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Lou Scheimer

Oct. 19, 1928 - Oct. 17, 2013

This book is dedicated to the life and career of cartoon visionary and co-founder of Filmation, Lou Scheimer. Without him, the cartoon landscape of the 1980s would have been much more barren. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude for forging wondrous memories for an entire generation of children.

He truly did have the power.



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Your Local Listings

Channel 1: Introduction 10

About Cartoon Action Hour	12
About Retro-Toons	12
Introducing the Co-Hosts	18
About Roleplaying Games	19
Recommended Viewing	23
Channel Guide	28

Channel 2: The Game System 30

Foundations of the Game	31
Types of Characters	32
Understanding Characters	32
Checks	34
Action Scenes	39
Oomph	43
Goons	47
Vehicles	48
Playsets	49
Transformation	50
Gestalts	53
Hazards	56
Optional Rules	57
Action Scene Example	62

Channel 3: Series Creation 88

Segment 1: The Series Guide	90
Segment 2: Player Characters	100
Segment 3: GM Characters	117
Segment 4: Playsets	123
Example of Series Creation	124
Character Alterations	132

Channel 3: Series Creation (Cont.)

Saturday Funtime	134
Ani-Bots	136
The Brutaloids	137
Asgard 3000	138
Ghost Patrol	140
Rift Warriors	141
Skyfighters of Voltania	142
S.L.A.M.	143
Tin Horns	144
Sample Characters	146

Channel 4: The Players 152

Being a Good Player	153
Embracing the Genre	155
Oomph and You	157

Channel 5: The Game Master 158

Being a Good Game Master	159
Embracing the Genre	161
Creating Episodes	165

Appendix 172

Index	172
Afterword	174
Sample Stuff	176
Bio-File	182
Printer-Friendly Bio-File	183
Series Guide	184
Tokens	185

Reading through the *Cartoon Action Hour Game* rulebook, I had a sudden flashback to my career/life in the '80s. While I only worked on four of the shows listed in the rules (*G.I. Joe*, *Transformers*, *Inhumanoids* and *Visionaries*), and was in blast radius of a few of the others (*Jem*, *Thundarr*, *MOTU*), but just reading the list caused a sudden flashback.

But the flashback wasn't to the shows, it was to the intersection of the shows and games, because at that exact same moment in life, Gary Gygax and I were working on various things at the Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corporation mansion in Beverly Hills. And while I don't remember doing role-playing as such, I do remember spending one day in the huge lawn in front of the ranch house style mansion at the top of the Beverly Hills, making what amounted to a miniatures game for Transformers (with maybe some Joes thrown in for good measure). We had tape measures, various assistants, visitors and others moving the characters around, I think there were some Pimms Cups on trays.

I remember we talked about how much time it took to transform, weapon strength (Megatron's gun was the strongest thing on the field), armor class (Optimus' discarded semi-trailer was the strongest shield). I'm not sure we ever got to a fully playable game, but as far back as then (it had to be late summer '84, or '85), action figures and games were fused in my mind.

Back at Sunbow (and earlier, Ruby/Spears), I was the token game guy. Almost everybody else had a history in either comic books or animation. Steve Gerber (co-creator of *Thundarr*) and Roger Slifer (co-creator of Lobo) had been in comics (Gerber created, among other things *Howard the Duck*), Doug Booth, Paul Dini and Buzz Dixon went back to Filmation and *MOTU* and maybe more. I was the only one whose heart was more in games than comics.

As a development technique (we had new characters join the show all the time), we actually did sort of roleplay the characters. In *G.I. Joe*, one of the tests was 'what does he do when he comes to a locked door?' Roadblock knocks it down, Shipwreck sends the parrot in to open it from the other side, Storm Shadow sneaks through the skylight, etc.

Also, we would talk like strategy game guys when we were trying to break a story (is there some cool new way to take out a Cobra fort?).

So, when you play this game, you'll get a taste of what it was really like developing stories for the actual shows.

Here are my pieces of advice for players and then I'll get out of the way and let you get to the game.

- This is an old Joe Ruby rule (and nobody knew the rules of '80s animation better than Joe). "Talk" beat then an "action" beat. You talk about what you're going to do or what is going on very briefly (animated mouths are tedious to watch) and then you did it. Of course, your plan rarely ever works. If you can hold the talk until an action beat, that's even better. All the best '80s cartoon characters had an amazing ability to talk during laser fire.
- Not too much 'yap yap' (Joe's term for dialogue). In fact, my rule was that you couldn't have more than four script lines in any piece of dialogue. (Yes, that rule got broken, but it was a good one). People have to speak in short bursts, complete each other's sentences, etc.
- Rely on the environment. As there is near zero chance that a blue or red laser will actually hit anybody, battles are decided by affecting the environment. You have to hit the rock that will start a landslide that will seal the cave. You hit the fire alarm and water sprays, shorting out electronic enemies. You get the idea. The more stuff you have like that, the more it will feel like animation.

- Here's a historical note. In order to understand '80s syndicated cartoons (and most on the list were that), you have to understand the network environment that preceded it, because the thrill of working on the syndicated shows was liberation from network rules.

A variant of the game would be 'Network Action Hour'. This would be to reflect the incredibly politically correct anti-violence, pro-social world of the networks in the '80s (most of the shows mentioned were syndicated, so they played by slightly looser rules).

- You assign 'violence points.' Somebody slamming a door is one violence point. Somebody raising their voice is one violence point, etc. You only get 40 violence points. That is that nobody can ever intend to harm anybody. A truly violent and heinous thing like shouting, "I'm going to get you" gets 5 violence points. That's the max. You can't go beyond 5 violence points for any action. You can't save up your points for, say, a disembowelling.
- The 'pro social' option is that no one character can do very much. All problems are solved by a group. If you are to solve a mystery, each character has to solve exactly the same amount of the mystery. (See *Mr. T.*). If you escape from a flooding castle, everybody must have a critical role to play in the escape.

- All action has to amount to somebody running away in fear but usually without actually being threatened by another human. Though it should seem like they were threatened.
- Actual threats have to come from neutral sources. I'll give you an example from Mr.T that took us most of a night to come up with and was almost pure role-playing. At one point, we had to have a character escape from a room. There were rattlesnakes on the floor of the room (I think it was the forbidden monastery). The character could not harm a rattlesnake, but he could throw a rope onto a fly fan, which would spin him out of the room and toss him harmlessly through the window. (I think that's how it ended up working). The point is that no hand drawn snakes can be harmed in the process. Of course, the villain will be terrified by the snakes and not pursue our heroes any further.

The fun of the 'Network Action Hour' variant is that it is a great set up for the *Cartoon Action Hour* game where we had looser rules.

Steve Gerber sold me on G.I. Joe by saying, 'our characters can hit with real fists.' And forget 'Yo-Joe'. The real battle cry we marched to: "We can hit with real fists!"

Wait. One last rule. These cartoons were about two things: product and velocity. Make no mistake about it. These shows were 22-minute commercials for toys. It was the most creative freedom most of us will ever see in major media, but the idea was that the toys (good guys and bad guys) look heroic. They are product. So make sure your characters shine when you play (and mention their names a lot). If you generate your own franchise, make sure you have five good guys (maybe one is a girl), five bad guys (ditto on the girl), two vehicles and an environment that can be the Christmas playset. It's okay for characters to be 'discontinued.' That's how it worked in the real world. If a character isn't working, get rid of him and make a new one.

Another last rule. Velocity. These stories have to fly. The episodes were 22 minutes plus main title, credits and bumpers. (The PSA's came out of advertising time, I think). You should be able to play an episode in an hour. Make it fly. Lite on the dialogue. Lite on the combat. Long on huge, ridiculous ideas for how action works.

Okay, that's Flint's Cartoon Clinic. Now go play.

--- Flint Dille



CHANNEL 1 INTRODUCTION

Picture it. The year is 1980-something and it's seven o'clock on a Saturday morning. The sun is only now just starting to peek out from the remaining darkness of the night before. Most people – including your parents – are still fast asleep, recuperating from a long, hard week at work.

But not you.

No, sir. Your eyes flit open at the still-weak beams of sunlight that struggle to penetrate your curtains and the distinctive sounds of birds chirping. This is your wake-up call; your alarm clock. Even before you will your body into action, thoughts of action and adventure play about your imagination, as you wonder what excitement awaits you once you turn on the family television set.

You peel the blankets off of you and – still clad in your pajamas – hurriedly scuttle into the kitchen to pour yourself a delicious bowl of sugary cereal. It's okay. You have plenty of time. After all, the stations don't start playing the good stuff until eight o'clock anyway. Into the bowl goes the cereal, followed by the milk and, lastly, the food shovel. You're now all set for the morning that lies before you.

