

Client Hasbro/Hasbro Pulse

Voice Friendly/Fan Aware/Semi-Informal

Hasbro Pulse provides blog-style content for customers of popular Hasbro products. The following three articles were produced for the **Dungeons & Dragons** page, mixing sales promotions with reader-interest content in order to highlight the introduction of a new action figure set. I decided to explore the character upon which the action figure is based by approaching two popular creators whose work shaped both his design and personality. After setting up and conducting the interviews, I published them through Wordpress. The content required knowledge of the subject matter and an understanding of the Hasbro Pulse voice, particularly for an American audience. The promotional piece for the action figure itself was fashioned according to the brief requirement.

Note: all content is for the US market and therefore features US spelling.

Featured Samples

Behind the Design: D&D Drizzt Illustrator, Max Dunbar

Introducing: Dungeons & Dragons Drizzt Do'Urden Figure

Q&A With D&D Legend, R A Salvatore

Behind the Design: D&D Drizzt Illustrator, Max Dunbar

Today we're talking to Max Dunbar, comic book and concept artist extraordinaire. Max is known for his incredible work on IDW Publishing's Dungeons & Dragons comic book. Max has teamed up with Hasbro to bring two fan-favorite D&D characters to life in glorious 6-inch scale: Drizzt Do'urden, the mold breaking dark elf, and his faithful companion, Guenhwyvar the panther.

Q: Max, tell us a little of your history with Dungeons & Dragons. Were you a player before working on the comic book series?

A: *My first real exposure to D&D was back in 2014 when I first started working on the comic "D&D Legends of Baldur's Gate". I didn't know much about the game at all at the time, but had always loved fantasy as a genre, and was very keen to work with Jim Zub, so I was eager to work on it. A few years later I got to finally play 5e and I was hooked instantly.*

Q: What's your fondest memory of playing the game?

A: *My favorite thing about playing D&D in general is the huge swings in emotion at the table the group can experience in the span of a few hours. I've never laughed harder, or been more tense and worried, or scared in a short span of time like I have playing D&D. Our group just finished Curse of Strahd, and there were some amazing moments where we thought we were done for, surrounded by undead, but just managed to escape. Those moments are the best.*

Q: What's the D&D character equivalent to Max Dunbar?

A: *I think I'd be a Halfling Druid, Lawful Good. I love nature, I love animals and I think Druids would probably like to sit around and draw in their spare time. I think I'm generally a happy, jovial person, so a Halfling fits. Lawful good because I'm always scared to break rules.*

Q: What were some of the challenges you encountered with this particular piece of art? [artwork shown] Is there a different approach to illustrating comics versus art for a toy product?

A: I think the biggest challenge I ever have is trying to capture what I imagine, and put it down on paper. It never actually works out the way I saw it in my head, but I try to get it to a point where I'm satisfied with it. In comics, there rarely is enough time during the process to give the art too much of a second look, which can be a good and bad thing.

Q: You have a really distinct style which encompasses the details of your subjects. What were some of the things you wanted to focus on with Drizzt and Guenhwyvar, or with the monsters on the cards?

A: I always try and get as much character across in the faces that I draw, as well as energy into the poses to try and convey movement and keep it as exciting looking as I can. Drizzt and Guenhwyver are such well-known and storied characters, with so much incredible art depicting them. I wanted to try and capture the qualities that people love about those two.

Q: For aspiring illustrators out there, what tools/software did you use to create the artwork?

A: I do a mix of traditional drawing with digital coloring. All the line work is done with technical pens, the coloring in Photoshop. My advice would be to experiment with a whole bunch of different materials to see what works for you best, and never be afraid to try new things. You might stumble across a way of working that makes the whole process easier or more fun.

Q: Dungeons & Dragons is the most popular roleplaying game of all time. If you could draw any Hasbro brand in a D&D crossover, what would you choose?

A: I know there has been some crossover with Magic: The Gathering with Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica, but I think that would be really fun to explore even more. I absolutely love the art in MTG, so getting to draw anything from that universe would be incredible.

Q: What other D&D products have you worked on?

A: Aside from the initial comic book miniseries I worked on "Legends of Baldur's Gate" I've been involved in one way or another with each of the 4 subsequent miniseries starring the same characters, doing covers and/or character designs. With the 5th and current D&D comic book miniseries "Infernal Tides" I returned to work on the interior art as well as covers, which has been so much fun. The arc is based off of the recently released adventure "Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus" which I was lucky enough to work on with the crew at WOTC as a concept artist.

Q: What can fans expect to see from you next?

A: D&D Infernal Tides is currently being released monthly into comic book stores and online, and I've re-teamed up with Jim Zub to do a second story arc of our creator-owned comic STONE STAR with colorist Espen Grundetjern and Letterer Marshall Dillon, which will be released later this year!

