My review of the sci-fi starter set

Posted by L - 2004/08/02 22:14

So I found the new sci-fi sets at my local gaming place today. I was putting off ordering them online, largely coz I couldn't get the site to work and I kept forgetting to just try calling direct, and then today it all became moot. There they was!

I picked up the starter set, passed on the passages. I am not a fan of passages, they are not the best use of my limited space, IMHO, and I'd rather have the more-versatile basic pieces. Plus, for $50, it seemed like you don't get THAT many passage pieces. It's actually the same as the dungeon sets, I think, but somehow it seemed sparse to me.

So -- the set itself. Overall, I'm really happy with it. It looks gorgeous, and it's a blast and a half to come up with new arrangements. In other words, it's a Dwarven Forge product! I just love how versatile this stuff is, it feels like there are just endless arrangements possible, every one looks great. I am truly impressed.

A few specific positive points:

1. At first, I thought the doors were too small. Then I realized they've just been redesigned, so you can use them in smaller spaces -- specifically, in a piece that has a wall taking up some floor space, so you can make little rooms that are 1 square large. In the sci-fi setting, that means lots of cargo closets and tiny little maintenance cells. Cool!

2. The doors this time are designed so you don't have to worry about things falling through (a la the porticullis) Nice touch.

3. I love the design of the floor. Appropriately futuristic, doesn't tie you down to any particular setting, lends itself to repeating patterns but looks good on its own as well, and no more bowties! Actually, I never minded them, but they would not have looked as good here as they do in the dungeon setting (where they blend into the floor pretty well)

4. I like the fact that the starter set allows you to make two medium sized rooms. If you pick up two, you can do four, or maybe even one or two really BIG rooms.

A few negatives have to be noted:

1. I would have liked SOME more pieces in this set. But I suppose this is the price that it is -- this way does technically have the advantage that you can get a $50 set or a $100 set, which is more flexible than the older approach, where you had to spend $100 to get anything. I can get another starter set in a month or two, it allows me to absorb the cost a bit more easily. So nevermind, this is a positive. ;)

2. Some accessories besides doors would be nice, though. While a basic starter set that is undetermined and easily turned into any number of settings is good, it needs something to tie it down to one specific setting. Adding pieces to the starter would drive up the price, but I would have gladly spent $30-40 to get another set that included accessories. Personally, I would have much preferred it to the passages set. As it is, the setups all look kinda empty. I need consoles, engines, cargo, SOMETHING.

3. The diamond tread pattern is neat, but isn't it more appropriate to floors than walls?

4. I think the back of the walls is slightly more interesting than the front. The panels look a bit generic,

maybe with some rivets in the corners they'd look more like access panels or something, instead of being just, well, rectangular shapes. (I guess this way you can use your imagination and pretend they are not just access panels, but consoles or security screens or gigantic buttons or something...)

Right now I'd say the starter set is exactly what it says it is -- a starter set. It's fantastically done, looks great, but it is just the beginning. We need a LOT more. Get us more!

:)

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My review of the sci-fi starter set

Posted by admin - 2004/08/04 10:02

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Thanks for your great review. We appreciate your effort, and we will be expanding this line from the starter set. Thanks again.

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My review of the sci-fi starter set

Posted by L - 2004/08/06 16:13

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A few things to add that I hadn't noticed before:

1. The doors are no longer higher than the walls, which means you can lay floors right on top of them when you stack levels. It looks GREAT.

2. Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me that the sci-fi stuff doesn't require accessories as much as the fantasy stuff. I mean, with a basic 3X4 room adjoining a 4X2 room in the fantasy sets, things are going to look rather bare. You're going to want stairs, a trap, a table, some chests, a pile of treasure -- SOMETHING. Even once you put minis in place, it looks like a drab and empty room. (sometimes, of course, that's just what you want)

The sci-fi pieces, on the other hand, are just busy enough that even without accessories they look great. Not that I don't want accessories -- I have some Grendel Resins consoles and they really add some flavor. But in a complex of four rooms (I have two starter sets now), you only need consoles in one room. That's the "command centre" or whatever, and the rest falls into place. In general, the sci-fi pieces stand on their own pretty effectively.

At the same time, they're not SO busy that they look cluttered over crowded when you put a bunch together. It's a really great compromise -- simple enough to look good and to support additions, not so simple that they look dull without something extra.

I have to say, I am really impressed by these pieces, especially as time passes. Even with the bar set high, and my expectations unreasonable, I am pleasantly surprised. The only downside is the price. I realize the needs of a business, but I hope the price isn't so high that sales are stunted as a result. I'd hate to see this line unable to sustain many many add-ons in the future.

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My review of the sci-fi starter set
Posted by MyLordVoid - 2004/08/07 12:14

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L,

Very Nice Review, I Have Been Waiting for a bit for these sets to Come out... And Waiting... Etc... So that by the Time they did I was a little underwhelmed and hesitant... Your Detailed and Thoughtful Review has rekindled my intrigue in these Sets so Thank you... I Guess my Question in reference to your waffleing on the matter of Accessories would be this: With Master Maze Fantasy Skirmish Battles Did not really Benefit much from Lots of Furniture, Wine Casks, Scrolls and what have you, while Role-playing on the other hand greatly benefits from these... Might it be the Same Here? A Game of Space Hulk, or Legions of Steele would not require more than One or two "Mission Objective" kinds of Objects... Where as Star Wars/ Trek/ Frontiers would be more likely to make role-play use of accessory Items? Anyway, again great review, thanks...

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My review of the sci-fi starter set
Posted by L - 2004/08/07 16:08

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I think you're probably right -- for skirmish battles, you wouldn't need much, but for roleplaying you'd definitely want a sense that the world is full of "stuff."

I was thinking purely aesthetically. Show someone a dungeon in Master Maze, and they might not be as impressed if you didn't include the mermaid fountain, the demon arch, the secret doors, the casks and chests and sacks and treasure.

But show someone a sci-fi setup, with maybe just one extra accessory, and it already looks really impressive.

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My review of the sci-fi starter set
Posted by MyLordVoid - 2004/08/08 08:08

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I Understand... I Really would that there was a Full Game Store in Town that Could Stock a lot of Stuff... The Local Comic Store has about a third of their Stock Geared towards Games, but even that is Mostly CCG and CMG or Mini Games Like Zombies!!! or Munchkin... The Point Being that with the Exception of a Nice MBA display for in store Games, there really is nothing to check out... They do not Stock DF and will only Order for Special Orders, (Which I Can Do online)... The Point Being I Do not have the Benefit of being able to see this stuff up Close (Not Saying that would keep me from Buying it, only Recovering

from D&D Minis Mania and its financial Toll is currently doing that.....). But I Have to Say that most Peoples reaction to the MM products even without the Furniture etc... Is Very Good, so if it is your Opinion that the Sci-Fi Sets are even more impressive on their own, then that is a Good Sign...

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