Careful not to spill your heaping mass of foodstuff, you slowly pad into the living room. With the unmistakable "click" sound of the "on" switch, the television is activated and the screen comes to life with vivid colors, exaggerated sound effects and unadulterated fun.

Oh, sure, these are still the low-grade reruns the networks use to placate early risers, but that's fine by you. They're warm-up cartoons; shows that make you all the more excited for the first-run series. The next forty-five minutes are spent eating, half-heartedly watching the television and playing with your action figures, all the while enjoying your early-morning freedom from your mom and dad.

As the credits roll for the last of the warm-up cartoons, you feel your heart skip a beat. The inevitable commercial break is all that stands between you and kid paradise. The wait becomes excruciating. To heck with the fast-food clown and his dawdling purple sidekick. Who gives a hang about bills pouting on the steps of Capital Hill? You don't want to see an owl counting the licks it takes to finish off a friggin' lollipop! You want heroic exploits and struggles between good and evil!

Ask and you shall receive. The final commercial wraps up and the glorious intro animation and the accompanying theme song roars triumphantly onto your TV screen. This is what you've been waiting for. This is what your entire week of crummy tests and obnoxious teachers have led to. This is what helped get you through all the homework and studying. Nothing else matters. As far as you're concerned, the only things that exist in the universe are you, the television set and the line-up of all your favorite cartoons. All is right with the world. This is your own personal utopia; your own little slice of heaven. This... is what *Cartoon Action Hour* is all about!

About Cartoon Action Hour

What you hold in your hands is the third edition of the Origins-nominated roleplaying game that seeks to emulate the wham-bang fun and excitement of the action cartoons from the 1980s (or "retro-toons", as we call them). If you aren't familiar with the source material, we strongly recommend that you watch at least a handful of episodes before running or playing the game. We have even compiled a "recommended viewing" section later in this channel that should help you pick out a series to watch.

Cartoon Action Hour is not tied to one definitive setting. It is intended for use with virtually any cartoon-like setting imaginable, whether it's one published by us or created by you and your group. The end result is that there is no limit to the types of settings (we call them "series") you can explore with *Cartoon Action Hour*, so go nuts with it! We have included a selection of sample series seeds, starting on page 134, that you can use to jump right into the game with.

You may be wondering if *Cartoon Action Hour* is a universal game. While it certainly is capable of accommodating a wide variety of genres, from *commando military action* to *giant transforming robots* (and everything in between), the game system is built from the ground up using "cartoon logic" as its foundation. "Real-world logic" has no place here! This means that regardless of what genre you base a series on, you're going to end up with a cartoony version of it. In other words, *Cartoon Action Hour* isn't just a universal roleplaying game adorned with retro-toon art... it's a roleplaying game that zeroes in on the source material and brings it to life on your tabletop.

About Retro-Toons

Whether you're an existing fan of the 1980s cartoons or couldn't tell a Transformer from a GoBot, it's important for you to understand the conventions of the milieu. That's exactly what we have set out to do. Read on.

The Distinctions

This section analyzes exactly what sets the retro-toons apart from other cartoons.

Cartoon Logic

The retro-toons operated on a much different type of logic than exists in our own world. Logic in the retro-toons functioned more or less like this: If something made for a good story, it was possible. This, of course, led to many situations that were absolutely preposterous in "real world" context, but somehow seemed fitting for the cartoons – characters leaping from one airship to another, rugs being yanked out from under villains' feet, huge guns doing more damage to vehicles than to characters because they never score a direct hit

on characters, etc. But, hey, who cares as long as it resulted in a fun show?

Clear Cut Morality

Morality in the retro-toons was simple enough: there was good and there was evil. There was very little crossover between good and evil in the retro-toons, though occasionally, a character would cross over from one side to the other. When it all boiled down, every character was either a good guy or a bad guy.

Fast-Paced Action

The writers had roughly 20 minutes to tell a full-blown story of rather epic proportions. This meant that the action had to move at a breakneck speed in order to get everything accomplished in time for those end credits to roll. The end result was that there could be no boring parts that dragged on seemingly forever and that the action was brisk, exciting and enthralling.

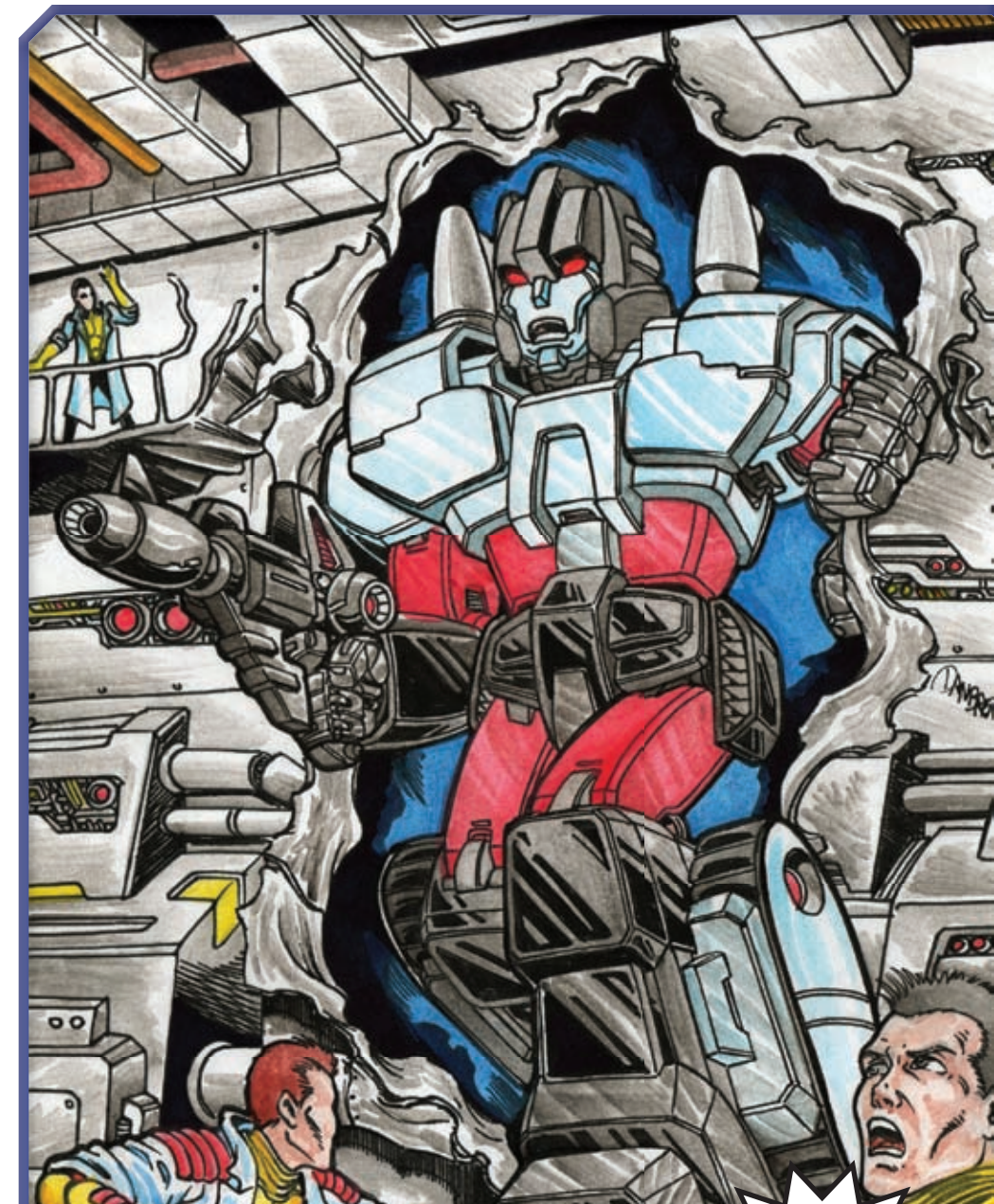
Good Guys Always Finished First

There was never any doubt that the heroes would come out on top by the end of the episode, unless the words "to be continued" appeared on the screen. The heroes constantly had to work hard for the victory and would typically suffer severe setbacks along the way (a captured teammate, the loss of their HQ, etc.), but the viewer knew that good always triumphed over evil.

Innocent Fun

At its heart, the retro-toon milieu was all about innocent, over the top fun! The tone varied somewhat from one series to the next, but all of them possessed this quality to a high degree.

