

## REVIEWS

**CONSPIRACY X**  
NEW MILLENNIUM ENTERTAINMENT  
\$25.00/224 PAGES  
REVIEWED BY KEVIN JONES

*In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.*

—Winston Churchill

*If you don't know enough, be prepared to face extreme dangers. Ignorance is deadly.*

*If you know too much, be prepared to face extreme dangers. That is the nature of conspiracies.*

—From the *Conspiracy X* rulebook

I've never watched *The X-Files*. I don't follow the UFO folklore. I'm not interested in "Grays" or "Saurians" and I really don't care what's in that mythical warehouse out in the middle of the California desert. I am, however, a student of classic conspiracy theory (that's the Illuminati, the Assassins, the Rosicrucians and the Templars, by the way) and even though they aren't even mentioned once in the new RPG *Conspiracy X* by New Millennium Games, it was still one of the most entertaining and enlightening role-playing games I've read in a long time.

The focus of the game is on alien research and conspiracy, although there's also a healthy dose of psychics and sorcery (my area of expertise) thrown in. I passed the UFO stuff by our resident expert on the subject, and he said that the data was well-researched and the original stuff was pretty insightful and creative. I can say first-hand that the same could be said about the chapters on psychic and supernatural phenomenon. It's all good.



CONSPIRACY X AIN'T NO X-FILES RIP-OFF. IT MAY BE THE PACESETTER FOR THE UPCOMING CONSPIRACY GENRE.



Now I could tell you that the system uses eight attributes and it all works on a difficulty number system that you've seen in a hundred other games, and the wound system is pretty lethal and blah blah blah.... You could learn how to use the system with your eyes closed. But if you read the mechanics that are used for luck, psychics, and magic, you'll find some real innovative thinking. I've never seen a magic/psychic system like the one used in *Conspiracy X*, and quite frankly, I've got green eyes. I wish I thought of this stuff.

But the mechanics are only a small part of the book. Most of it is background material, character generation and game master advice. The book has side bars that explain some of the more difficult concepts and give GMs tips on how to make the players paranoid in a game world that's littered with smoky, shadow-filled rooms. It presents the theories on building secret societies (ever wonder why the symbol of the Illuminati is a pyramid?) and techniques that these folks use to keep themselves secret. Great reading for any game.

PCs in *Conspiracy X* are typically agents of the secret government organization known as "Aegis." Organized into autonomous cells, Aegis agents are responsible for dealing with the alien menace, among other things. Aegis is opposed by another group known as "The Black Book." Originally built with "black project" dollars (hence the nickname) to investigate and exploit exotic technologies, this organization has ceased answering to any sort of authority. Even worse, they have formed treaties with the Saurians and the Greys. Both Aegis and The Black Book were formed in the 1940s.

*Conspiracy X* is very unlike GURPS *Illuminati*, which conspiracy gamers might also be familiar with. While they both deal with aliens, psychics and the like *Conspiracy X* has a very sinister feel about it, where the GURPS product is more lighthearted—even silly at times. To each his own of course, but I prefer sinister any day. And *Conspiracy X* delivers sinister in spades.

As a die hard conspiracy fan, I cannot recommend *Conspiracy X* enough. However, it also provides an abundance of information for any game master who may be running a modern campaign with a bit of the "unexplained." If you run any of the *World of Darkness* games, *Over The Edge*, or even some of the dark future stuff like *Cyberpunk* or *Shadowrun*, you'll want to check this one out for the source material alone. It may look like its just a "jump on the bandwagon" product on the surface, but the guys down at NME know what they're talking about. They've done the genre a service by making a slick, well-written product that exposes "outsiders" to one of my favorite genres. Just as White Wolf's "World of Darkness" line began a new era in roleplaying, products like *Conspiracy X* might be the start of the Age of Conspiracy. We can only hope...

### PSYCHICS AND MAGIC IN CONSPIRACY X

When using psychics and magic in *Conspiracy X*, you get to use those nifty Zener cards. In a nutshell, if you want to use your psychic power, you tell the GM you are using it and he asks what your rank is. Let's say it's a "2." The GM asks you if the card at the top of the deck is a star, a circle, three squiggly lines, or whatever and you tell him what you think it is. Then, he draws as many cards off the top of the deck as you have skill ranks in that power. If you're right, the skill works. If it doesn't ... you know the rest. It's quick, clean and best of all, it's cool!

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