SOFTWARE & TECH

Codex Chaos 2nd Edition

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Introduction: The Age of Chaos Unfolds

In the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war. And for Warhammer 40,000 enthusiasts, few rulebooks captured the raw, malevolent energy of the Warp better than the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**. Released in the mid-1990s, this was the first dedicated army book for the servants of Chaos in the then-new second edition of the game. It not only provided players with a comprehensive army list but also expanded the lore of the Traitor Legions in ways that would echo through decades of publications. Whether you are a veteran Heretic Astartes general or a newcomer curious about the origins of today's rules, understanding the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**is essential to grasping how Chaos Space Marines evolved from a generic foe into a faction with nine distinct god-aligned paths.

This article will delve into the history, content, and lasting influence of this seminal publication. From its groundbreaking rules for Daemon Princes and Chaos sorcerers to the first official breakdown of the Traitor Legions, we will explore why this codex remains a cornerstone of Warhammer 40k hobbyism. So gather your Black Legion, your World Eaters, or your Thousand Sons, and step into the webway of nostalgia and strategy.

Historical Context: The Dawn of Second Edition

When Games Workshop launched **Warhammer 40,000 2nd Edition** in 1993, the game was still heavily influenced by its epic-scale sibling, Warhammer Fantasy Battle. The core rulebook included a bare-bones Chaos army list, but players craved depth. The **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**, published in 1994, answered that call. It was one of the first true codices – a dedicated army book that gave Chaos players their own unique feel, separate from the generic Space Marine forces. At the time, the background material heavily drew from the Horus Heresy novels (then still being written), but the codex painted a vivid picture of the nine Traitor Legions, their Primarchs, and their descent into damnation.

The second edition itself was a revolution: it introduced the concept of "army cards" for vehicles and characters, a more structured psychic phase, and the iconic "blast" and "flame" templates. The **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**wove seamlessly into these mechanics, offering specialized units like Possessed Chaos Space Marines and the terrifying Chaos Dreadnought.

What Was Inside the Codex? A Breakdown of Content

The Lore: Nine Legions, One Purpose

The codex opened with a substantial background section that became the definitive source for the Traitor Legions for years. It detailed each Legion – from the Black Legion (formerly the Luna Wolves) to the Word Bearers – and their allegiance to the four Chaos gods: Khorne, Tzeentch, Nurgle, and Slaanesh. For the first time, players saw clear distinction between Khorne Berzerkers (with their blood-red armor and chain axes) and Plague Marines (slow, tough, and disease-ridden). The lore also introduced the concept of the "Lost and the Damned", mortal cultists and mutants who fought alongside the Astartes.

Notably, the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**devoted significant space to the "god-specific" units: Noise Marines (Slaanesh), Thousand Sons (Tzeentch), and Plague Marines (Nurgle). Each had unique rules that made them play

very differently – a design philosophy that remains central to today's codexes.

Army List: From Aspiring Champions to Daemon Princes

The army list was organized into three main categories: Chaos Space Marines (the core), Chaos Daemons, and Renegades & Cultists. The most iconic addition was the **Daemon Prince**, a winged, immortal champion of Chaos who could lead the army. The codex also included rules for "Champions of Chaos" who could be upgraded with marks of the gods, gaining special abilities like additional attacks or invulnerable saves.

Vehicles were another highlight. The Chaos Land Raider and Predator received spikes, daemonic possession, and the ability to become "Frenzied". The Chaos Dreadnought was not just a walker – it housed the entombed remains of a fallen Chaos Marine, often driven insane by centuries of war.

Special Rules: The Warp Unleashed

The psychic phase in 2nd Edition was intricate, and the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**gave sorcerers access to the "Chaos Powers" – spells that could summon daemons, cause enemy units to flee, or even create warp rifts. The codex also introduced the concept of "Daemonic Gifts" – upgrades like Daemonic Flight (making a unit jump infantry) or Daemonic Resilience (a 5+ invulnerable save). These rules were balanced by the "Daemonic Instability" rule: if a daemon unit lost a combat, it might be banished back to the Warp.

One of the most memorable mechanics was the "Fury of the Chaos Gods" table, where a wizard could attempt to cast a "Greater Power" – risky but devastating. Players loved the unpredictability, even if it sometimes backfired.