You'll find little angst, apprehension, or depression in the colorful world of these cartoons. What you will find, however, is an abundance of exuberance and a sense of optimism that pervaded throughout the shows, primarily on behalf of the protagonists. While they might've gotten down in the dumps when things looked the bleakest, they



always shook it off and regained their positive attitudes just in time to kick the bad guys' tails from here to Poughkeepsie.

Moral of the Story

One of the ways in which the cartoon producers appeased the always-complaining parent groups was by inserting a message into the story. Sometimes, these messages were low key, but in most cases, they were about as subtle as a Sherman tank rumbling through your living room. This morale was often reiterated in a 30-second "public service announcement" skit attached to the end of each episode of some series.

Toned-Down Violence

There was no shortage of fighting in the retro-toons. No shortage whatsoever. However, if you look closely, you'll see that the actual amount of violence was shockingly low. The gunfire invariably seemed to miss, the drivers or pilots always managed to jump out of vehicles before they exploded, blood apparently didn't exist, and practically nobody died. Robots were popular adversaries, as the censors and parent groups didn't gripe much when they were blown to smithereens.

Toy-Centric Nature

Oh, sure the retro-toons were entertaining, but let's not fool ourselves; most of them were intended to sell action figures to kids. This may not seem terribly important at first glance, but it affected numerous aspects of a series. For example, "battle features" from the action figures were often incorporated into the show in order to make the young viewers want to rush out and buy the toys.

The retro-toons have been accused of being 30-minute toy advertisements and in some ways, they were. Despite this commercialization, though, the writers and artists endeavored to make these programs highly entertaining tales that transcended their intended goal. In most cases, they succeeded.

The Tropes

Now that we've discussed some of the general distinctions, let's get into some specific conventions of the retro-toon genre. These are clichés or tropes that pop up with surprising regularity.

After-Show Messages

Many series ended each episode with a public service announcement or "moral of the story" lecture by one of the show's heroes. Often, the forth wall was broken, thus allowing the character to speak directly to the viewers.

Animal Companions

Virtually every series had at least one character with an animal pal. In most cases, this animal was extremely intelligent or witty and could sometimes even talk.

Annoying Comic Relief Characters

You couldn't throw a stone in the cartoons without hitting a comic relief character that grated many viewers' nerves instead of making them laugh.

Between-Season Character Changes

Successful toy lines offered up a new batch of action figures each year. In order to capitalize on popular characters and to reduce the number of all-new characters added to the line, toy companies occasionally included new versions of existing characters. The new versions would

★ **One Size Doesn't Fit All!** ★

It's important to note that these tropes aren't entirely universal. That is, not every retro-toon series contained every entry from this list. Some series contained more of them than others, but no two series were exactly the same in that regard.

usually just look different, but sometimes, they would have new action features/accessories that carried over into the next season of the associated cartoon series.

Between-Season Show Changes

We've always been told that change is good, right? Well, that isn't always the case in the retro-toons. Sometimes, a series would endure a dramatic alteration of format, tone or direction. This usually proved to be an unpopular move, but it happened nevertheless.

Bumbling Wizards/Gadgeteers

We've seen it in a million cartoons – the wizard attempts to conjure up a dragon to do his bidding, but ends up with a cross-eyed rabbit instead... or the gadgeteer tries to produce a pair of rocket-boots from his gizmo pack, only to grab a beanie cap with a propeller on the top.

Catch Phrases and Battle Cries

In the heat of the moment, characters often gravitated toward bellowing out a distinctive exclamation at dramatically appropriate times.

Couldn't Hit the Broadside of a Barn

Villains, that is... especially the nameless mooks employed by master villains. The air can be laden with laser bolts, yet none of them seem to hit their intended targets.

Creative Threats

Retro-toon villains sometimes threatened to eradicate the heroes outright, but more often than not, they used their creativity to concoct something less fatal but equally awful – sending the heroes to another dimension, turning the heroes into mindless slaves, permanently mind-controlling the heroes to make them evil, etc.

Discolored Background Elements

If a particular piece of set dressing is going to move during a scene, it will be colored in a slightly different hue. In other words, you can bet the mortgage that that peculiar-looking rectangle on the floor is going to be a trap door.



Escape Plans

The master villains may taste defeat in damn near every episode, but they're pretty proficient at planning ahead so that they escape the heroes at the end of each episode.

Ethnic Stereotypes

Ethnic stereotypes were alive and well in the retro-toons – from the Australians running around talking about putting shrimp on the barbie and calling everyone "mate" to the Native Americans who were expert trackers and spoke of animal spirits all the time. To be fair, the more insulting stereotypes were usually left well enough alone, but not always...

Exploding Vehicles, Safe Pilots

Vehicles went "boom" in the retro-toons at an alarming rate. Seriously, it happened practically all the time. Don't worry, though. The people operating them invariably managed to leap out unscathed at the last second. Those parachutes sure do come in handy.

Funny Endings

It was common for the show's comic relief character to do something funny (often making a fool of him/herself) at the end of an episode, concluding with all the other characters sharing a hearty belly laugh.

Gimmicky Series Concepts

All it took was one good gimmick to spawn an entire action figure line and cartoon series. Whether it was holograms, robots that turned into vehicles or characters riding giant bugs, gimmicky series concepts were very abundant in the '80s.



Hayseed Hero

Even in series not based on our planet (or even in our solar system), there's often a token "hick" character, complete with appropriate trappings and mannerisms (Southern accent, cowboy hat, a banjo, etc.).

Incompetent Villains

The typical retro-toon featured at least one inefficient villain who was extremely stupid and (or) clumsy. Only slightly less common was the series wherein more than one such villain existed. In some rare cases, even the master villain was a buffoon.

Indirect Attacks

The retro-toon writers had to find ways around direct violence when scripting episodes in order to appease the censors and parent groups. They turned to indirect attacks such as cutting down a branch so that it falls down upon a villain, trapping him beneath it.

Kid Characters

The idea of throwing a plucky kid into an otherwise kid-less show was spawned by the idea that the target audience would relate to them more than the adult characters. On occasion, most of the characters would be kids, with an adult or two to lead them.

Laser Proliferation

Bullets and blades were considered inappropriate for children to see on television at the time. As such, bullets were pretty much unheard of and blades were either shown infrequently or they never scored direct hits on organic targets. This led to the proliferation of lasers! Even the machine guns spewed laser blasts!

Mantras

Characters that transformed commonly had to verbalize some kind of mantra before they could do so. This ranged from spouting out a single word to reciting several poetically dramatic lines. Stock footage was likely used for the transformation sequence as well.

Mission Briefing

This oft-used plot device involved all the heroes being gathered together by an authority figure, who would give them the lowdown on the

mission at hand. It was a quick and easy way to get the show on the road in a timely manner, without a bunch of time-consuming exposition.

No Death

Characters never died violent deaths in the retro-toons (aside from animated movies based on a series). Could you imagine the hissy fits the parent groups would have thrown in the '80s if a show had depicted a character getting his brains blown out? On rare occasions, background characters were allowed to perish via natural causes. Bear in mind that this was the exception rather than the norm.

No Sense of Realism

We all know that if the world effectively comes to an end, all of our buildings and landmarks would be long gone after two thousand years... but not in the retro-toons. No, in the retro-toons, the ruins of civilization would still be standing as monuments to what had come before. Realism, in every respect, takes a backseat to whatever would make for a fun series.

Noggin-Knockers

Heroes in the retro-toons weren't always known for their originality in combat. Perhaps that's why they were obsessed with taking two villains and bonking their heads together.



Non-Organic Foes

In the retro-toons, chopping an organic villain in half was a huge no-no... but giving a robot the same treatment was fine and dandy. Those wacky parent groups were full of hilarity.

Overdramatic Line Delivery

There are times in which stating things in a normal voice just won't cut the mustard. That's when heroes and villains exaggerate the heck out of their dialogue and ham it up big time ("Step away from that lever, you fiendish cretin!").

Punny Character Names

First and foremost, character names were created to sell action figures. Not many kids would clamor for a toy named Jim Peters. By contrast, kids would go goofy over a character whose name was cleverly tied to his appearance, abilities, action features or theme... and pun-based names were a direct way to accomplish that.

Soft Landings

When characters plummeted from great heights, they never went "splat". Instead, they somehow managed to land in a body of water, a mound of hay, a pool of mud or any other non-lethal spot imaginable.

Teamwork

The retro-toon writers always pushed cooperation, so teamwork was emphasized regularly.

Treacherous Underlings

Almost without fail, every master villain had one or more underlings that sought to overthrow him and claim power for themselves. This underling was typically the master villain's second-in-command.

