



SEASONS OF WAR

DESIGN DOCUMENT

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Abstract

Seasons of War (SWR) is a multiplayer set with strong **Commander** components, designed for Limited, Commander, and Constructed (MSEM2) play.

Commander Legends & Seasons of War

As many Council members know, Seasons of War was conceived and initially developed many years before Commander Legends was even announced. Initial forays into the concept worked with **promoting** any drafted creature, sometimes including color identity, partner concepts, draft mechanics, etc.

The initial reveal and release of Commander Legends played heavily on my motivation to complete the set, but after having had the opportunity to draft, play, and dissect Commander Legends, there are more than enough differences that I feel confident, comfortable, and furthermore excited to release Seasons of War to the MSEM2 community.

Unlike the recently released **Commander Legends** which aimed to replicate with fidelity a game of Commander within a multiplayer limited environment (color identity, larger life totals, larger deck size), Seasons of War aims to instead add the “feel” of a Commander game (legendary commander) to a faster paced multiplayer limited environment. In a sense, Commander Legends can be seen as a game of Commander *with* limited elements, while Seasons of War is a game of limited *with* Commander elements.

Seasons of War does *not* include color identity, increased deck size, or increased life totals. In a sense, I answered many questions the Wizards team did in very different ways. Taking the “problems” from the Commander Legends design [article](#), we get as follows:

Problem #1: How do you get your commander?

Wizards: Commander is all about building a deck around a legendary creature whose color identity defines the limitations of your deck. Obviously, you would have to somehow draft a legendary creature, which meant they'd have to be in boosters, but we didn't want to force a legendary creature on the drafters. We wanted them to have some option of what to play. How would we make that happen?

Me: Seasons of War is all about building a deck around a legendary creature. Though you obviously still need to draft a legendary creature for many of SWR's mechanics to function, I don't want to force a creature on drafters so the option of a “basic” commander was added (much like the Piper, which was revealed after this decision.)

Problem #2: How do you get 100 cards?

Wizards: That would be a lot of booster packs and a lot of drafting time. The draft has to be economically sound (a draft costs a value that players would be willing to pay), and it has to be executable in some reasonable amount of time. 100 cards is a lot, after all.

Me: You don't. Drafting and deckbuilding is the same size as a typical draft (40 cards). This size makes the already lengthy drafting through PS the same. Perhaps if this were designed for physical play, I would keep the same solutions Wizards did.

Problem #3: How do you keep from being siloed?

Wizards: In a normal Booster Draft, players can shift between colors. If it becomes clear that a color is being cut off, you can go into a color that seems to be open. Once you lock onto a commander though, you're now locked in your colors. You don't have the ability to adapt to the draft like you would normally. This also creates a problem where the draft gets on rails as everyone has less and less options for what they can take and the draft starts becoming prescriptive.

Inability to change during the draft – Many years ago, we made a set called Lorwyn which had a strong tribal component. The biggest complaint about the Booster Draft was that once you selected your tribe, you got locked into colors very early. Start drafting merfolk? Well, now you only care about the white and blue cards. Commander Draft had the same issue. How could we let players evolve what they're drafting as the draft evolves?

Lack of overlap – Another issue that Lorwyn Booster Draft brought up was how when cards are too focused, the decks all end up the same. If only the merfolk deck wants a particular merfolk card, then the merfolk deck is most likely to pick it up every draft it shows up in. Commander Draft was having a similar problem, being that color identity was locking people into colors. If this were a non-Commander set, we'd solve this problem with hybrid cards, but Commander is the one format where hybrid is treated as "and" rather than "or" (a blue-red hybrid card can only go into a blue and red deck, not a blue deck or a red deck), so hybrid was off the table as a solution.

Partner would allow players to draft one partner early and then pick up a second one along the way, which would allow them to then add a second color to their draft. (All the creatures with partner in Commander Legends are monocolored.) Because there was the potential to pick up later legendary creatures with partner, it also encouraged players to occasionally draft off-color cards early in the draft. This solution did more to help with the first problem than the second, but it was a big step forward in making the product viable.

Me: Simple. You don't go with color identity. As many players have realized, even with **partner** showing up in CMR, the draft (double picks and color identity) create *very* railroaded experiences. This way, players never feel as if they are *forced* to play what was offered. I consider giving players agency to build interesting decks to be the more important component.

While Wizards needed multiple solutions to fix this problem (partners, increased amount of colorless cards, etc), SWR will not have that issue.

Though I'm sure not everyone will agree, in the end I chose to keep what I enjoyed most about Commander (build around legendary commander, multicolor, splashy big cards, etc) but drop the limitations. I think Wizards picked correctly for a mass market product, but SWR being designed for the enfranchised custom crowd gives me the opportunity to play in a very different space.

Designing the Fundamentals

TL;DR

- More commons.
- Increased synergy between cards.
- More legendaries at uncommon and above.
- Three-colors but flexible.
- Open ended archetypes.
- Design cards for all player types.
- Avoid board stall/durdly gameplay.
- Encourage attacks and interaction.
- 3/2s for 3 are the best. (If done correctly)
- Evasion is important.
- Player interaction is important.
- Multiplayer changes the value of certain effects. (obviously)

Lessons learned from CMR

While SWR differs from CMR in a great many ways, some decisions made in that set helped build SWR:

- **Larger pool of commons:** The more commons you have, the more the set reduces duplicates, helping to capture the feel of Commander. Because submitting massive sets to Council is something I *know* is problematic, care was taken in making sure the commons were aimed to be of **reasonable impact** to MSEM2. (2 versus 2.4 average copies of a common)
- **Synergies:** While CMR focused on *partner* synergies, SWR focuses on simply having the pool of available cards be flexible enough to function for multiple commanders, making them be desirable as inclusions *within* the deck as well.
- **Increasing the legendary ratio:** Discussed below..