Factions and Subfactions in Codex Chaos 2nd Edition

The Traitor Legions

The codex allowed players to choose a specific Legion, each with unique restrictions and bonuses. For example, World Eaters had to take at least one unit of Khorne Berzerkers and could not use sorcerers. Emperors Children (Slaanesh) gained access to Noise Marine squads with sonic weapons that ignored cover. Death Guard (Nurgle) were slow but incredibly tough with Feel No Pain-like rules long before that term existed.

This Legion-specific design encouraged thematic armies. It also introduced the idea that not all Chaos Marines were the same – a core concept that later editions would expand with the 3rd, 4th, and 10th edition codexes.

The Lost and the Damned

Although the main army was built around Chaos Space Marines, the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**included an entire section for non-Astartes forces. Cultists (with shotguns and autoguns), Chaos Ogryns, and even Beastmen (mutant braves) swelled the ranks. This gave players the ability to field a "horde" style army, contrasting with the elite marine core. The Renegade Militia rules allowed for customized warbands with random mutations – a precursor to the "Chaos Spawn" rules we see today.

Impact on the Warhammer 40k Hobby

Painting and Modeling Inspiration

The **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**was also a golden age for conversion and kitbashing. The box art and internal illustrations showed Chaos Space Marines adorned with spikes, tentacles, and gore. Many hobbyists began adding bits from the Chaos sprue to create unique characters. The codex even included a section on building a "Chaos Altar" terrain piece and converting plastic Imperial Guard into cultists.

For the first time, Games Workshop produced a Chaos Space Marine plastic box set, which became a staple. The codex's release coincided with a surge in Chaos-themed White Dwarf articles, tournaments, and narrative campaigns like "The Battle of Tallarn" where Chaos was a primary antagonist.

Influence on Later Editions

When the 3rd Edition of Warhammer 40k arrived in 1998, the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**was succeeded by the new "Codex: Chaos Space Marines", but many of its innovations persisted. The marks of chaos, Daemon Princes, and the concept of Legion-specific rules were carried forward. The daemonic upgrades became "Daemon" rules in later editions. Even the "Frenzy" rule that gave Berzerkers extra attacks found its way into the 8th and 9th editions.

Today's Chaos Space Marines codex (10th Edition) still references the nine Traitor Legions and retains the mark system. The core identity of the faction – fanatical, mutated, and unpredictable – was forged in the pages of that 2nd Edition codex.

Collecting Classic Codex Chaos 2nd Edition

For collectors, original copies of the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**are sought-after relics. The softcover book features cover art by John Blanche, showing a heavily armored Chaos Marine with a bionic eye and a chainaxe, standing in a wasteland. Inside, the black-and-white illustrations by Tony Ackland and others evoke a gritty, punk aesthetic that modern digital art cannot replicate.

Many hobbyists still play 2nd Edition games using these original rules. The appeal is the slower, more character-driven gameplay where a single Daemon Prince could turn the tide of battle. Online communities like the "Oldhammer" forums keep the rules alive, and campaigns set in the Eye of Terror often reference the codex's lore.

Common Myths and Misunderstandings

Some newcomers assume that the **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**was only about Chaos Space Marines. In fact, it greatly expanded the Chaos Daemon faction, which would later split into its own codex. Also, rules for Nurgle's "Great Unclean One" and Khorne's "Bloodthirster" appeared in this book, not just in the main rulebook.

Another myth is that the codex was unbalanced. While some units (like the Daemon Prince with a Steam of Corruption) were very powerful, the game was designed around narrative fun rather than tournament parity. Most veteran players cherish those wild, cinematic moments.

Conclusion: A Legacy Written in Blood and Souls

The **Codex Chaos 2nd Edition**is far more than an outdated rulebook. It is a blueprint for how Warhammer 40,000 embraced its dark, chaotic heart. From the detailed background of the Traitor Legions to the innovative rules for daemon engines and sorcerers, this codex defined the Chaos Space Marine identity for a generation. Whether you are compiling a retro army for a nostalgia campaign or studying the evolution of the game's design, this book remains an essential piece of Warhammer history.

Its influence resonates in every modern Chaos release – the marks of the gods, the daemon princes, the cult legions – all trace back to that 1994 masterpiece. So crack open those flimsy pages, dust off your old metal Berzerkers, and remember: in the Warp, the Second Edition never truly ends.

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