Voiceover Introduction

In order to instantly familiarize viewers with a series' concept, the retro-toons commonly had a voiceover during the show's introduction or theme song that gave a quick summation.

Since the goal of *Cartoon Action Hour* is to bring the 1980s action cartoons to life, we wanted to ensure that the experience was as authentic as possible. For this reason, we have gone to Cartoon Land to hire three individuals who can act as co-hosts, offering readers their unique perspectives and insight throughout this rulebook. Rather than giving you a rather sterile introduction to each of them, we thought we'd let them do it themselves.

Bravesteel

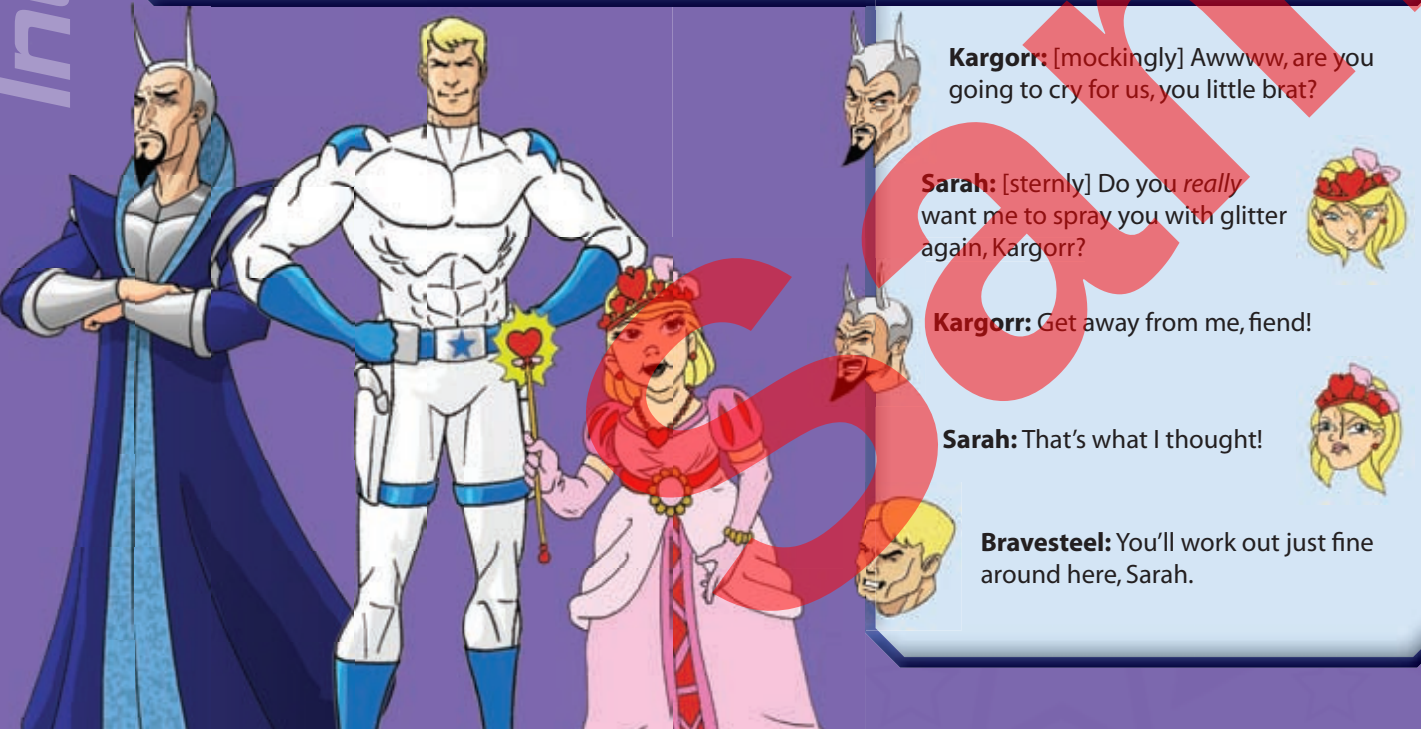
Hello there, friends. My name is Jason Bravesteel and I was the primary protagonist of the woefully short-lived *Galactic Heroes*. I began co-hosting *Cartoon Action Hour* starting with the Season 2 rulebook and I'll freely admit that it's a pretty swell gig overall. I enjoy bringing the remarkable fun of Cartoon Land to those who have never been there. I hope to continue doing so for many years to come... and that, my friends, is a fact. *[Editor's Note: that was his groan-worthy catchphrase in Galactic Heroes. Apparently, he's still unable to shake it.]*

Kargorr

Allow me to introduce myself, so as to avoid the clumsy wording that no doubt would have been perpetrated by the authors had they handled it. I am Kargorr, the greatest and most feared master villain Cartoon Land has ever known! Entire civilizations tremble at the mere mention of my name! No hero was ever able to match wits with me, not even that pathetic bumbler, Bravesteel! You'd think the writers of *Galactic Heroes* would have given me a worthier adversary! But, no – I had to thwart him episode after episode! It was like taking candy from a... erm... what's the expression? It's like taking candy from a dirt clod! No, that's not it. Hmmm. Aha! It's like taking candy from a porpoise! Yes, that's it, a porpoise! *[Editor's Note: Ummm... Kargorr never defeated Bravesteel. He never even came close.]*

Sarah

I'm Sarah Strongheart and I'm the newest member of this co-hosting team. I was the main heroine on a little show known as *Power Princesses*. Despite being a simple commoner, one of the mystical power ponies chose me to bond with instead of the highborn Princess Darkstra. When I rode Tiara – that was my pony's name – we were imbued with sparkly power that allowed us to defend the realm against the jealous and spiteful Princess Darkstra and other threats. After my show ended, I had little to do, but now I'm here in the real world to help with this fun book! I sure do miss my friend Tyler though.



About Roleplaying Games

If you've never played a roleplaying game (or RPG) before, you're probably not going to make heads or tails out of this rulebook. Let me rephrase that: You wouldn't be able to make heads or tails out of this rulebook if it wasn't for this section (or someone else taught you). What follows is a full crash course in how an RPG works. Are you ready? Good, let's get cracking!

Understanding the Concept

Do you remember sitting in front of the television on Saturday mornings or weekday afternoons, watching your favorite cartoons while playing with your action figures? It was always so much fun continuing the exciting adventures of the cartoon heroes and villains via their fully-poseable plastic counterparts. The tales we told with our toys were epic struggles of good versus evil that were more than a match for anything we saw on the television screen... because they were *our* own stories, not ones that someone else dreamed up. *Our own* stories!

Well, guess what? That's what roleplaying games are all about too.

So, are we saying that playing RPGs is essentially the adult equivalent of playing with action figures? More or less, yeah.

As youths, we used our action figures as vessels for creating stories; physical tools with which to act out elaborate clashes between the valiant heroes and the sinister villains. As adults, we can move beyond the need for action figures. All we need is a rulebook and some dice.

In essence, roleplaying games are collaborative storytelling games, where everyone involved contributes to spinning a tale as enthralling and exciting as any cartoon. The rules just provide us with some structure upon which our stories rest. Best of all, winning and losing is moot in roleplaying games. Everyone wins if a good time was had. That's the true goal of an RPG – to work together and have fun.

How it Works

One of the participants acts as the *Game Master* (or *GM*) and he is the primary storyteller. He is in charge of *running* the game, which is an RPG term for coming up with the challenges that the players will encounter during the game session, taking the role of referee in knowing and interpreting the rules of the game, and creating and acting out the supporting characters the players will interact with during the game (called *Game Master Characters* or *GMCs*). All of the other participants are called *players*, and each player takes on the role of one character (called *Player Characters* or *PCs*) that they create and portray. These characters are the protagonists of the story that unfolds during the game.

The game mostly consists of a verbal interplay between the players and the Game Master. The Game Master describes the scene and the situation the PCs are in, giving the players information about the adventure and world. In turn, the players describe the actions of their characters to him – a big part of the enjoyment of roleplaying is thinking, talking, and making decisions as your character. After the players describe their characters' actions, the Game Master either makes a decision or consults the rules, and tells the players the results. This goes back and forth, and a story ensues.

At points where the Game Master and players are unsure on the results of an action, the rules come into play. They are the vehicle by which confusion

or disputes are resolved, as well as a way to add color and an element of chance to a story. Rules in an RPG are somewhere between the hard-and-fast rules of a traditional board or card game and the free-wheeling imagination of a science-fiction writer – they are only used as a tool to determine the results of a questionable action and to further the story along. Each group has their own style about how often or little they use the rules in their game, and most *gamers* (or people who play and run RPGs) often make up their own rules for their favorite games.