Introducing: Dungeons & Dragons Drizzt Do'Urden Figure

Drizzt Do'Urden. It's a legendary name among Dungeons & Dragons fans.

It's a good time to be a fan of Dungeons & Dragons. The game has never been more popular, and there's so much content out there, from all-new campaigns, source books and online streams released almost constantly to all-new Drizzt novels from R.A. Salvatore. With a new video game coming in 2020, featuring Drizzt Do'Urden, one of the most popular and recognizable characters in

the Forgotten Realms, we decided the time had finally come to put the iconic drow into action figure form, Hasbro style.

A chance to display Drizzt on our desks and shelves, posing with his sword and wolf companion Guenhwyvar, have a lot of us inside Hasbro excited. We know a few things about making highly poseable, six-inch figures with cool accessories. But it was vital to this project that we do justice not only to Drizzt, who's such a huge part of so many people's love of the Forgotten Realms, but to those fans who've been following his adventures for so long.

Of course, Drizzt wouldn't be Drizzt without his panther companion, Guenhwyvar, so the team knew we needed to include her in this pack, not just as an accessory — although the Figurine of Wondrous Power carved in her likeness is in there — but as a figure in her own right, complete with articulation so she could be posed alongside Drizzt.

Iconic characters like these two deserve iconic packaging, so we enlisted the comic book and concept artist Max Dunbar to create an illustration of Drizzt and Guenhwyvar on the pack. Max is no stranger to D&D work and put his amazing talent for detail and action to work on the artwork.

But we can't forget the most important piece for any D&D fan: the d20. Our d20 is a custom Icewind Dale oversized die, which pairs perfectly with the dice in the Icewind Dale Rime of the Frostmaiden Dice and Miscellany dice set. It'll be a real... critical hit... at your table. (Sorry, we're contractually obligated.)

Bad jokes aside, there's a lot in this pack for a fan to sink their teeth into, from the awesome figures to the amazing accessories, and even a few bonuses we haven't talked about here. We hope you guys will love the set just as much as we loved making it.

Q&A with D&D Legend, R. A. Salvatore

We're talking to legendary author R.A. Salvatore, creator of some of the most iconic characters in Dungeons & Dragons during his writing career and the history of the game — both of which span over thirty years. Today we're discussing two legendary characters: the dark elf hero of Forgotten Realms, Drizzt Do'urden, and his astral panther, Guenhwyvar. The duo will be featured in an upcoming deluxe 6-inch scale action figure 2-pack.

Q: The character Drizzt first appeared in your novel, *The Crystal Shard*, in 1988, making him older than a lot of current D&D players. As a long time player yourself, did you ever imagine the game would be so popular and as widely accepted as it is today?

A: *The game? Well, maybe not to this level, but when I started playing, circa 1980, I knew I had found something wonderful. RPG meant cooperative roleplay and it satisfied me in so many creative ways. The jump to the mainstream surprises me a bit, but I think we're all better off for it, as it's a positive force.*

Q: What do you think fuels the current resurgence of and interest in D&D, especially over the last five years?

A: *The need for human contact instead of just playing video games plays a role, I'm sure. Also, so many celebrities and mainstream shows — *Big Bang Theory*, "*Stranger Things*," etc. — widening the viewership and letting people know about D&D. I remember many years ago watching the wonderful "*Freaks & Geeks*," and the final episode where the younger kids (the geeks) convince the*

coolest freak to join in their D&D game. James Franco's character gets into the roleplaying with enthusiasm, turns out to be a good player, and Carlos the Dwarf becomes legendary overnight. How I miss that show. Judd Apatow let a god one get away.

Q: You've written thirty six novels featuring Drizzt and Guenhwyvar. These are obviously characters you care about deeply. What was your reaction when you first heard about, then saw the new action figure pair?

A: First thought: I can finally tell my readers that yes, there already is an action figure! They've been asking for one for decades. Actual decades. And then I just sat back and thought how amazing is this journey I've been on. The figure itself looks really great. I haven't held one yet, but the images look spot on.

Q: The fantastic worlds of Dungeons & Dragons are filled with legions of iconic characters. Of all those larger-than-life heroes and villains, which would you love to see as an action figure?

A: The Companions of the Hall, of course! And Jarlaxle and Entreri, Athrogate and Pwent. That'd be a great set. Aside from my own works, there are scores of great Realms novels full of life and wonderful characters. If I started listing them here, I'd go on forever. The mage Elminster certainly should get a figure, or five.