Planesculptor Limitations & Legendary Ratio

That is not to say that SWR is being released exactly how I wished. Some design decisions are happening simply because the most commonly used drafting engine (Planesculptors) requires it.

With only a single “seeded” slot, I had to increase the ratio of **legendary creatures** within the draft itself to ensure that they would appear enough at **uncommon** and **rare**. Each pack is guaranteed to have a legendary, but the ratio of legend to non-legend *creature* cards means there should frequently be 2+ in a pack.

Three Colors

Unlike CMR, SWR focuses on **three colored** commanders, using goldbrid (of Alara Reborn and Kahembo fame.) This makes for *flexible* commanders. A G/W and B Commander is therefore viable in GB and WB decks, but *more importantly* makes them playable in any GBx and WBx decks, which the format encourages.

Manabase, fixing, and ramp options have been designed to function as 2-3 color decks, with options to splash for 4-5 available.

Archetypes (or lack thereof)

Unlike CMR (this will be a recurring theme), SWR also drops the usual **archetype cycles** present in many modern limited environments. Instead, each commander functions as the signpost for a unique archetype, with the cards in the format designed to be flexible enough to function across many different commanders.

Take for instance **Cyril, Volaris Shipwright** (pictured left). One of the earliest legends designed for the set, Cyril plays in a unique space of turning creature *cards* into vehicles. Cyril could easily have been a simple token commander, but in my opinion designs like these are what drives Commander; they ask you to try something new. Beyond simply being powerful, there's a reason Commanders such as Nekusar, Yuriko, Meren, and Kaalia are so popular and exciting to play with.



Cards of all shapes and sizes

Seasons of War, besides being a pretty darn fun draft, is honest in its goal to also provide constructed players some new tools, both in MSEM2 and MSEDH. We have many different players in the MSEM2 community, many of which enjoy vastly different playstyles. Commanders in SWR reflect this by providing as many unique options to bolster and complement our card pool. I have tried extensively to avoid designing **must-haves** that shake up the format too much, though I expect some mana options and legendary focused cards may see more play.

Avoiding the durdle

Commander games are durdly. Multiplayer games are durdly. Without incentives, games can easily devolve into board stalls that take hours. Honestly, just watch CMR reviews online. Games can easily take up to 2-3h (fidelity to Commander achieved). Unlike traditional Commander games with an increased number of sweepers or game changing cards, CMR (and to a lesser extent other multiplayer formats) has far fewer swing turns. Though a part of the issues lies with the use of a digital platform, many of these same issues would happen with SWR given it'll be primarily played through Cockatrice. As such, cards were designed to encourage play progress and the format's smaller deck size and regular life totals help in making sure games take far less time.

Encouraging attacks

- **Conspiracy mechanics:** Conspiracy 1 played with **dethrone** as the primary way to encourage attacks but I'm quite glad it got dropped in Conspiracy TTC. Highest life total is rarely the best indicator of the player in the leading position. Conspiracy TTC instead uses **melee** and **monarch**. Though I initially used monarch, I cut it from the recent revisions because it plays atrociously in 1v1. **Melee** on the other hand will be returning as it encourages players to chip away at everyone and make political "trades." (I swing with my 1/1 unblockable at you to let my melee creature get big against them). Furthermore, without the crown lying around this becomes a lot easier to do. **Goad** also provides a few additional interesting ways of forcing attacks.
- **3/2 Format:** I will always thank Piper and this [article](#) for keying me into the greatness that is 3/2 formats. The following statements are taken from said article but in my own words. It allows you to design creatures across the curve that don't get obsoleted as quickly. It is a far cry from a 2/3

format (see WAY pre-revisions) where the game often devolves into nothing happening. When everyone has 2/3s, the correct play is to basically not attack. When everyone has 3/2s it becomes a question of resources and exchanges. We also avoid the issues of 3/1s where a stray token (a frequent sight in Commander) simply bricks the body. This also leads us to focusing on 3 mana 3/2s, which gives us a lot more room to create interesting abilities.

- **Evasion is key:** Each color has options for evasion: flying, menace, trample, unblockability, etc. Having the right ratio of evasion and evasion granting (think Rogue's Passage) helps continue to encourage attacks and mitigate board stalls.

Encouraging interaction

A smattering of group hug (and hate) lets me design cards to encourage interaction. Some of the best moments playing MSEDH has been the discussion, banter, and politics so replicating some of that in SWR is something I wanted to not forget.

The Value of Multiplayer

Cards that can interact with multiple opponents at a time have always been a staple of multiplayer focused sets. "Each opponent" cards let me print strong limited focused effects at C and U for a decent cost, while not adding more redundancy to MSEM2 constructed.

Furthermore, the value of single target/single use removal is a lot worse when facing multiple opponents. Solutions include replayability, cantripping, and additional value.



Designing the Set Skeleton

Seasons of War is the largest set I've ever designed and the largest set submitted to MSEM2 (by 2 cards more than VTM). I started with the traditional large set (101/80/53/15) for a 249 base. I then distributed an additional 77 cards while removing mythics to shore up the set for a final set of 326 cards with a distribution of 120/120/86. I've also included an additional Command Tower **Buy a box** reprint not included in the set itself and of course **Barlick, Twyllian Hero**.

Legendaries (72)

While initially I had conceived the set to be even larger with legendaries both in the set and in a separate Legend sheet, I realized this wasn't needed. Legendaries simply show up more often in the set at U and R to compensate.

EDIT: 15/4/2021 - Now with Cajun's new pack generation process, we can have 2 legendaries per pack!



Uncommon Legends

There are 41 uncommon legendaries in SWR split into three categories.