Unlike other games, things don't have to end when everything is put away after an evening of play (called a *game session*). Instead, you can continue the exploits of the PCs the next time you want to play – the game has no definitive ending, preset time limit, or single goal that marks the game's end. The PCs can even improve in their abilities as time goes on, evolving into fully fleshed-out personas that all the participants care about.

During a typical game session, one full "adventure" is played out; this adventure is called an *episode* and is comprised of numerous *scenes*. A series of episodes linked together in this fashion is called a *series*. All this is further divided up into *seasons*. A season usually consists of six episodes.

Example of Play

Below is a brief excerpt from a typical session of *Cartoon Action Hour*. We have kept the rules references very general so that you can understand what's going on without first reading the game system.

Tony is running the series known as *Warriors of the Cosmos*. In a nutshell, the series takes place on the once peaceful world of Iconia. Most of Iconia has been conquered by Nekrottus, a foul being with powers of sorcery and a total lack of compassion. Now, only the kingdom of Haven remains unclaimed by Nekrottus. The benevolent

King Rastor has gathered Iconia's most valiant heroes in an effort to reclaim the world in the name of freedom. Collectively, they are known as the Guardians of Iconia.

Jay is playing the role of Combato, a heroic robot with a multitude of gadgets within his metal hull. Linda is playing the role of Noblara, the former ruler of a kingdom that has been conquered by Nekrottus.

Earlier in this episode, Nekrottus used a magical artifact known as the Amulet of Decay to destroy the crops of Haven... and the only way he'll restore them is if King Rastor finally surrenders to him. The King has sent Combato and Noblara to capture the relic and make the farmland productive again. They have approached the mountaintop castle, where the villain is keeping it. Now, they just have to figure out how to get inside!

Tony: As you ascend the mountain, you see the tall, spire-laden castle that juts from the peak. It's onyx in coloration and has irregularly placed windows, but only on the upper floors. A giant drawbridge dominates the front. The entire castle is surrounded by a moat filled with poorly animated lava.

Linda: Noblara says, "We've got to get that drawbridge down!"

Jay: Combato's mechanical voice pipes up. "That is easier said than done."

Linda: "I've got an idea."

Jay: "I'm all audio-sensors."

[everyone chuckles]

Tony: Audio-sensors. That's funny!

Linda: "I can use my Cloak of Shadowy Invisibility to vanish from sight while you draw their attention. When Nekrottus' minions lower the drawbridge

to come after you, I'll slip inside and retrieve the Amulet of Decay."

Jay: "That sounds like a good plan. Hopefully, I'll be able to hold up against his fiends long enough to buy you some time."

Linda: Okay, Noblara pulls up the hood of her cloak so she can go invisible.

Jay: Combato starts shooting his arm-mounted mini-guns at the castle while yelling, "Come and get me, you half-witted morons! I'm out here!" It's a good thing this is supposed to be an '80s cartoon, because there's no way this would work in any other setting. [laughs]

Tony: I know, right? Okay, make your check.

[dice are rolled]

Tony: [looking at the die roll] Against all logic, it actually works! The drawbridge drops and Nekrottus' minion known as Grumblor comes lunging out at Combato in a suitably bestial manner.

Linda: Not wasting any time, Noblara sneaks through the door and into the castle. Now to make my check to make sure nobody detects me.

[dice are rolled]





What You'll Need



Playing *Cartoon Action Hour* requires very little in the way of materials. Each participant will need a pencil, some scratch paper, and a bio-file (the latter can be found in the back of this book; feel free to photocopy it for your personal use). You should also bring along a few 12-sided dice, which can be found at any game or hobby store. Lastly, at least one person should have a copy of this rulebook on hand.

The group will also need something to represent Oomph (see page 43) and Setback Tokens (see page 40). You can find specially designed tokens in the back of this book (and at www.spectrum-games.com) that can be used.

Alternatively, you can use glass tokens, beads, poker chips, coins or anything else you have at hand.

Tony: The guard just inside the door begins to notice your footprints on the floor, but he's interrupted by Nekrottus' voice over the intercom system, ordering him to raise the drawbridge. You got lucky! Once inside, you see that you're in a large chamber with several wooden doors. A large, wide staircase leads to the upper floors.

Linda: Noblara carefully heads up the stairs.

Tony: Meanwhile, outside the castle – Grumbler is savagely lunging at Combato. Given that Grumbler is coming from so far away, I'll let Combato act first.

Jay: Awesome! Combato is going to leapfrog him using a quick burst from his jetpack. That way he'll go right underneath Combato.

[dice are rolled]

Tony: Holy crap! That was a good roll! Grumbler charges at Combato, but the heroic robot briefly takes to the air, ending with the villain going underneath him and careening headfirst into a large boulder. That had to hurt!

Tony: Back inside the castle...

The narrative continues back and forth, forging a cool story... just like the ones in the retro-toons of the 1980s! As you can see from the example above, roleplaying games are truly cooperative in nature. If nobody cooperates, the game session can (and will) quickly degenerate into a frustrating exercise in chaos. But as long as everyone cooperates, great fun can be had by all.

Kargorr: I hate Tony.

Bravesteel: I know I'm going to regret this, but I'll bite. Why exactly do you hate Tony?

Kargorr: Since you want to know so bad, I'll tell you. It's because he's a pantywaisted milksop! For example, he should never have let Combato go first! It should have been Grumbler who went first!

Bravesteel: Why did I even ask?



Recommended Viewing



There was no shortage of fantastic action-adventure cartoons during the '80s. Some would even say that there was a glut that eventually led to the near-demise of the genre. Rather than create a laundry list of all the retro-toons, we have chosen a gaggle of series that we feel all *Cartoon Action Hour* fans should see.

Blackstar

Filmation, 1981-82

After being sucked into a black hole, astronaut John Blackstar landed on Sagar, a planet ruled by the despot known as the Overlord of the Underworld. Along with a race of cute Hobbit-esque little people, a sorceress named Mara, and a shape-shifter named Klone, Blackstar battled Overlord and his minions, hoping to restore freedom to the planet!

Our Take: The show was an early example of the kinds of cartoons that would soon come to dominate the television landscape. As an interesting side note, John Blackstar was originally supposed to be an African American. Apparently, this was just too racy for the conservative television execs, so plans were changed.

Bravestarr

Filmation, 1987-88

A sci-fi western cartoon set in the 24th century, on a distant planet known as New Texas. The stories revolved around a tough lawman, Marshal Bravestarr, and his battle to rid the territory of lawlessness. Most of this lawlessness was provided by a nasty hombre called Tex Hex who led the Carrion Bunch, an outlaw gang with shady benefactors.

Our Take: This show ruffled a few conservative feathers at the time, as its main protagonist was from an ethnic background (American Indian). In any case, this series masterfully blended two genres together. Sci-fi westerns aren't very easy to pull off, but the Bravestarr crew did just that.

C.O.P.S.

DIC / Claster, 1988-89

Empire City was a metropolis rotting from the rampant crime. The most notorious crime lord was the Big Boss, who sounded exactly like Edward G. Robinson, but had a vicious streak a mile long. Of course, what series would be complete without a gaggle of good guys to put a stop to the villains' wrongdoings? Enter the Central Organization of Police Specialists (a.k.a., C.O.P.S.), lead by "Bulletproof" Vess. The protagonists each had their own specialty and an appropriate name to match.

Our Take: C.O.P.S. was "cyber" before that sort of thing really came into fashion. It had a really nice "feel" unlike any other cartoon I've ever seen – a really cool blend of sci-fi and police action.

Centurions

Ruby-Spears / Worldvision, 1986

From Yesterdayland.com: "Inspired by her heroic father, Crystal Kane gathered together a band of computer-generated specialists to battle the megalomaniacal Dr. Terror, his sidekick Hacker, and his army of Doom Drones. Kane's squad consisted of Jake Rockwell, Ace McCloud, Max Ray, Rex Charger, and John Thunder. The team also had a pair of animal mascots, Shadow the dog and Lucy the orangutan."

Our Take: The thing that always stood out in my mind about the Centurions was the incredible action sequences.

Challenge of the GoBots

Hanna-Barbara, 1984-86

It's a classic story of good robot protectors gone bad and then trying to take over the world (in this case, Gobotron). Lead by the maniacal Cy-Kill, the Renegades wrecked havoc episode after episode. And only the noble Guardians, led by Leader-1, could stop them!

Our Take: The GoBots hit the screen and toy isles at more or less the same time the Transformers did. While not a terribly bad cartoon, the GoBots simply couldn't survive the uber-popularity of their rivals. The world just wasn't big enough for two lines of transforming robots.

