is a campaign set during the time frame of the Robin Hood legends, people can play characters from soldiers to outlaws hiding in Sherwood Forest, or even be part of the 'Merry Men'.

Trius is an interesting world setting in the traditional fantasy genre, Currently I am not a liberty to discuss it until we announce further material on the website concerning Trius. I don't believe there will be many that are disappointed in the setting. All of those settings you asked about are using the d20 system from WotC, in Cityscape we had to make d20 do things it wasn't really designed to do, but it works and mostly everyone is happy with it so far.

Craig: Why do you feel that most people won't be disappointed with Trius? What do you feel Trius has to offer gamers with so many game systems on the market?

Jonathan: I feel it will be well used and well liked, it was thought out and planned unlike a lot of the other fantasy settings on the market. This particular project I would have to claim as a "give me" I created the world, the background, and have written all the books for publication (so far). This is my one piece of work that is being published just because I can. Even if it doesn't go over well with the majority of the consumers, it has a decent fan base already and I know those people will buy.

Craig: Cityscape sounds a lot like the Sigil from the old campaign setting Planescape from TSR. How is Cityscape different? Better?

Jonathan: Cityscape is Multi-Genre, it is full of cybernetic rogues hacking the magical archives of temples, True blue super heroes battling the forces of evil wizards, aliens running around in steam powered vehicles.

It is different and better because it allows any character from any d20 game to be played as is, without any tweaking, or altering the character in any way. Now if you are dreaming of your wizard boarding a spaceship and taking off to fight an evil galactic overlord...just bring him to 'The City' and we will take care of the rest.

Craig: What appeal do you believe Sherwood will have for gamers? How is it different from the Robin Hood supplement for GURPS by SJG?

Jonathan: SJG puts out excellent source material, and their GURPS Robin Hood book was no exception. I am hoping to show the legend in a different light, not after the opportunity to make something better the SJG, but to have something that is as enjoyable to play.

Craig: Can you give us some background on Battlefield Press?

Jonathan: It's a small press located in Bossier City, Louisiana (about 40 minutes away from the Texas state line down I-20).

Craig: Can you tell us who else works for Battlefield Press?

Jonathan: I can, but I am not sure you would recognize any of the names - Adam Thompson and B.L. Sisemore along with a handful of freelancers.

Craig: Stated on your company's WWW site: "Many products are out there that most companies don't see because they are not willing to take the risk on an unknown, but here at Battlefield Press, Inc. we are willing to at the least look at your submission."

Why is Battlefield Press willing to take a "risk on the unknown"? How does this set Battlefield Press apart from other RPG companies?

Jonathan: For too many years I ran into a problem with getting published, if you were not already known the odds were slim that your material would ever be published, I decided that I would take a look at the "unknown" talent out there and see what they had to say.

Craig: Have you had many people submit their RPG concepts/ideas to Battlefield Press? If so, are you planning to publish anything you have received?

Jonathan: I am not a liberty to say at the present time, but I will say it's a possibility.

Craig: Can you tell us what effect Internet has had on Battlefield Press?

Jonathan: It has allowed us to be in contact with more people, for example we have a pool of play-testers from areas that we would never have even known about in the traditional manner.

Craig: What impact do you feel the Internet has had on the RPG industry?

Jonathan: I think it has been a big help to the industry; it has brought gamers and publishers together in ways that could not have been possible even ten years ago.

Craig: How so?

Jonathan: Because the internet has allowed me to discuss things with other publishers and freelancers that I would have only been able to do by US post or telephone ten years ago, the whole communication between your various networks has sped up considerably, I no longer have to wait ten days for an immediate turn around on a post to NY or CA.

Craig: Why did you use d20 over developing a whole new system(s) for your some of your products?

Jonathan: Cityscape, Sherwood and Pulp Fantasy had their own systems already, but we decided to convert them to d20 so that the settings would be able to be used with little modification in other peoples games (and vice versa) I would be happy to see traditional wizards from any of the fantasy d20 settings out there to wander around 'The City'.

Also I would be happy to see any of the new races and classes ending up in other peoples' products, that would be a great honor for the entire staff, not just the developers.

Craig: Was it easier to use already developed system like d20?

Jonathan: It was easier in the fact that there were already established settings and players, which gave us a core group for marketing to target.

Pulp Fantasy <<http://www.battlefieldpress.com/pulpfantasy.htm>> and Luftwaffe 1946 RPG <<http://www.battlefieldpress.com/luftwaffe1946rpg.html>> will be released also using the Action! system <<http://www.action-system.com/>> from Gold Rush Games <<http://www.goldrushgames.com/>>.

Craig: Why are you using the Action! system over converting d20?