- **Monocolor “Hybrid” Commanders (20; 4 per monocolor):** Each monocolor has four single color commanders with hybrid mana activations. They tend to be the cleanest and simplest of the commanders but have a very low color requirement. They make very good in-deck inclusions as well.
- **Three Color “Goldbrid” Commanders (20; 2 per three color group):** Each three color group (shards and wedges) has two three color gold-hybrid commanders, with the goldbrid being different and representing the two ally or enemy color pairs in a group. For instance, Jeskai (RWU) has UR, RW, and WU (two enemy and one ally pair) so the uncommon commanders have a U/R and a R/W goldbrid. The W/U goldbrid would be rare. These commanders are more unique and complex than the monocolors and are meant to be splashy.
- **Artifact Commanders (1):** One commander can be found at uncommon, being an artifact with no colored casting cost, but with an activated ability that essentially makes them a 5 color commander.

Rare Legends

There are 31 rare legendaries in SWR split into the same categories as uncommon.

- **Monocolor “Hybrid” Commanders (20; 4 per monocolor):** Same as the uncommon ones.
- **Three Color “Goldbrid” Commanders (10; 1 per three color group):** Each three color group (shards and wedges) has a three color gold-hybrid commander, with the goldbrid being different and representing the one ally or enemy color pairs in a group.
- **Artifact Commanders (1):** One more commander can be found at rare with an activated ability containing the WUBRG mana symbols.

Designing the Draft [15/4/2021]

With Cajun's new booster pack technology for Planesculptors, we have the possibility of increasing the amount of legendaries we see in each pack.

Therefore, the new booster pack distribution is as follows:

9 Commons

3 Uncommons (Nonlegendary)

1 Uncommon Legendary

1 Rare (Nonlegendary)

1 Rare Legendary

This now guarantees **48** legends in an 8 player pod, with **24** uncommon and **24** rare, while also ensuring the non legendaries now show up at a reasonable amount, without the risk of a pack being too overloaded with legends.

Total Number of Cards and Ratio

1. 216 Commons per pod of 8 means we see each common on average **1.8** times. Commons therefore show up *less* than in the average draft.
2. 72 Uncommons (nonlegendary) per pod of 8 means we see each uncommon on average **0.91** times.
3. 24 Uncommons (legendary) per pod of 8 means we see each uncommon legendary on average **0.59** times. This means not every uncommon legend will appear in each pod.
4. 24 Rares (nonlegendary) per pod of 8 means we see each rare on average **0.61** times.
5. 24 Rares (legendary) per pod of 8 means we see each rare legend on average **0.58** times. This means not every rare legend will appear in each pod.

Comparisons to a regular set

- Commons (100) is **2.4**
- Uncommons (80) is **0.9**
- Rares (54) is **0.44**

Comparisons to CMR

14 Commons/3 Uncommons/1 Rare/2 Legends

- Commons (140) is **2.4**
- Uncommons (Nonlegendary) (80) is **0.9**
- Rares (52) is **0.46**

Designing the Manabase

Commons

The common lands provide the easiest way to fix in any of the five colors. Three are variants on classic fixing (Evolving Wilds/Shimmering Grotto/Rupture Spire) while the other three are more distinct. At this density, it should be relatively easy to get the fixing needed to play in 2-3 colors.



Uncommons

The uncommon lands play in different spaces, providing some utility-driven effects on top of additional color fixing. The uncommon lands provide your premium source of untapped fixing, even if they function better the later the game is. Rogue's Passage, Mystical Tomb, Wildkin Grove provide some additional utility on top of being classic Commander style lands (evasion, token creation, and recursion.) Archmage's Tower allows Reliquary Tower to actually function in a limited format.



Rares

Two of the four rare lands focus on utility over fixing and are much more likely to be niche than mainstays, while Chamber of Ceremonies' ability being exceptionally niche gets the Shimmering Grotto treatment.



Designing Vraniveer

History of Vraniveer

Vraniveer is a high fantasy world inspired by years playing D&D and summers spent exploring when I lived in Europe. Long forgotten castles, ancient magic, and a quest for the throne are at the heart of Vraniveer.

Centuries ago, the citizens of Vraniveer pledged fealty to whomever sat upon the Elderthrone. Forgotten to time however is how Vraniveer's former seat of power was shattered into a hundred fragments. Over the years, the pieces were found, lost, hoarded, and stolen. Today, they are gathered by those seeking to reclaim the Elderthrone, whether it be through diplomacy or battle.

Locations of Vraniveer

- **Heartland**
 - **Trossingen (Bant):** Vraniveer's former seat of power. Since the fracturing of the Elderthrone,
 - **Port of Volaris**
 - **Kytherax's Deep** (Beneath Volaris; See **ETD** for more)
 - **Skarvith (Grixis)**
 - **Caerdyne (Naya)**
 - **Twyll** (Kithkin Village; see **ETD** for more)
 - **Umbermoor (Jund)**
 - **Hethwhyr (Esper)**
- **Frontier**
 - **Gyrewood (Abzan)**
 - **Calenfyr's Glade**
 - **Aith Aera** (Gladefolk capital city)
 - **Mount Varagan (Mardu)**
 - **Galdurheim** (Dwarven capital city)
 - **Shatterhold** (Ironpact fortress)
 - **Endmire (Sultai)**
 - **Ruins of Osgaerith**
 - **Riverrun (Temur)**
 - **Silvercrest (Jeskai)**

Races of Vraniveer

- White: Dwarf
- Blue: Merfolk, Faerie
- Black: Elf, Azra
- Red: Dwarf, Dragon (Dragonfolk), Azra
- Green: Elf, Dryad

Resources & Links

Conspiracy

Conspiracy: Take the Crown Gameplay and Design Review

<https://nyxathidgoestotown.com/2016/09/06/conspiracy-take-the-crown-gameplay-and-design-review/>