Dino-Riders

Marvel / New World / Orion, 1988

Valoria was a resource-rich, peace loving planet where the natives could speak telepathically. Without warning, a race of reptilian conquerors called the Rulons invaded! A small band of Valorians, headed up by Questar, escaped their wrath and traveled back in time... to an age where dinosaurs ruled Valoria. But, the Rulons, led by Krulos, weren't far behind. The Valorians were able to communicate with the dinosaurs, who agreed to help them out. Not to be outdone, the evil lizardmen used mind control to force other dinosaurs to help them take care of their enemies once and for all!

Our Take: This series had a rather slick premise with good plot twists and interesting characterization. Plus, the Rulons were just cool!

Dinosaucers

DIC / Michael Maliani Productions, 1987-88

From Yesterdayland.com: "After centuries of dino-wars, Reptilon was near destruction, so the Dinosaucers and Tyrannos moved their battle to a new orb: Earth. Like any good alien species, the Dinosaucers immediately made friends with a few

young earthlings. Paul, Sara, David, and Ryan were each given powerful rings by their new outer space buddies, and the teens joined the fight against evil as the "Secret Scouts." And for comic relief, the show also included a race of friendly, fuzzy round fellows called Furballs, to whom the Tyrannos were allergic."

Our Take: The Dinosaucers was pretty much a cookie-cutter show fare here that relied heavily on the "if you add dinosaurs, kids will automatically love it" school of thought. The idea of the characters being able to transform into the forms of their more primitive ancestors was a rather nifty touch though. And the theme song is infectious!

Dungeons and Dragons

Marvel Productions / TSR Entertainment, 1983-85

When an amusement park ride goes nutty, a group of kids riding it find themselves in an entirely different world: a fantastic realm of knights, monsters and wizardry. Each of the kids is given a magical item or weapon by a kindly, diminutive sage with a habit of vanishing inexplicably at inopportune times. The heroes roam the land in search of a way back, while facing numerous threats and hazards, chief among them an evil wizard named Venger.

Our Take: When it comes to fantasy retro-toons without sci-fi elements, this is the one that people instantly think of. It was consistently written, nicely animated and boasted a wide variety of adventures. It has very little in common with its namesake roleplaying game (aside from creatures and such), but it stands on its own merits nonetheless.

G.I. Joe

Marvel / Sunbow / Claster, 1983-87

It's G.I. Joe against Cobra in this archetypal cartoon of paramilitary action! G.I. Joe is a top-secret military strike force, comprised of the best specialists the U.S. of A. has to offer. They

fight for freedom in all the world's hot spots, opposed by Cobra Commander (who was later overshadowed by Serpentor) and his villainous terrorist organization.

Our Take: This archetypal series has a great deal to offer on many levels. The animation and characterization were excellent and the show maintained a team-based approach at all times, while sometimes putting the spotlight on a different member.

He-Man and the Masters of the Universe

Filmation, 1983-85

Handsome but mild-mannered Prince Adam and his cowardly green and yellow tiger, Cringer, wielded the power to morph into the heroic protectors of Eternia, He-Man and Battle Cat. Along with their allies, Man-at-Arms, Teela, Orko, Ram Man and a few others, He-Man and Battle Cat protected Castle Grayskull from the vilest of cretins... Skeletor, who was aided by his own minions such as Beast Man, Mer-Man and Evil-Lyn!

Our Take: In many ways, Masters of the Universe is the retro-toon by which all others are measured. It had a wonderful cast of characters and some truly entertaining stories. Skeletor will always be one of the all-time greatest cartoon villains.

The Inhumanoids

Marvel / Claster / LBS, 1986

A scientific group known as Earth Corps made a huge mistake when they started exploring beneath the earth's crust using huge exo-suits. Much to their own chagrin, these humans accidentally released a trio of elemental terrors called the Inhumanoids, who were imprisoned long ago by three other elemental groups collectively known as the Mutores. Now, Earth Corps must team up with the Mutores to imprison the Inhumanoids once more!

Our Take: A lot darker than many other cartoons, the Inhumanoids is highly under-appreciated and undeservedly so. This was a great example of what could be done with an animated action adventure cartoon in the 1980s and artistically introduced numerous elements of horror to the mix.

Jayce and the Wheeled Warriors

DIC, 1985-87

Jayce's father had invented a magic root that could feed everyone in the world. Unfortunately, the twisted Sawboss interfered and kidnapped him, along with one half of the root. Sawboss used the root to create a race of plant-like creatures called the Monster Minds. Jayce, who possessed the other half of the root, found some allies (Herc, Gillian, Oon, Flora, and Brock) and headed off to find and rescue his father. If the two parts of the root could be reunited, peace would be restored. And let's not forget about all the awesome vehicles they all piloted!

Our Take: This series was written by none other than J. Michael Straczynski of Babylon 5 fame. Possibly the most complex and involved storyline ever displayed in action cartoons of the era. It must also be noted that it felt less like a toy tie-in than many cartoons; in fact, much of the stuff from the toy line was discarded entirely for the show.

Jem

Sunbow / Wildstar / Wildfire / Claster, 1985-87

An action cartoon with girl appeal, this series centered on Jerrica Benton, who could transform into the rock star, Jem. How could she do this, you ask? Her late father invented a high-tech computer called Synergy, which could create very realistic holograms for use with Jerrica's videos (she was CEO of a lucrative record company). So, using Synergy's abilities, she turned herself and three others into Jem and the Holograms! Of course, there were the evil girl rockers, the Misfits, who gave Jem and company a hard time at every turn.

Our Take: Jem was always entertaining, despite some outwardly silly music videos that appeared throughout each episode. It was the perfect hybrid of Madonna, Barbie, and more traditional action cartoons. Believe us, however, when we say that you'll find yourself angrily shaking your fist in the air at Kimber's behavior throughout the series.

MASK
DIC, 1985-86

Cashing in on the transformable vehicle craze of the mid-1980s, this series introduced a fresh variant... vehicles that changed into other vehicles, with a bung load of weaponry added in for good measure. The show was about the conflict between Mobile Armored Strike Kommand (MASK) and the Vicious Evil Network of Mayhem (VENOM). Furthermore, each character had their own high-tech helmet that granted them a super power.

Our Take: MA-MA-MA-MASK! The earlier episodes were remarkable, for the most part. It may have been yet another gimmick series, but don't let that fool you – there's some really incredible stuff to be found here. Until the second season, that is. That's when the show took on a lame racing theme, which I believe, shortened its lifespan significantly.

Pole Position
DIC, 1984-86

Three orphans continue their family business, a stunt car show. These aren't ordinary cars, mind you, but sentient cars, called Roadie and Wheels. To make things even more exciting, the kids also battled crime for a top-secret government agency.

Our Take: A fairly obscure cartoon, Pole Position far surpassed the quality of the video game it was based on, which isn't a terribly difficult task, to be honest.

Sectaurs
Ruby-Spears, 1985

On the utopian planet of Symbion, genetic experiments began to go terribly awry, transforming the world into "an exotic realm beyond belief." It was a world where insects mutated into large beasts and the citizens took on insect-like characteristics. A new race emerged... the Sectaurs. Riding atop these gigantic creatures, Prince Dargon from the Shing Realm and his allies lead the fight against the evil forces of General Sydrax and his Terror Troops.

Our Take: This five-episode mini-series has largely been forgotten, which truly is a shame. Although the premise is standard retro-toon fare, its skillful execution made it stand out from its peers. Plus, it has warriors riding mutant bugs! Come on! I mean what's cooler than that?

She-Ra: Princess of Power
Filmation, 1985-86

Adora (a.k.a. She-Ra) was the sister of He-Man, who was already a well-established action cartoon/toy superstar. This series took place on the world of Etheria, most of which has been conquered by the nefarious Hordak. A small rebellion was set into motion, headed up by She-Ra, who previously worked as Hordak's right hand gal... until she had seen how cruel and unjust he was. Much like Masters of the Universe, Princess of Power featured an array of unusual villains... in this case, Catra, Scorpia, Leech, and Mantenna, as well as a host of heroic protagonists like Bow, Queen Angella, and Glimmer.

Our Take: Probably the best attempt to combine elements that appeal to both genders in a cartoon. Only Jem could even come close. If you like He-Man, you'll likely enjoy She-Ra as well, as they have extremely similar tones.

SilverHawks
Rankin-Bass / Lorimar-Telepictures, 1986

A band of heroes are given metal bodies and wings, and they set forth to thwart Mon*Star, an alien crime boss. Mon*Star, too, has been altered, fitted with a gargantuan metallic body. The protagonists are led by the very capable Jonathan Quick, now known as Quicksilver, and his metal bird TallyHawk.

