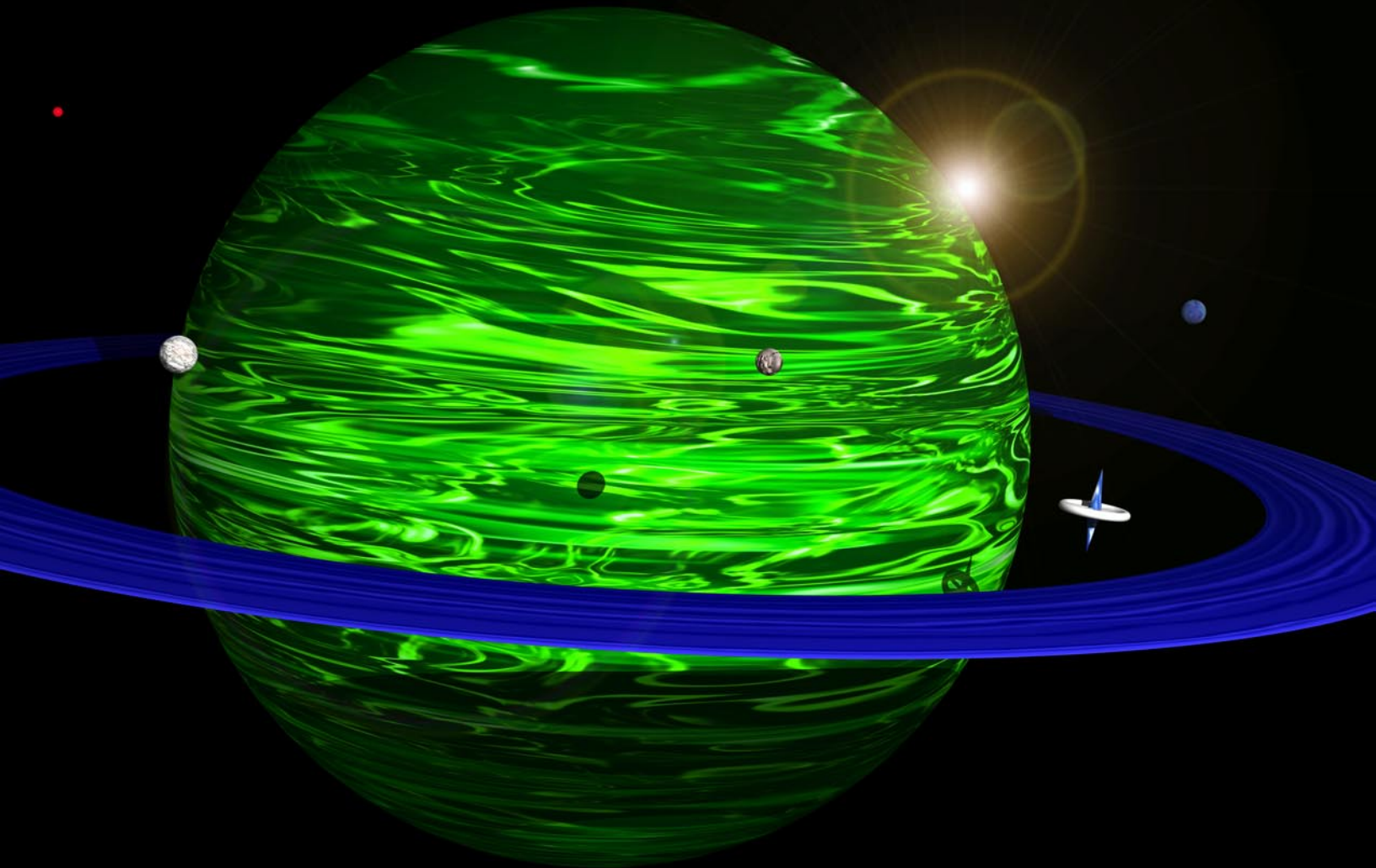


Valence

Science Fiction Role-playing



Valence

Science-Fiction Roleplaying

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Valence was created on several generations of Macintosh computers, and assembled (in this version) using Adobe InDesign and Adobe Acrobat. Artwork was scaled and touched up with Adobe Photoshop. This book uses the font Optima. Valent Games can be found online at <http://www.valentgames.com/>

Credits

2nd Edition

Writer: Colin Fredericks

Contributors: Eric Tapley, Eric Garrison, Kate Tapley, Sarah Campbell, and James Kilbride.

Editors: Dan DiTursi, Anna Tatro, Jeremy Maryott

Artwork: Jennifer Meyer, Andy World, Heather Vellante, and TauCeti Deichmann

Distributors: Valence can be found at both www.RPGNow.com and www.DriveThruRPG.com.