Commander Cubes

The Commander Tavern - Best Way to Build a Commander Cube

<https://edhrec.com/articles/the-commander-tavern-best-way-to-build-a-commander-cube-commander-cube-draft-e01/>

Brandon Sanderson's Commander Cube

<https://collected.company/brandon-sandersons-commander-cube/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3dbficwd3w&ab_channel=TheCommandZone

Commanders Brew - E199.1 - Commander Cube | Commander's Brew

<https://edhrec.com/articles/commanders-brew-e199-1-commander-cube-commanders-brew-magic-the-gathering/>

Limited Formats

Top 8 Characteristics of a Great Limited Format

<https://blog.cardsphere.com/top-8-characteri/>

Playtesting

The Five Trials of Playtesting

<https://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/beyond-basics/five-trials-playtesting-2017-06-01>

Commander Legends Survey Results

Dr.Chillbrain (April 3rd, 2021)

Commander

1) What commander(s) did you end up playing? Did you enjoy playing with it/them? Why?

Halana, Kessig Range + Keskit, the Flesh Sculptor. Keskit was largely just played for colors, but it was very enjoyable to use Halana with all the Deathtouch creatures.

2) Was your deck able to leverage your commander(s) effectively?

Basically what I said above, the deck was fully built around Halana and was able to use her well. The above-average number of artifacts did mean Keskit got activated once, but it wasn't fully built around him or anything.

3) Do you have any additional feedback about the commander(s) you picked?

Halana being intended for the RG archetype but also working super well for this funky side strat was super fun

Gameplay

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.) What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting and playing CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted/played?

My first pick was actually Obeka, but as I started seeing lots of good Green cards I found myself wanting to pivot, which I was unable to with my first pick, which was frustrating. I luckily was able to find good B/G Partners later on, but it felt more like a crapshoot of if I would be able to play the colors I wanted or not. I don't think Color Identity adds much to the draft.

Likewise, Commander damage felt more annoying to track than useful. Nobody's commanders were really built to kill with commander damage, so it just felt like pointless bookkeeping and we didn't even bother after a while. It's especially annoying with Partners.

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

See above, basically. The high amount of colorless cards and the fact that there are 3-color commanders around (which is what I started with) did help though.

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

Definitely. The 2-picks-per-pack helped it move along at a good clip and there's lots of super interesting cards in the set. The sheer number of cards in the set also helped it feel varied.

4) What are your opinions on the following gameplay elements: game length, board state, interactivity, removal.

My biggest point of feedback is that this format really needed more ways to break boardstalls. Two -2/-2 wipes at common and a couple niche ones at uncommon just isn't enough to keep the board in check. Would definitely have liked to see more board clears at uncommon and maybe a less conditional one at common, even.

5) Did you find the gameplay experience enjoyable? Why?

Definitely. Finding this unique synergy was super rewarding, and getting to have this deck really come out and do its thing was super cool to see. The games all felt interactive and like stuff was always happening, and we even got some politics in there which was fun.

6) What was your least favorite part, if any, of the experience? Why?

Basically what I said above about boardstalls. In addition to more wipes, having less things with defensive statlines and more evasion would definitely be good. Starting with 40 life already does a fine enough job of ensuring games go long, so I don't think ROE style super-defensive early creatures are as necessary.

7) What was your most favorite part of the experience? Why?

Building this unique deck and seeing the cool stuff everyone else was able to build.

Design

1) Were there any cards/card effects you felt were missing? Any that you'd have liked to see more of? Less of?

See above comments about Wraths and defensively-statted creatures/evasion.

2) Did you feel the color(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

Yeah for sure, though green and black aren't really colors known for having a hard time in long games haha. I always felt like I had stuff to do and was never really in topdeck mode thanks to the availability of draw and late-game effects.

3) Did you feel the archetype(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

Definitely, especially considering I was in a totally different kind of deck than the intended archetype for my color pair.

CyberChronometer (Draft Only)

Commander Questions

1) What commander(s) did you end up drafting?

Ghost of Ramirez de Pietro + Tormod the Desecrator

Gameplay Questions

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.) What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted?

20 life magic is better than 40 life magic; the larger deck size is fine. Color identity works but I feel like it makes the non-partner 2c commanders rough picks since that immediately forces you on rails if you're trying to build around them.

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

When I was trying to be in monoblue, I was pretty worried about getting enough playables, especially with half the first pack being dead; in UB I had no issues. Pivoting out of Hamza was hard because I didn't have any G or W partners, so I had to completely throw away all of it.

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

Yeah, always love trying to wrap my mind around a new limited format, especially an unusual one. Not sure how well it'll keep once the novelty wears off; guess I'll have to draft it more and see.

Design Questions

1) Were there any cards/card effects you felt were missing? Any that you'd have liked to see more of? Less of?

Interactive spells felt a bit light, and I also felt like too many of the artifacts were just manarocks; I'd like to have seen more artifact creatures than just the gargoyle (would've made my monoblue plan easier).

2) Did you feel the color(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

Sure did.

3) Did you feel the archetype(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

The graveyard archetype, absolutely; the CMC6+ and counters ones, eh, that's part of why I pivoted.

Admiralvy (Draft Only)

Commander Questions

1) What commander(s) did you end up drafting?

Nevinyrral, Urborg Tyrant. Decided on blue, and to a lesser degree white, before picking any commanders. Managed to grab some blue and white partners luckily as well but Larry in a later pack was very handy (partly because I just like him).

Gameplay Questions

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.) What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted?

From the games I have played of CMR, they really drag the game out. The first one came down to decking even with my elfball strategy. Commander damage is irrelevant. Color identity I'm unsure on. It makes it somewhat awkward to draft unless you decide on a commander very early. I don't feel confident suggesting any changes.