Our Take: A very good series, though it featured possibly the most annoying character to plague cartoons, Bluegrass. In case you're wondering, Bluegrass is a cowboy hat-wearing, sonic guitar-picking individual who blatantly stuck out like a sore thumb. Cowboy hats and metal bodies don't mix so well.

Spiral Zone
Atlantic-Kushner-Locke, 1987

A renegade military scientist named Dr. James Bent hijacks a space shuttle to deploy his Zone Generators across half of the earth. Millions of people are caught in the dark mists and become "zoners", zombie-like drones that Bent – now calling himself Overlord – can control from his headquarters in the Chrysler Building. Desperate, the world's nations unite to combat a common threat. The result is a team of five highly trained soldiers who wear high-tech suits that protect them from the effects of the mist-covered portions of the world known as the Spiral Zone.

Our Take: Spiral Zone was clearly aimed at older kids, as evidenced by a very detailed and complex backstory and setting (our synopsis barely scratches the surface). The tone is also much darker than most other cartoons of the era. It was an excellent series that has, sadly, been overlooked by the masses and is now largely forgotten.

Thundarr the Barbarian
Ruby-Spears, 1980-82

One part Conan, one part Star Wars, and one part Mad Max! According to the show's back-story, in 1994, a runaway planet hurtled between the Earth and the moon, dealing out "cosmic destruction". Two thousand years later, the Earth has been transformed into a far more dangerous place, full of sorcerers, mutants, and robots! Thundarr, a hot-tempered barbarian, escaped slavery with the aid of a beautiful magic user named Ariel and a foul-tempered, strong humanoid named Ookla. Now, they travel the deadly country-side, fighting injustice wherever it raises its head.

Our Take: Thundarr is a phenomenal cartoon! The writing was great, the characters (designed by two legends, Alex Toth and Jack "King" Kirby) were interesting and it had atmosphere galore! The setting itself was unbelievable, as we were treated to seeing various remains of landmarks and locales.

ThunderCats
Rankin-Bass / Lorimar-Telepictures, 1985-87

After their planet's destruction, a group of feline aliens escape and land on Third Earth. Unfortunately, the evil Mutants followed them! But more importantly, the ThunderCats attracted the attention of a black-hearted demon-like entity, Mumm-Ra, who sought to take the Eye of Thundera from our heroes. Fortunately, their Leader, Lion-O, had the Sword of Omens and a slew of allies to assist him in protecting the source of their power.

Our Take: One of the more prolific cartoons of the 80's to be sure. The true strength here was the characterization. Each character came across really well, which made the show instantly more enjoyable. Well, except Snarf.

Transformers

Sunbow / Hasbro / Marvel, 1984-87
“Many millions of years ago, on the planet Cybertron, life existed, but not life as we know it today...” With these words in 1984, a new story was born; a story of alien sentient robots from a distant planet battling in an ancient war on the planet Earth. These breeds of robots – Autobots and Decepticons – became known collectively as the Transformers. The Autobot leader, Optimus Prime, fought to keep the Earth’s energy resources away from the Decepticon leader, Megatron.

Our Take: This was a truly pivotal series for cartoon fans! In my mind, robots were never this believable, especially in terms of personality. The 1986 theatrically-released animated movie was also a true work of art, signaling a major shift in direction of the series that remains controversial among fans to this day.

Visionaries

Marvel / Sunbow / Hasbro / Claster, 1987
The planet of Prysmos is tossed back into a dark age following a cosmic calamity. Magic ruled the day and two factions were destined to collide: the noble Spectral Knights and the evil Darkling Lords. Merkllynn gathered them together to bring about peace to a world gone to hell. The ones who passed his rigorous tests would be able to transform themselves into an animal that bore their specific traits. Several of them were also given holographic staves that held great power and were used by repeating a rhymed mantra.

Our Take: Definitely not typical kiddie stuff. The animation was jaw dropping and the stories were top-notch, often mixing involved action with a bit of wry humor. It’s baffling that this series didn’t last longer than it did. Perhaps it was simply too far ahead of its time.

Voltron: Defender of the Universe

World Events Productions / Toei Animation, 1984-85
Comprised of material from two different Japanese shows (*Beast King GoLion* and *Armored Fleet Dairugger XV*, to be exact), this series focused on a team of galactic explorers known as the Voltron Force, who clash with the evil King Zarkon and the forces of Planet Doom while piloting robotic lions that can merge together to create a colossal robot.

Our Take: Voltron is the definitive “gestalt” cartoon. Despite some shaky stories (likely resulting from being created from two different shows), Voltron never fails to deliver high-octane action.

Channel Guide

So, what lies ahead for you in this book, bold adventurer? Forge ahead and learn about what each channel holds.

Channel 1: Introduction

Given that you just finished reading this channel, you probably don’t need a summary of it.

Channel 2: Game System

Channel 2 is all about the game system. If you read through it, you’ll know how to play *Cartoon Action Hour*. We explain what defines a character and how to make your character do stuff – fun stuff like battling evil and saving the universe! We also discuss how to spend Oomph and how action scenes work. And that’s just a tip of the iceberg.

Channel 3: The Series

Everything in *Cartoon Action Hour* revolves around the series in which you’re playing. While you can grab one of the existing series seeds and jump right in, you can also create your own series from scratch. This channel tells you how to do that. The process also includes creating the show’s cast – that is, the characters!

Channel 4: The Players

This short but important channel presents a lot of sound advice for players, especially when it comes to getting into the spirit of the retro-toon genre. No player should skip out on this!

Channel 5: The Game Master

Just as the players get their own channel, so does the Game Master. This channel has tips for running the game and creating episodes for

the players to enjoy... all with an emphasis on replicating the feel of the source material!

Appendix

This section contains a series sheet and a bio-file for characters and game stats for various monsters, vehicles, weapons, and items.

Personal Pronouns

In order to avoid awkward phrasings like “he/she” or “his/hers”, we opted to write the rulebook using male pronouns for players and female pronouns for the Game Master.



CHANNEL 2 THE GAME SYSTEM

As explained on the previous channel, much of what happens in *Cartoon Action Hour* is driven by narration and good old-fashion common sense. That's what separates RPGs from other types of games. However, there are times in which the rules should come into play in order to heighten the excitement of the story's various scenes. On this channel, we'll teach you everything you need to know in order to play the game.

★ ★ ★ Foundations of the Game ★ ★ ★

There are some important concepts that must be understood before treading further into this section. They were mentioned briefly in Channel 1, but we'll go into more detail here.

The Series

A series in *Cartoon Action Hour* is just like a retro-toon series, in that it has its own concept, back story, setting and cast of characters (both heroic and villainous). You and your group can create your own series in which to play or you can use a series published by Spectrum Games. Either way, the series is analogous to a campaign in other roleplaying games.

Episodes and Scenes

Just as with the cartoon series of old (and new ones as well, for that matter), a series in *Cartoon Action Hour* is divided up into separate episodes. For the most part, a single episode tells one full story, though multi-episode storylines aren't uncommon.

An episode is comprised of any number of scenes. A scene is best defined as a situation that occurs in one place, though some scenes – such as chase sequences – can span multiple locations. The most common example of a scene would be a fight between the heroes and the villains.

It's entirely possible for several scenes to be happening at one time. In such cases, the GM would have to periodically cut back and forth between the different scenes until they are concluded.

Seasons

While a season of a network retro-toon series averaged 12 or 13 episodes and a season of a syndicated retro-toon series leaned toward 65, a season in *Cartoon Action Hour* is 6 episodes. After each season, characters can be improved or changed altogether.

Types of Characters

There are two main types of characters in *Cartoon Action Hour*.

Player Characters (PCs)

Player Characters are the stars of the series and are controlled by (as their name implies) the players. Generally speaking, each player controls one PC.

Game Master Characters (GMCs)

Any character in the game world not controlled by the players is known as a Game Master Character. Guess who controls them. That's correct – the Game Master. Huge shocker there!

GMCs are sometimes referred to as either *Ally GMCs* or *Enemy GMCs*. Ally GMCs are on the same side as the PCs – teammates, friends, relatives, etc. Enemy GMCs, on the other hand, are against the PCs.

Understanding Characters

Characters are defined, in game terms, by their stats; this goes for both PCs and GMCs alike. These stats are recorded on a bio-file, which can be found on pages 182 and 183. If you were to look at a bio-file right now, you'd likely be a bit confused as to what it all means. So, let's go about fixing it so that you'll know what you're looking at.

