

Empire of the Dead review – by Gordon Millar jnr.

Empire of the Dead by West Wing Productions is a Steam-punk skirmish game set in the year 1888. The backdrop is of a Victorian world where there is not only crazy technology but the Undead, Werewolves and Vampires all of which are awesome. Moreover the backdrop allows for so many more cool factions to come out in time.

The game basics are very easy to grasp. You activate a character, move him, perform any actions with him, move on to the next character. This works really well for a skirmish game simply because each model is, although part of a team, fighting for themselves. This Forces players to move, shoot/attack with each model before moving on to the next keeps you thinking about the bigger picture much more so than the traditional move, shoot, combat phases.

The opposing roll mechanic works and people are familiar with it. This makes the rules simple and that means less time checking rules and more time playing, this combined with a streamlined phase system means the game has a good pace.

It still has all the rules like fighting over obstacles, snap fire and what happens when people lose their nerve and run from the field, but everything is clearly written and usually involves little more than a modifier so as long as you've downloaded the quick play sheet it won't disrupt play.

There's also a comprehensive campaign system that allows gamer's to progress their warband's along quite nicely including skills and injuries. I feel this is the strongest point of the rules and really makes the game something special.

Empire of the Dead is an awesome game and the book is beautifully presented. It's got great background and a strong game mechanic allied with a robust campaign tool that gives the game genuine replay value which will only increase as more models become available.