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

Yes to the first, tentative no to the second. I started largely colorless, then went into blue for artifact synergy, then into white because of what was available in packs. At that point I decided on solidly being in those two colors, and just hoped to get at least one of them in my commander's color identity. Did get those in the second pack, and then completely lucked into Larry in the third pack and got to use some black cards I had picked up along the way.

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

Somewhat. I'm not huge on drafting in general but I didn't find this any particularly more or less enjoyable than other drafts. "Easy" is generally what I look for at my particular skill level in relation to drafting.

Design Questions

1) Were there any cards/card effects you felt were missing? Any that you'd have liked to see more of? Less of?

There seemed to be quite a lot of ramp and not a lot of payoffs, but that may have been variance. My favorite cards are all worse in EDH (counterspells and single target removal), so I'm not sure what I'd like to see more of. Maybe stax-ish pieces? Not sure how that would work out in draft.

2) Did you feel the color(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

The set felt very artifact heavy as a whole, but blue and white (and black, though I paid less attention to it) all had various other options. Tokens, +1/+1 counters, lots of bounce for some reason. From previous experience I know black elves are a strategy, which is definitely interesting. Changeling is certainly helpful.

3) Did you feel the archetype(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

Definitely. Artifacts had ramp, large creatures, recursion, synergy with various smaller creatures, some removal, etc.

Kayju (Draft Only)

Commander Questions

1) What commander(s) did you end up drafting?

Hans Eriksson

Gameplay Questions

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.) What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted?

I think that [access to piper and multiple unc partners makes color identity less of a potential issue than one might assume at first blush](#). I think 40 life is a detriment, though, as it holds back lots of the more aggressive strategies that are supported, especially when there are multiple potent anti-aggro tools.

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

[Yes and Yes! I actually started on UG, but upon U closing off I found it easy to spec into R and continue from there. The dual picks makes it very easy to spec on colors/archetypes while still also making "safe" choices in parallel.](#)

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

Well, that's a whopper of a question. I'd say yes, because [I could feel my decisions cascading \(if you'll pardon the pun\) throughout the draft from merely picking good cards into having the semblance of a gameplan](#). The [overall powerlevel and overlapping synergies makes it hard to go wrong with any pick, as does the dual picking](#).

Design Questions

1) Were there any cards/card effects you felt were missing? Any that you'd have liked to see more of? Less of?

[Less ramp, honestly - with the whole diamond cycle at common, it feels trivially easy to pick up a multitude of ramp pieces. I also felt that the three-drop slot felt unnaturally thin while the four-drop slot felt unnaturally bloated.](#)

2) Did you feel the color(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

[Yes - I just happened to chose a very linear archetype](#). (Though I do think having access to playing Good Card Tribal can sometimes render that depth/synergy moot.)

3) Did you feel the archetype(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

[Ramp isn't really that deep, no. Getting Anara as a soft combo with Hans was quite nice, though.](#)

BluesEclipse (Draft Only)

Commander Questions

1) What commander(s) did you end up drafting?

For tonight's draft, it was Siani and Alharu.

Gameplay Questions

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.) What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted?

I do think that for draft purposes, 40 life is a bit high - I don't know that I'd limit it to 20, though. I'd probably go 30 life myself. I do think that color identity is the biggest impact on how I draft the set - I either am locking myself into at least one color early on (if I get a good legend), or am wary of picking colored cards at all for fear of them being wasted picks.

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

It's fairly easy to pick up cards in your colors once established, but beyond pick 3-4, it feels like pivoting into new colors is impossible unless you come across a commander that incorporates your existing colors and adds another - the color identity restrictions make it impossible to try and pivot to another color for a strategy you feel is better supported in the packs.

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

I enjoy the drafting experience, though that's true of draft in general - I particularly enjoy being able to effectively build my deck as I go.

Design Questions

1) Were there any cards/card effects you felt were missing? Any that you'd have liked to see more of? Less of?

Too many mana rocks.

Unis (Draft Only)

Commander:

1) Commanders Drafted: Brinelin + Radiant. Was considering Eligeth but...yeah.

Gameplay:

1) Great googly moogly this set is too battlecruisery. 2x Pick is a mistake, however i don't think CI is. I've played draft commander cube, and honestly...if there were just more packs, or more cards per pack, it'd be fine with 1x pick. Eh.

2) Too easy to pick, pivoting is impossible with so few packs.

3) It was ok. Playing it may be rough.

Design Questions:

1) Boardwipes, sweepers, SOMETHING TO MAKE THE GAME MOVE

2 & 3) Roughly? WU Flier Bigstuff is...certainly a thing that is supported, albeit the bigstuff mostly comes from how battlecruisery this set is.

ThatDamnPipsqueak (Draft Only)

A1) Sakashima and Falthis

B1) CI makes draft suck. 40 life makes things feel awkward in terms of what strategies don't work (everything is curved so high) but that might be something I can get used to. Larger deck size wasn't an issue for me because of how open UB was, but could've been an issue otherwise.

B2) Yes; Absolutely not. My draft could've straight up died with pack 2 if I didn't open Falthis.

B3) I'm glad I didn't pay money for this.

C1) There was so much ramp and so many expensive things. Also commander synergies felt less prevalent (might've been the commanders I picked). Also gib more clones.

InfinityChef

Commander Questions

1) What commander(s) did you end up playing? Did you enjoy playing with it/them? Why?

I played Keleth, Sunmane Familiar and Sakashima of a Thousand Faces. [Eh I didn't really enjoy it, my deck was kind of bland and the commanders were just kinda generic value cards.](#)

2) Was your deck able to leverage your commander(s) effectively?

