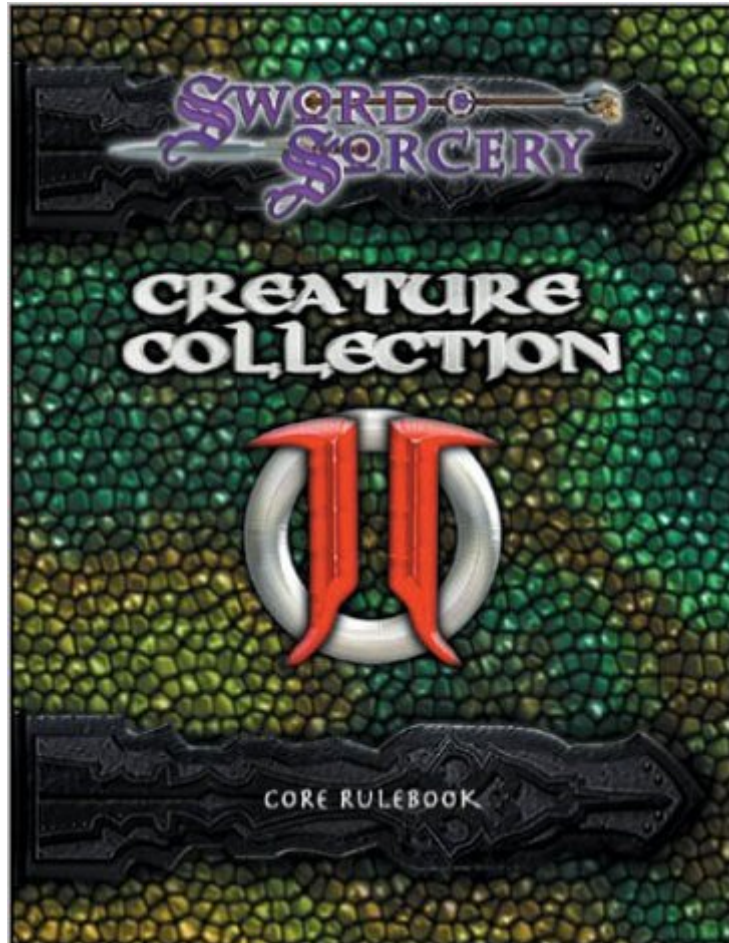


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Sword & Sorcery Creature Collection II: Dark Menagerie (Core Rulebook)



Synopsis

CREATURE COLLECTION II: DARK MENAGERIE THE TWISTED LEGACY OF DEAD GODS
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Customer Reviews

This book is good. Really good. It shows what the Open Gaming License can do. The monsters in this book are for the most part creative and interesting. Swords and Sorcery Studios obviously put

some thought into a lot of the monsters. True, there are monsters in the book that lack the pizzazz that you would want in a campaign of heroism that Dungeons and Dragons is suited to. Yet with 300 monsters or so, it would be irrational to expect them all to be perfect. I have to complaints with the book, each of which cost the Creature Collection II a star. My first gripe is a personal one, but I think it's significant. The CC2 is in black and white. While this is usually issue, I feel that in role-playing, hardcover books should come in color. You may disagree, and if you're happy with black and white, then consider this book a four star supplement. Gripe two is more significant. Whoever came up with the challenge ratings (CR) for the monsters has either never played the D20 system (...). They are way off. There are monsters in there with CRs of 5 who I would pit my not-so-buff group of 1st level PCs against without any fear for their lives. On the other hand, there are monsters who have CRs way lower than they deserve. Example: The "Time Killer" has a CR of one, yet can use a touch attack to send players ahead in time, thus separating the group, and it's touch attack also ages players 1d10 years. It also has a sizable number of hit points. I would have reservations pitting 4th level PCs against this monster. Two notes that are neither pros nor cons: The book is a bit campaign specific (for the SSS campaign "Scarred Lands"), but with minimal work the DM can change the monsters to any campaign. Also, this book is very dark. Lots of undead and grisly aberrations. You could call them demons or devils and have all of the Planes fleshed out with evil. If you want some scary monsters, here they are. Overall, good, but not the MM.

"Creature Collection II" contains a lot of interesting monsters, most of which can be used in most campaigns (a few entries are a little too world specific to use if not playing in the Scarred Lands). For the most part, this book is well written, and the artwork is very good except for a few rare cases. Most of the creatures are well balanced (in my opinion anyway), and of course there are the critters which make you wonder why did they put that in here. I definitely like the amount of detail and information they give for each monster (this is something I miss from 2nd edition AD&D). This book would be an excellent addition to any game master or person adventuring in the Scarred Lands.

For those that are NOT familiar with the idea, WOTC has offered an 'Open Game License' to any publisher that would like to contribute to the further growth of the d20 system that has been implemented with D&D3Ed. Sword and Sorcery Studios is one of the leaders in the race to see who will dominate the d20 market (outside of WOTC). With White Wolf Games as Publisher/Printer of their materials they stand a good chance. The Creature Collection II is the much anticipated sequel to the sometimes maligned Creature Collection. Though I really enjoyed the creativity that went into

the Original CC, CC2:Dark Menagerie is by FAR a better product. The illustrations are of a much higher calibre (though still black and white) and it is obvious that the creators had a great time putting this work together. Much like the Original CC, the whole collection manages to work well and add some very nice elements to what appears to be an exciting campaign setting. Unlike the Original, CC2 seems to be more geared towards the minions of the Dark Titans that once ruled the Scarred Lands. These creatures run the gamut from the Frighteningly deadly to the just plain DISGUSTING... but it all manages to work, giving the GM (whether he is using the SL campaign setting or not) a veritable army of bizzare minions to delight and confound players in his/her d20 game. By far, this is one of the most pleasing products recently released for the ever expanding d20 game system. Finally, SSS has stated their manifesto to be "3rd Edition D&D with a 1st Edition feel"... with that goal in mind... I'd say they are succeeding.

Well, i was pleasantly surprised when this arrived at my door. The d20 Open Gaming License looks likes its off to a good start. I was not impressed with the initial Creature Collection and didn't even buy it, but this one is of MUCH better quality. The black and white artwork is generally very good with the occasional lacking picture. Just a brief listing of the pros and cons of this manual: Hundreds and hundreds of strange and deadly monsters, all fully detailed and versatile in all types of climates, from cities to swamps to deserts to oceans. As mentioned, most of the artwork is very good and a great visual aid for players so they know exactly what it is that is about to kill their characters. Cons: Virtually all of the material is heavilly rooted in the Scarred Lands campaign setting. This in and of itself isn't bad, but a lot of the details will be hard to mesh with other campaigns. Much of the descriptions are ultraviolent and lend a very dark tone to the book, but that probably won't be a deterrent to most readers. But if all you want is the picture, a brief blurb and the 3E stats, (like me) this book is for you. That said, i don't know much about Scarred Lands aside from reading the CC2, but it looks like a DANGEROUS place to live. The world is full of murderous, grotesque monsters intent on slaying all life, with the ruminations of Gods and Titans thrown into the mix to make it even more dangerous. The VAST majority of these creatures were created by gods and titans both living and dead, but they can still be adapted to individual campaigns without too much trouble. I look forward to CC3 and hope that Sword and Sorcery Studios can outdo themselves with the next one. They're one gaming company to keep an eye on as they grow, and they've earned this DM's respect.

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