

GAMES IN FOCUS

Dungeon Crawl Classics

Use DCC World to build a module business

by
Joseph Goodman
President,
Goodman
Games

From a retailer's perspective, **DCC #35** presents a unique selling opportunity. It's not just a one-shot product with a high MSRP. It's also a lead-in to the rest of the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** line.

Joseph Goodman is president of Goodman Games, publishers of **Dungeon Crawl Classics**, **Etherscope**, and **X-Crawl**. Find out more at www.goodman-games.com.

Four years after the release of **Dungeon Crawl Classics #1: Idylls of the Rat King**, the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** line remains one of the industry's best-recognized brands of **d20 System** adventure modules. With the imminent publication of #35 in the series — a milestone for *any* role-playing game line, especially a d20 line past the boom — publisher Goodman Games announced plans to make the 35th DCC a deluxe boxed set. This \$69.99 MSRP product is a complete campaign setting that also presents a unique opportunity for retailers — not only will it make for a profitable sale on a single product, it can also be used to sell an entire line of products.

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms is a complete campaign setting that ties together all previously published modules in the series. The "DCC World," known as *Æereth*, is an archetypal fantasy world. It's the kind of world where a grizzled old warrior decides to go after the dragon and asks who's coming with him. Or where the dark-eyed sorceress slowly surveys the crowd of peasants, waiting for one to step forward and pull the sword from the stone. In other words, it's a classic fantasy world, an environment where a **Dungeon Master** can tell engaging new stories using archetypes already familiar to the players.

From a retailer's perspective, **DCC #35** presents a unique selling opportunity. It's not just a one-shot product with a high MSRP. It's also a lead-in to the rest of the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** line. Any gamer who starts a campaign in the world of *Æereth* is presented with three full-color,

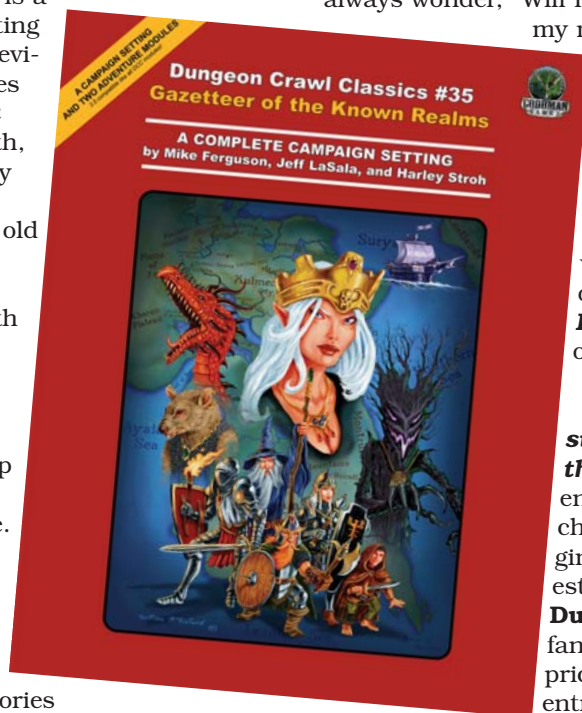
gorgeously illustrated poster-sized world maps which notate the locations of every **Dungeon Crawl Classics** module in the series. The boxed set includes three defined adventure paths that show a **Dungeon Master** how to link these adventures together. Of course, all of the modules must be purchased separately. So the **Dungeon Master** who buys the boxed set will be back in your store two weeks later, purchasing the other **Dungeon Crawl Classics** modules he needs to set up his campaign!

This placement within a larger line is a very important trait to consider. Selling a role-playing game product with an MSRP higher than \$40 is always difficult, and it becomes more difficult the higher the price goes. Consumers always wonder, "Will I use this enough to get

my money's worth?" or "Is this good enough to justify the price?" In this case, the consumer is already familiar with the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** brand, so half the battle is already won. It's not a question of *whether* they'll buy **DCC #35**; it's a question of *when*.

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms presents retailers with a chance to sell a high-margin, high-priced item to an established fan base. Some **Dungeon Crawl Classics** fans may question the high price, especially in an entry-level product line

whose typical price point is under \$15. The boxed set is expensive — but it presents an extraordinary value for the price. Any consumer who picks up the box will feel the weight of what's within — more than 300 pages of gaming material, presented as a total of four books. A *Gazetteer*, GM's Guide, and two brand new modules fill up the interior of the box, along with the aforementioned three full-color poster-sized maps, plus



a fourth players' map designed for immediately use by players.

The boxed set's cover is designed to appeal to older gamers. According to Wizards of the Coast's demographic surveys, older gamers typically spend more than double what younger gamers spend on role-playing games each year. They represent a segment of the population that has disposable income — *and* they have influence over what the next generation of gamers will buy. Many older gamers are raising their children as role-players. It's with that in mind that the cover art of **DCC #35** is designed. It features two design elements that will immediately appeal to older gamers — the Clyde Caldwell-style cover art reminiscent of the old TSR Gazetteers, and the “red box” look of the classic **Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set** from the early 1980's. Every gamer from that era will immediately “get” what the product is trying to accomplish.