Not really, there weren't that many cool synergies except for sakashima making any creature into my command for kenneth and sakashima becoming some huge artifact.

3) Do you have any additional feedback about the commander(s) you picked?

They didn't point me to anything, they were just kinda generic value cards. [Wish they kinda worked for an archetype.](#)

Gameplay Questions

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.)

What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting and playing CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted/played?

[I don't mind 40 life and 60 card decks, but I dislike commander damage and color identity. Commander damage is a pain to track for little reward, and color identity made the draft feel very railroaded.](#)

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

I wouldn't say it was that hard to pick up cards in my colors, though most of the cards I picked up later were artifacts. [I found it hard to pivot into new colors, because I wanted to play my p1p1 gold legend and have sakashima as my commander so I also needed to draft a white partner legender.](#)

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

[It was too railroaded for me. There weren't really that many interesting decisions for me to make.](#)

4) What are your opinions on the following gameplay elements: game length, board state, interactivity, removal.

[The game lasted too long for me, I think somewhere less than an hour would be ideal.](#)

5) Did you find the gameplay experience enjoyable? Why?

[There were definitely fun individual moments, particularly when wrenn won off of the soul's fire in response to removal \(I think\).](#)

6) What was your least favorite part, if any, of the experience? Why?

[The game was long, and once I got eliminated there wasn't really much to do \(Though that was partly because my mic didn't work for some reason\).](#)

7) What was your most favorite part of the experience? Why?

There weren't that many cool plays I made tbh, I didn't draw any huge haymakers. I think my favorite part was the anticipation of always being able to draw my Akroma's commander or whatever, which would win me the game.

8) Any other comments you'd like to add.

I think I covered everything above.

Design Questions

1) Were there any cards/card effects you felt were missing? Any that you'd have liked to see more of? Less of?

Haymakers. Bombs. Better removal. Utility lands. Lots less of the high toughness low power creatures.

2) Did you feel the color(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

Yeah, probably I guess. My deck was more of a goodstuff pile but there were rooms to focus on more synergies.

3) Did you feel the archetype(s) you were in had sufficient depth/gameplay?

Not really? It was a fairly average UW deck, just good cards. Doesn't really capture the whole "play random draft chaff commons that are insane in this one specific deck" thing that I really enjoy about normal commander.

McGuffin (Draft only)

Commander Questions

1. Jared Carthalion, True Heir

Gameplay Questions

1. I don't have any issue with the deck size or color identity to be entirely honest. I wonder if keeping 40 life in such a low power environment would lead to very long and drawn out games. (I haven't played with this set before so this is without real experience). Color identity does make drafting awkward but I wonder if you could rework Prismatic Piper to add colors to your color identity without needing it to be a commander.
2. Pivoting feels really difficult in this format. I ended up just staying super open in pack one, picking mostly rocks, until I opened a 3 color legend and found my lane. (Kind of related: I think 3 color legends or having the ability to reach 3 colors with partners is important.)
3. The drafting experience was enjoyable but I feel that there isn't much in the way of pivoting or signaling so you kind of just shut your brain off and pick the cards in your colors after scrambling to find a commander/commanders.

Design Questions

1. I feel like more finishers/threats that can run away with and end the game on their own would be nice. Mana Gorger Hydras, Torrent of Hailfires, Insurrections, Roil Elementals, and the like. Then again I don't have much experience in actually playing the format. I feel like the must-answer threats in a game of commander make it interesting and create that back-and-forth gameplay.
 - 2 & 3. I don't think I have much for answers for these questions? I'd probably need to draft more/actually play before I could really say.
- I guess my overall concerns are:
1. Lacking ways to end games (which might have just been an issue in how/what I drafted).
 2. Not being able to play all the colors you want to/splash cards.

Void

Commander Questions

1) What commander(s) did you end up playing? Did you enjoy playing with it/them? Why?

Hazma, Guardian of Arashin

2) Was your deck able to leverage your commander(s) effectively?

Very well supported.

3) Do you have any additional feedback about the commander(s) you picked?

I also had Gilanra OR Slurrk + Alharu as possible commanders. Just liked this one better, and used the others in my deck. This seems to be easier with the commanders in Green/White than Blue/White what I saw, but maybe I just got lucky/unlucky.

Gameplay Questions

1) CMR follows commander rules closely (40 life, larger deck size, color identity, commander damage, etc.) What are your thoughts on these rules as it pertains to drafting and playing CMR? Is there anything you'd change? Did any impact the way you drafted/played?

30 life seemed to keep the game quick. Commander damage would not have impacted the game unless it was unreasonably low. I'm an inexperienced drafter, so I just tried to grab anything that supported giving counters or was high costed.

2) During the draft portion, did you find it easy to pick up cards in your color(s)? Did you find it easy to pivot into new colors?

Very easy to find cards in my colors in the draft we actually played, but very difficult to find anything actually useful in the first one that broke. I made no real attempt to pivot in either, as one broke too soon and the other I felt comfortable in.

3) Did you find the drafting experience enjoyable? Why?

Yes. The first (failed) draft was significantly less fun because I grabbed the Flying Tribal and then found no flyers except the overcosted artifacts and one other bird. Maybe the draft ended too soon for me to tell, but maybe some archetypes are way better supported than others? That or pure luck.

Due to the abundance of support I found for +1/+1 and big creature tribal, I was able to easily swap between commanders as I found them.

4) What are your opinions on the following gameplay elements: game length, board state, interactivity, removal.

Our game kept moving quickly. I didn't find any boardwipes, but targeted removal and overwhelmingly strong creatures kept me from needing them.

5) Did you find the gameplay experience enjoyable? Why?

Commander fun hehe. Draft instead of constructed leads to more variance and less "lol {my color's broken high costed spell} time"

6) What was your least favorite part, if any, of the experience? Why?