Q: As we mentioned earlier, you've written thirty six novels featuring Drizzt and Guenhwyvar, most as trilogies. When you look back on all those stories, does one stand out above the others as a personal favorite?

A: That's a tough question. The answer is always: "the one I'm working on," or at least, I hope that's the answer, and I really do think these latest two trilogies have been the payoff for a long, long investment. However, the two books that constantly come back to me whenever I consider this question are "Homeland" and "The Companions."

"Homeland" was the fourth book I wrote with Drizzt, but the first chronologically in his journey. In it, I was given the privilege of creating the drow in the Forgotten Realms. I didn't create the race – the drow go back to Gary Gygax and the original TSR team - but the details on them were thin, so I got to make Menzoberranzan. I spent many hours considering how to go about this task. Were the drow really "evil"? More so than we might consider the human cultures? Or were they trapped in a system that had come about beyond the longest memory, where corrupt demonic power held them in thrall?

Since these are rational and highly-intelligent reasoning beings, and since I had already shown Drizzt as a heroic character, it had to be the latter. It had to be the influence of Lolth on this relatively small society.

So I began to consider how a society like that might survive the constant strife and tension, and then I had a thought. I grew up in an Italian neighborhood in the northeast, so I pulled out my well-read copy of Mario Puzo's "The Godfather" – really! – and based the houses of Menzoberranzan on the New York families detailed in that work. Once you're in, it's hard to get out (particularly when you're surrounded by the merciless Underdark), as both Drizzt and his father learned. Making that world come to life was quite an experience.

What really made "Homeland special for me, though, was that it was the first time I consciously and repeatedly asked myself "why?" Why was I writing? What was the purpose of each book? Before that, I wanted to just write fun adventure novels, a bit of escapism, a bit of swordplay, a buddy fantasy in a coming-of-age adventure tale. I sprinkled in a bit of my philosophy of life and of right

and wrong – the stupidity of racism is evident in all three books of the first trilogy, Icewind Dale. It became more than that with “Homeland” for me. Perhaps it’s because that’s when I started doing Drizzt’s journal entries (the ones in the Icewind Dale Trilogy were added later), or more likely, those entries came about because I was determined to put more of myself into the books. Before “Homeland,” I was working a full-time job an hour commute each way, and with three young kids and a working spouse. I could fashion a good adventure under those circumstances, but after I quit my day job in 1990, I realized the importance of my writing to me. This was my journey. This was how I would make sense of the world around me. I don’t think I fully appreciated that until many years later, but when I look back at those early writing days, I can fully see that turning point.

With “The Companions,” I had the pleasure of trying to answer that age-old dilemma “if I only knew then what I know now.” Like “Homeland,” this was a very difficult book to write, in no small part because I was doing something you’re really not supposed to do in a novel. I got to bring back from the dead and follow the journey of three main characters, each with a different reason for accepting the chance to return to this world from their state of limbo. I got to explore the motivations of Regis, Bruenor, and Catti-brie after returning them to life (as newborn babies) with full memories of their previous lives, and with the sensibilities of an adult.

I went into the writing with trepidation – we were doing this to help reboot the Realms for reasons outside the novels, and were taking big chances here – but once I started writing, the worries fell away. The whole book became so natural and easy to me. I knew these characters so well, and understood why they were returning – not the top-level mission they saw before them, but internally. Why it mattered to them beyond their love of Drizzt. I did what I set out to do, and if it hadn’t worked, the Legend of Drizzt probably would have ended with “The Last Threshold.” But it worked. It felt right on every level, even with Bruenor’s character explaining throughout the reason you really can’t do that in a novel! I love that book.

Q: Drizzt has managed to overcome endless challenges over the years, slaying dragons, escaping the Underdark and the evil of the Drow to become a hero of legend, not to mention enduring the loss of his dearest friends. With so many years and adventures behind him, can you tell us a little of what the future may hold for Drizzt?

A: *The adventures, the dragon fights, the wars, have always been the catalyst for the character growth, and that sword and sorcery is what makes the stories fast and fun. So, yeah, that won’t change. Really, though, the thing that has kept the stories going is that they are the tale of growth, a continual coming-of-age story, so to speak, and not just for Drizzt, but for the other Companions of the Hall, and for many of the side-characters – Entreri, Jarlaxle, Kimmuriel, Ivan and Pikel, Athrogate, Pwent...too many to count. My books are about characters more than they are about battles. They’re about nuance and failure, growth, love and friendship. Mostly, they’re about me striving to learn, to keep learning. Drizzt strives for perfection, both physical in his martial arts, and philosophical. He’s constantly trying to make sense of...everything. In the newest books, he’s found a teacher in a grandmaster monk. Which begs the question: will he be learning until he dies, or will he die when he stops learning?*