1st Edition (Valence 592)

Writers and Design Team: Eric Tapley, Eric Garrison, Cameron Betts, Nik Heikkila, Colin Fredericks, James Kilbride

Editors: Colin Fredericks, Heather Vellante

Printers: DeHart's

Playtesters

James Kilbride, Jason Raff, Andrew Konopaki, Sean Edwards, Brian Koshnick, Dave Vershaw, TauCeti Deichmann, and dozens of friendly con-goers at Genericon (Troy, NY), ConBust (Northampton, MA), and OurCon (Amherst, MA) for the last several years.

Writer's Notes

It started more than ten years ago, and when I look at all those old computer files I tend to cringe. So many things have changed since then, and they all needed changing, most of them *badly*... and yet the seeds were there.

Valence is a labor of love for all of us. Even though most of the original design team has fallen by the wayside, or moved on to other things, none of the old guard can say that they aren't still at least a *little* bit interested in what's going on with their old creation. I'm glad to keep the torch lit, to keep Valence up to date and keep improving it, and I hope they like what I've done.

For most of you, this is the first time you've seen the game, and all this nostalgia means nothing. So let's get on with it, right? What is this game about? Why play it? You've got your choice of dozens of science fiction games; what's going to make this one any better?

- Culture. This book doesn't assume that species and culture are the same thing. We have thousands of cultures here on Earth; why should aliens have just one apiece? Culture isn't just a miscellaneous piece of background information, either: it's an integral part of character creation. Ditto for character backstory.
- History, both in and out of game. In game, you've got a ten-million-year timeline to pull ideas from, historical details from all ten species and the present-day cultures, and plenty of "secrets from the past" hidden in the backstory. Out of game, we the writers have been continually updating and improving the game for years, and we like to think that it's gained a certain amount of polish because of it.
- Internal consistency. The world of Valence, like almost all science fiction worlds, has its own idiosyncrasies and oddities. It would hardly be science fiction without them. What's more important (in our view) is that the world hangs together properly. In a galaxy with expensive interstellar travel, you won't find starships that haul iron ore — it doesn't make enough money. Novel and innovative solutions to a problem don't disappear overnight once the problem is gone. When Earth was devastated, people didn't forget about it or leave it alone. There haven't

been technological dark ages in a galaxy where information transfer and storage is ubiquitous, and there are no “space barbarians.” People who shun technology and Lording end up marginalized. Planets don’t have universal climates, terrains, or even cultures. It makes the galaxy much more complex... and much more believable.

- An enormous setting. The galaxy has billions of planets, and not all of them are explored. The ones that are have hundreds of millions of individuals. Within the boundaries of the game’s technology and other such factors, almost every type of culture you could imagine exists. True, there are some huge cultures that span hundreds of thousands of star systems, but even they aren’t ubiquitous.
- Separated metaplot. The metaplot for Valence isn’t going to be interwoven through every book we publish — it’s going to be contained in a single volume, the Little Book of Metaplot. That way people can feel free to include or ignore it as they see fit. It’s a strong metaplot, but it’s not one that literally everyone has to deal with.

I’m not saying Valence is perfect for every kind of game. It doesn’t work so well for gritty noir cyberpunk, Buck Rogers style space opera, or “hard” science fiction (after all, there is a magic-like power in the game, and FTL travel, and some cloaking devices — it’s difficult to play hard sci-fi without stripping those out first).

What Valence *does* handle well are stories about black ops teams, government and military operatives, culture clash, interstellar adventure, and changing the world. If those things sound like your cup of tea, you’ve come to the right place.

Inspirations

Of all the TV shows we watched, of all the ones we pulled interesting plot points and themes from, Babylon 5 would have to be the big one. Most of it’s hidden in the metaplot, but it’s there. Of course, science fiction would probably be nowhere without Star Trek and Star Wars, and everyone in the sci-fi market owes them at least a little. Firefly was too recent to have a major impact on the game; ironically Valence seems to be a good match to the show’s style.

Our favorite science fiction authors include Isaac Asimov, Orson Scott Card, Arthur C. Clarke, Diane Duane, Madeline L’Engle, Ursula K. LeGuin, Larry Niven, and David Weber. There are others, of course, but these provided a formative impact for Valence. If we ever publish a book to advance the timeline, look for high-tech stuff from Wil McCarthy, John C. Wright, Dan Simmons, and Charles Stross — all good authors, but their tech is a bit beyond what we use.

Sadly, there have been few good sci-fi movies out there overall. Most of them cross into horror or fantasy or both, and the writing is generally unimpressive. Most of the better ones concentrate on themes that Valence isn’t concerned with. Here’s hoping some better ones come out soon.

In a somewhat related category, Macross and Robotech provide some inspiration for the space-related parts of the game. Valence does indeed have mecha, though you’ll have to wait for the rules.

Dungeons and Dragons was our first RPG, just like most gamers our age. Corner me at a convention and I’ll tell you an interesting story about the Budetug, Dwarves, and the early days of Valence. Strangely enough, they *aren’t* where we got our dice-rolling system... as for more recent games, the works of Dream Pod 9 (Jovian Chronicles), White Wolf (Trinity), and Biohazard Games (Blue Planet) all provided some amount of inspiration and guidance.

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