Instant speed conceding. I would make it a rule you have to die or scoop during your turn, but that's less an issue with the set than it is an issue with people having manners.

7) What was your most favorite part of the experience? Why?

My archetype was extremely well supported and draft in and of itself prevents the stupid combo decks I hate playing against in commander.

I also almost never win in my group, wild.

8) Any other comments you'd like to add.

Thanks for hosting, I had a lot of fun. :)

Espithel's Wise Words

To elaborate on this:

In multiplayer games of magic, you have to worry about three players attacking you, and attacking someone leaves you open to being attacked. This is a counterbalancing factor where, if a player gets dangerously ahead, all the other players will gang up on them to get them behind - You need the consent of other players to advance your gameplan.

This means that if players are in equal boardstate but are very close to dying, this counterbalancing factor means that no one can really attack or progress the gamestate - What I call a "knot." I call it a knot because all the players' progression is tangled together and based on what other players do.

The consequence of these knots is that, if one player tries to attack with all their creatures or severely hurt a player, they'll usually die on the backswing from the other players, hence "untangling the knot." This problem becomes more pronounced if a player requires multiple attacks in order to properly take down.

In the worst cases, knots degenerate into zombie knots, such as this game and several others I've played, where there are 2 players likely to win the game and one or more players who cannot feasibly do so, yet the choices of the zombies decide who wins even though they can't win themselves.

Things that makes knots worse are grindy value engines, repeatable effects, lack of evasion, and cards that are often beneficial for your opponents to keep around (lurzog/pacifisms/orings)

Things that make knots better are aggressive curves, lack of card draw/similar effects, lots of safe evasion, and 1-card game-ending win conditions.

I think SWR would hugely benefit from a card like <<azorius knight arbiter>>

Playtesting Feedback

April 26th Sealed Pools (v.0.03)

Timespiraled	<p>Great Vorganisaath Jund Sacrifice https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/0bee86f7427a15c7cb4cb0019a91474e#</p> <p>The deck has a lot of synergy and cross-commander functionality. Making cuts was easier than my practice draft session. A lot of cards are still generically good and my non-commander legends functioned as decent bombs to supplement my gameplan.</p>
Lycodrake	<p>Skali Naya Abound https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/a4e55d7b64fb6cf226cba0980321e257#</p>
Ivy	<p>Adira, Crimson Battleguard Mardu Melee https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/c7624b9d0aaf55501108a35c5f17ba12#</p>
Dr. Chillbrain	<p>WU Gwynmere ETBs https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/b105e440b77bc5dee10aa0c6b2ca93bf#</p> <p>[I] really like the "each player may (do thing), for each player that does, (thing)" cycle, especially with the etb synergies. With the way commander limited wants you to build around your commander doing sealed felt a little bit off since I couldn't prioritize synergies but that's not the fault of the set</p> <p>Individual card comments, as promised Like I mentioned before this pool felt lacking in interaction, might just be variance though Big fan of the legendaries I saw. I felt like I had a lot of interesting choices of what to play as my commander, and then what was my commander influenced how I built my deck in a good way Love Melee and how it's used here That's basically it, felt pretty good overall</p>
TEST	<p>UR Spellslinging Disaster https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/99baf5cb99f7db1a7f14080d8807bd1f#</p>
Pipsqueak	<p>Abzan Amelle https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/a0b6e3e1a76bbafe512a00f4da50dc6b#</p> <p>I was surprised at how little removal white had in my pool? You did a great job of selling the "legends matter" stuff and I had a lot of interesting choices to make in terms of what colors to go in and how that interfaced with what commander I wanted. In particular, choosing where on the curve to put your commander is :fire: Sovereign Stone feels kinda whatever with the sorcery speed activation Think that's it</p> <p>Oh, also, there felt like there were few "value enchantments/artifacts" in my pool. that just sit around and accrue cards. like Phyrexian Arena, Rhystic Study, Phyrexian Reclamation, etc, which to me are one of the corner stones of commander.</p>

Avery	<p>Grixis Drosera and Nerium https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/1079eb8a8b1eaf8ada39ebf3c1c13e49#</p> <p>These goldbrid commanders look sick as hell to play Drosera and Nerium in particular tantalize me I will say, Kveta does not give me very "commander" vibes Since she just has a value ETB and nothing else She feels a lot better in the 99 to me, especially since you can gotcha people with her flash if she's not in the command zone</p>
Espithel	<p>Grixis Steal and Sac' https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/1a4e86d0712803ba1ff94e911eb77a19#</p>
McGuffin	<p>Gwynmere, The Tideshaper Abzan Value Town https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/6d0cbd612dd50fef9e7337557237f2fd#</p>
Parasign	<p>UR Gloriosa https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/c401e4d18e56539c25fa7f0bbf9f3558#</p>

April 26th Sealed Pools Cont. (V.0.04)

Crimpy	<p>Jund Midrange https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/ac4f6e7840eaa33b7ab7a19ea5a43892/export?type=text</p>
Pipsqueak	<p>I have some hype WBR cards but sealed means I opened Tranquil Crossing and Gilded Lamp as my only pieces of Mardu fixing with Dragon's Trove and Assassination Contract as honorable mention and no green fixing definitely appreciating the hybrids here also seconding the "need more removal". I'm in UB which should be fairly removal dense and I got 2 kill spells, a -X/-1 sweeper, and a freeze So I like never want to run the 4 drop counterspell because holding up 4 mana across an entire table, and potentially falling behind on development even if I tag something with it, is just an awful sound I suspect the answer is "both", tbh like the good news is I think even with higher removal than most limiteds, there's typically going to be more threats than answers on a given table, and you have huge bombs that don't die to removal the existence of the command zone means that kill spells are functionally unsummons for the biggest and scariest creatures</p>