Despite the fact that **Dungeon Crawl Classics #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms** presents a campaign setting for an adventure line billed as “stand-alone,” it doesn't change the way **Dungeon Crawl Classics** modules will be produced and played in the future. Aereth draws upon the same basic fantasy archetypes as **Dungeons & Dragons**, so it doesn't change the assumptions necessary to build a world of adventure. A gamer can easily run any **Dungeon Crawl Classic** in their own world, even after the release of **DCC #35** — and that won't change with #36 onward. Future **Dungeon Crawl Classics** will identify their locations on the maps presented in **DCC #35**, but will remain world-neutral for all practical purposes.

Retailer Support

Goodman Games offers extensive retailer support to make sure this boxed set continues to sell. Our spinner rack program is one of the most popular promotions of the last year. Nearly 100 game stores nationwide now employ the “**DCC spinner**,” a stainless-steel 16-pocket spinner rack with custom sign that occupies a tiny footprint — yet allows a retailer to display the entire line. All distributors offer this spinner as part of a **DCC** bundle — with a sufficiently large purchase, a retailer can get the custom-designed fixture *free* for their store.

Another popular Goodman Games promotion for the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** line was the 20%-off sale in April and May. We offered retailers the entire **DCC** line at a whopping 20% discount, and asked distributors to extend the deal to retailers. In turn, retailers were asked to extend the deal to consumers, with the help of a full-color in-store display sign

that Goodman Games provided.

We also promoted the line directly to consumers through a number of channels. Check the back of **Dungeon** or **Dragon** for their periodic **DCC** ads. In January of each year, Goodman Games offers a consumer rebate program. We also feature a retail locator on our web site. Perhaps our most popular promotion is the “\$2 module,” a complete **DCC** adventure module priced at the low, low price of \$2. It's a perfect introduction to the **DCC** series and a very easy sale for a retailer.

Each year at Gen Con, Goodman Games sponsors the annual **Dungeon Crawl Classics** Open Tournament, where more than 100 gamers compete to survive some of the toughest dungeons ever designed. Each year's tournament module is released to stores as a **DCC** module. **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich** and **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings** were both tournament modules, and the locations of both can be found on the maps inside **Dungeon Crawl Classics #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms**.

Build a Module Business In Your Store

There's an old saying in the gaming industry: “Modules don't sell.” Don't tell that to Goodman Games. We draw our inspiration from the 1980s boom days, before the terms “sourcebook” and “gazetteer” were ever termed. Back then, modules *did* sell, and they *were* **Dungeons & Dragons** in the eyes of many gamers.

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Goodman Games is leading the charge back to the "glory days" of adventure module sales. It is possible to build a game company around adven-

ture modules, provided it's done right. Goodman Games has used **Dungeon Crawl Classics** to expand both retailer and fan awareness about what makes a good module, and how to sell adventure modules.

Here are a few things you can do in your store...

Stock a Range of Levels. This is the most common mistake made when trying to build an adventure modules business. Modules are like shoes — even if you like the style, you have to hope the store has one that fits. There are 20 possible character levels in **Dungeons & Dragons** (more if you count epic-level play), so there's a significant chance that a Dungeon Master who likes a module still won't buy it because it doesn't

fit his players' current level. Thus, the important lesson is to stock a range of levels. An adventure module line such as **Dungeon Crawl Classics** doesn't earn its



legitimacy in the eyes of consumers until it has enough depth of adventures and breadth across levels to offer an option for every campaign.

Adventure Paths — Sometimes, But Not Always. There are strong opinions among gamers regarding whether or not they prefer adventure paths. An "adventure path" is a group of modules that follow continuously, one after another, to form an interconnected storyline. About 50% of active gamers love adventure paths — and the other 50% hate them. Regardless of your personal preference, you will never satisfy both camps. The solution is to stock both kinds of adventures. The best kind is modules that are both stand-alone, but which can be linked together if so desired. For example, **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle** is a complete adventure unto itself, but can easily be combined with **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut** to build an adventure path. The **Dungeon Crawl Classics** series offers a number of interlinked adventures that can be used on their own or as components of an adventure path.

Keep Them Coming Back

Goodman Games has aggressive plans for the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** line. We've launched a number of "buzz-worthy" products in addition to **DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms**. In partnership with Midnight Syndicate, the company has released **DCC #34: Cage of Delirium**, the first adventure module to be packaged with its own soundtrack on CD. The \$2 **Dungeon Crawl Classics** modules always provoke interest from fans, and the old-school cover art — featuring the likes of fan favorites Erol Otus, Jeff Dee, Jim Roslof, and Jim Holloway — continues to arrest attention of passers-by. Make sure you talk up the "buzz-worthy" products in your store, perhaps with shelf tags or employee recommendations. Once you have enough adventures on the shelves, every Dungeon Master will have an option — and once that happens, you can use buzz-worthy products to get them talking. After that, they'll keep coming back — and soon you'll have a growing module business! ♦