Jonathan: The Action! System has more "ability" to do what I want with those particular games. It is a very versatile system, more so than d20 even with all the modifications we made for Cityscape. For Pulp Fantasy and Luftwaffe 1946 RPG we wanted to go with a flexible system that we didn't have to stop and make up new rules just because we wanted to do things outside of the existing rules.

Craig: What makes the Action! system special and why do you think these RPGs will be successful?

Jonathan: The Action! System is a flexible system and will stand up to punishment that many other systems cannot handle. Visit [www.action-system.com](http://www.action-system.com) and take a look for yourself at the many games that are coming out using the Action! System.

Craig: What do you think of the d20 concept? What do you think of the OGL?

Jonathan: The OGL is a grand experiment that has the capability of making this industry stronger. I think there will be a lot more games going to the "Open Game" concept, for example another company has already released its own open system, and Gold Rush Games has released the Action! System under the same idea.

D20 is great for companies who want to create material that is compatible with the product lines from WotC. It also gives small publishers the ability to do mass collaborations, which strengthens all of us.

Craig: Do you ever expect to make a living at writing RPGs or was it just a labor of love?

Jonathan: It's a labor of love, but I do hope to be able to support myself full time in my hobby here in the near future.

Craig: Do you plan on using .pdf format to publish any of your games?

Jonathan: Yes we do, we are going to release some of our print products on pdf, and here soon we are going to release an entire line on pdf. Look for the 'Ships of the Line' supplements to be released here before the end of the year.

Craig: Can you tell us about 'Ships of the Line'?

Jonathan: 'Ships of the Line' is a d20 supplement dealing with ships through the ages. Our first product in the set is 'Ships of the Line: Ships of the US and CS Navies 1860-1865'. The ships will be completely open content and I hope the supplements will be enjoyed.

Craig: Where do you run your own games?

Jonathan: Anywhere I can find a place, but mainly in my game room at home. I have an entire room devoted only to RPGs.

Comment by Craig: You and me both ;-)

Craig: In all of your campaigns, who is your favorite creature or character you have created?

Jonathan: I would have to say Bythkal one of my characters from the Trius Campaign Setting, part of a campaign that's lasted for more than eight years.

Craig: What was your most humorous convention or role-playing moment?

Jonathan: I don't think I can answer that one, it's slightly rated :-D

Comment by Craig: Actually, you could ;-) My site is not g-rated :-)

Craig: What other supplements and or RPGs does Battlefield Press have in the works?

Jonathan: Several, we have most of them listed on the release schedule on the website. We have four books being worked on right now for Cityscape, Eternal Beings, Corporate Supers, The Warehouse, Powers of the Mind, the Luftwaffe RPG core book, Pulp Fantasy, Savage Worlds, The Mystic East for Pulp Fantasy, two books for the Trius Campaign Setting: Trius Campaign Setting and The Empire of Shodar.

Craig: Why do you think email lists are important to game support?

Jonathan: They allow for contact with other people and most of the time the designers so any problems you have with the system can be fixed and/or answered.

Craig: What would you have done differently if you could start over?

Jonathan: I would have probably started out earlier in the game, and probably with a little more money, but I am happy with the way things are going so far.

Craig: Will you and or Battlefield Press be going to any game conventions this year and if so which ones?

Jonathan: We will be at two for certain, Project A-kon (31 May to 2 June 02 in Dallas, Texas) and LexCon2002 (30 Aug - 2 Sept 02 in Houston, Texas).

Craig: Who created and designed the Battlefield WWW site?

Jonathan: I did, and it's still a work in progress.

Craig: Can you tell us about PCGen and why Battlefield Press is supporting it?

Jonathan: It is a character generator for d20 games; it is being supported publicly by BPI and Avalanche Press (I know there are others as well, but not sure who they are at the moment).

It does just what I would like to see done. If it's a d20 setting PCGen can assist you in making a character, its one of the best programs of the type I have seen in a long time. Best of all, the consumer can get it for free. The designer has put a lot of work into this program, and I do believe its commercial grade work.

Craig: What types of games does Battlefield Press publish?

Jonathan: Campaign supplements for our own games.

Craig: What makes your games special?

Jonathan: We hope that they are unique and are well thought about fondly, we will continue to support a game even if we quit publishing it (unless we are told different) because we feel that the consumer is the most important part of this industry.

Comment by Craig: Always glad to see this level of commitment from a publisher.

Comment by Jonathan: Thanks, it was my goal when starting to give consumers the type of commitment I had been given by some publishers and the commitment I wished I had been given by others.

Craig: Do you feel it is important to publish free material for RPG products?

Jonathan: I think you can do worse things than to give away material. I think that if I have something I want to share with people, why not give it away?