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Draft Feedback

April 26th

Draft Message Link:

<https://discord.com/channels/250273029920129025/429765638182141952/836412898669494293>

Avery	Jeskai Czeros https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/ed9d95230e2151e54abf7838950fe707#
Parasign	Kveta RW Tokens https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/fb7ab2e1521447e7d8e30ddb4311e27e#
FlamboyantBlobfish	WU Vune https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/c65e3441c8dc3689eb4d341e5afb6a98#
Lycodrake	Izzet Drosera and Nerium https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/1854b0c2171711dee4e45f743e3e61f2#
Espithel	UBw Lethal Vapors Teferi Protection Turnskip Tribal https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/dba7f089a8eada052fb9632f7e3e4b76#
Morgan	Orzhov Morwyn tooookens? https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/b4cdbddd33325c052e9cecee1c1c0b7e#
CyberChronometer	Great Vorganisaath for Jund! https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/bb6ab446dff42b2d88363213ee3a4421#
Timespiraled	BG Mourngash Tokens https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/b9d33820658378f1ec07b1eeb3441eb3#

Notes

For the first draft, **SWR** is already looking pretty decent. The drafts are definitely smoother than the Sealed pools. I was able to pick the best cards out of the packs without worrying about finding a Commander. (Ended up with eight legends in my deck, commander included.)

The fixing and removal seemed better, that's for sure. Some issues with signals coming from the "loose" tribal uncommons and the "good stuff" feel. Could be something to check out in the coming weeks once games are played.

Overall, the draft was considered above-average to high. SWR was said to be about a Dominaria, which is fine by me. I'll see what I can do to try and tap into the missing drops of excitement.

April 27th; Xira Draft

Draft Message Link:

<https://discord.com/channels/250273029920129025/429765638182141952/836675742456610857>

Espithel	Jeskai Black Gnolf Cringe https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/bbf0ec594798a92d1d99859ea28fd034#
Timespiraled	RW Skali Melee https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/197b1eeccf1879bea1150bc358b2758d#
Lycodrake	BG Erythane - My Graveyard Resources https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/004688c7c6891c6afecb4d497fc8b6e3#
BluesEclipse	Abzan Haerthach Recursion https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/d9d9b19fb0019a9e221b466170af364b#
McGuffin	BR Sarrithaz Aristocrats https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/64c64b3632bcffb75f6c2492f84cbd77#
Astimageon	BW Legendary Stuff https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/915a2b393d61c516786e15279ef141b2#
Chumbeque	Unfinished Pool https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/9ff6b3e3660dd146604c59dc1a1b9967
Emily	UR King Gjarbrand Embattled/Spells https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/cee2a9737aa9dce1c3f9557c6d7e0241#

Notes

Second draft done! Everyone found it fun!
Wharling Willow could search for basics for fixing?

April 27th

Draft Message Link:

<https://discord.com/channels/250273029920129025/429765638182141952/836675742456610857>

Wrenn	UR Orivia Spells https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/82864bdea48ce5269ec39ae892879440
Kayju	RW Kveta Tokens https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/367b14e68b52741faded5d8bd8395852#
Spockguy	BG Calenfyr/Gorganith? https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/4a9929035ab9a7e8ec7b7fe06d006c9e#
Divock	Sultai Erythane https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/3fd5208a9dddeeb52ec1211ce0e9d599
(?)	Mardu Kveta Embattled https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/c2887f06a4e6b0e490ceb72de92a2702#
Xela	RW Scarhide's Embattled Equipment Extravaganza https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/54a5f0007425828e85676f0205073d65

Notes

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Overall, the draft was considered above-average to high. SWR was said to be about a Dominaria, which is fine by me. I'll see what I can do to try and tap into the missing drops of excitement.

April 28th

Draft Message Link:

<https://discord.com/channels/250273029920129025/429765638182141952/837055238795558972>

Timespiraled	Bant Gwynmere Flicker ft. The Hammer https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/f5e933932fd7e576c2e9630ee05e328e#
Matt	Bant Morwyn https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/9dde688a8f1f4d6e746134615ebdce65
Astimageon	RG Breyga Creature Stuff https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/e8a3b6fcf6c96398e4a342be347c135d#
Espithel	Sultai Gharsha ... Stuff https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/6a40371c58bd03476e3205d39447a2ce#
CyberChronometer	RW Morwyn https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/209e434c177a47de7bdf333fb8474215#
Kayiu	Abzan Gwynmere https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/957e2f8689fbe5d6ec108c2f0b4ac8ed#
Plipster	UR Korephyr https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/2f2b6812fb76d7b9a9a8427b1d4d6cbf#
Nijugo	UB Legends https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/60bee1679fb1bd4ced2b784426f87a7c#

Notes

Fifth draft of **SWR**,

April 28th

Draft Message Link:

<https://discord.com/channels/250273029920129025/429765638182141952/837055238795558972>

Chumbeque	Barlick Mono White Weenies https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/80fe1ee313b8470dc2d6946dc74e4715
InfinityChef	Jund Sad Vorganisaath https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/17b4770b090919ce8c82dcbd1cadf4ee#
Kayiu	BR Legendary Aggro https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/cf98467ba6e8e28968f4406c09818579#
Morgan	UBgw Spellslinger https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/e773eb0bcaa72fbc448189f278a59eca#
Scribbl	Jund Happy Vorganisaath https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/92b52a82c463617492236ad40a1a1ed5#
Astimageon	Chaos Breyga (UBRG) https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/9bc04bb3da8842b23fef236ccdce81d#
Timespiraled	WU Czeros https://www.planesculptors.net/draft/df2278ed836c806ba71161d01b8f69f8#

Notes

Third draft of **SWR**,