Traits and Trait Ratings

Traits are the most important stats in the game. They illustrate what your character can do and how well he can do it.

Traits

Each Trait represents a skill, ability, knack, talent, power, resource, companion, weapon, vehicle or alternate form the character has at his disposal. There is no definitive list of Traits in the game. Instead, you make up your own. We'll get more into that on Channel 3. We'll give you a few typical Traits, just to give you a feel for what they are: MOVES LIKE LIGHTNING, HOTSHOT PILOT, PERCEPTIVE, ARM-MOUNTED CANNON, FEATHERED WINGS, etc.

The game system doesn't concern itself with things the character is average or poor at. Therefore, if a character's Traits don't cover a certain area of training, ability or skill, it can be assumed that the character is average at it.

Traits are always written in capital letters for easy distinction.

Trait Ratings

Every Trait has an associated rating that measures exactly how effective it is. The higher the rating, the more potent it is. Ratings are broken down into three Tiers.

- **Human Tier (ratings 1-4):** As the name suggests, a Trait with a Human Tier rating is within the realm of normal human achievement or capability.

- **Superhuman Tier (ratings 5-8):** This Tier is reserved for Traits that go beyond human potential.

- **Cosmic Tier (ratings 9 and up):** Beyond even what superhumans can achieve!

Special Rules

In many cases, Traits are straightforward and require nothing except a rating to make it function the way you want them to. In other cases, however, you may need to define a Trait a little more. That's where Special Rules come into play.

Special Rules modify how a Trait works in the game. You can find the list of common Special Rules on pages 104 – 111.

Qualities

Every character has at least three Qualities that can either help or hinder them. We'll discuss how they work a bit later in this section. There are two types of Qualities, both of which are explained below.

Signature Quality

The first Quality listed on the character's bio-file is the character's Signature Quality. It always has two boxes beside it. The Signature Quality is essentially the character's tagline or descriptor; something that you might see beneath his name on the action figure package ("Master of Weapons," "Laser Trooper," "Evil Henchman," "Mighty Warrior," etc.).

Standard Qualities

The other Qualities are the character's Standard Qualities. They always have one box beside them. Standard Qualities tend to be narrower in scope than the Signature Quality and focus on aspects of the character's personality, background, quirks and so forth.

Star Power

In the retro-toons, there was always a very distinct hierarchy when it came to characters. Rank and file goons seldom stood much of a chance against primary heroes, nor did they receive the same breaks that more important characters did.

In the game, each character has a Star Power score (ranging from 1 to 4) that reflects his place in the pecking order.

Star Power 1 (Goons): Characters with Star Power 1 are the lowest on the proverbial totem pole. In fact, they're so low that they don't represent a specific character – they represent small groups of a given character type. For heroes, they are the nameless allies that fill out the ranks of the forces of good (greenshirt soldiers, the kingdom's guards, etc.). For villains, they are much the same – nameless mooks, evil robots, creature minions, etc. Goons have additional rules, found in their own section later in this document.

Star Power 2 (Supporting Characters): Characters with Star Power 2 represent the bulk of the heroes and villains found in the retro-toons. For heroes, they are the standard allies of the PCs; their teammates and comrades. For villains, they are usually the main henchmen of the master villain.

Star Power 3 (Action Stars): Characters with Star Power 3 are focal points of the series; they are characters with a lot of screen time and often have the spotlight shining on them. For heroes, they are the PCs; the primary characters of the show. For villains, they are the lieutenants and

generals of the series' master villain; the ones he depends on to carry out important tasks.

Star Power 4 (Icons): Characters with Star Power 4 are the bigshot movers-and-shakers of the series, often held with reverence (or fear) by the rest of the setting's denizens. Heroes almost never have Star Power 4, unless the series has only one central protagonist. For villains, only the master villain has Star Power 4.

Star Power affects numerous things in the game, as we'll discuss later.

Oomph

Oomph is a pool of points that can be spent to help your character out when things get prickly... which is a common occurrence in the retro-toons. GMCs do not have Oomph of their own. They rely on a pool of Oomph awarded to the GM on a per-scene basis.

This section of the bio-file is divided up into three sub-sections, as described below.

Base Oomph: This is the amount of Oomph the character begins each episode with.

Current Oomph: This is where you keep track of the amount of Oomph your character has during an episode. When you spend it, make note of the remaining Oomph here.

Proofs of Purchase

When a character has unspent Oomph at the end of an episode, it's recorded here and can be spent to improve your character between seasons.

Checks

Here's a challenge for you. Name an episode of any retro-toon series that doesn't contain characters attempting risky or daring feats. Go ahead. We dare you. Before rack your brain (or scour the Internet), please allow us to save you the trouble by declaring that such episodes simply don't exist. Every episode of every cartoon of the 1980s is rife with heroes and villains performing actions in which success or failure will carry great narrative weight within context of the story. Games of *Cartoon Action Hour* should be no different.

Whenever the GM feels that the outcome of an action or situation would be made more interesting by adding a random element, he can require a check. A check is simply a roll that must be made to determine success or failure.

Making Checks

To make a check, roll a d12 and add the most appropriate Trait rating to it. If the result is equal to or higher than the Difficulty Number (or DN), the character's action is successful. How is the DN determined? It depends on what kind of check it is:

Opposed Checks

When the action is directly contested by another character, the contesting character chooses an appropriate Trait and makes a check with it. The result is the DN for the acting character. Alternatively, the GM can just add 6 to the Trait rating to get the DN.

EXAMPLE: My character is attempting to push open a door that's being held shut by a GMC named Mekanikus. The GM rolls a die and gets a 9, adding Mekanikus' ROBOT STRENGTH 5 to it, for a total DN of 14. That's a formidable DN, to say the

least! Sweating bullets, I roll a die and end up with a paltry 4. Adding my character's ABLE-BODIED 3 to the roll, my total result is 7, which isn't equal to or higher than the DN of 14. Thus, my character valiantly struggles to force the door open, but falls short in the end.

Normal Checks

When the action isn't directly against another character (jumping over a chasm, lifting a boulder, etc.), the GM chooses an appropriate base difficulty number and adds it to the roll of a die to determine the DN. Alternatively, the GM can just add 6 to the base difficulty number to get the DN.

Base Difficulty:	Description:
0	Moderate
2	Challenging
4	Hard
6	Very Hard
8	Extremely Hard
10	Nearly Impossible
12	Beyond Comprehension

EXAMPLE: I decide that my character is going to leap from the rooftop onto the escaping villain's personal helicopter. The GM figures that the action is rather tough to pull off, so she goes with a base difficulty number of 4. She rolls the die and gets a 7. Adding the base difficulty of 4 to it, the final DN is 11. You roll a die and come up with a 6. After adding your character's AUGMENTED AGILITY 6, your final result is 12. Since it is equal to or higher than the DN, your character bounds into the air and lands on the helicopter's landing gear, ready to thwart the bad guy!

Who Rolls First?

It has been established that the reacting character establishes the DN in an opposed check. Similarly, the GM establishes the DN for a normal check. Does this mean that the individual who sets the DN has to roll first so that the DN is established first?

That's the default way to do it, yes. However, if everyone agrees, all parties can roll simultaneously or the acting player can even roll first. Some of the dynamics may change as a result, but it won't "break" the game.

GMCs and Checks

In most cases, it's perfectly acceptable to forego rolling checks for GMCs. Just do what's best for the story! This is especially true for opposed checks against other GMCs or normal checks. This speeds up game play and ensures that an unimportant die roll doesn't jeopardize the drama of the episode. In general, you should consider only rolling for GMCs for crucial checks and when you think it's a dramatically important moment. In short, it's your call!

Other Important Factors

We've already covered the basics of how to make checks in *Cartoon Action Hour*, but there are still some wrinkles that add some variety and depth to the process.

Standard Qualities

If one of the character's Standard Qualities might prove helpful while making a check, mark off the box by it, describe how it factors in and add 2 to the check result. This must be declared before the check is made. The GM has the right to nix the idea if he doesn't feel the Standard Quality would impact the check.

Used Standard Qualities are replenished between episodes.

EXAMPLE: Uh oh! My character stumbles across a couple of guards while attempting to sneak into the engine room of a large spaceship. After weighing my options, I decide to create a diversion and slip past them while they check it out. The idea is to use INFILTRATION EXPERT 4 for the check, but I also check off the "Deceptive" Quality to add 2 to the check result. The die rolls a 7, which generates a total result of 13 (7 + 4 + 2).

Benefit Dice

There may be times in which you get to roll additional dice and use the highest-rolling one to use for your result. These extra dice are called "Benefit Dice" and you can never roll more than 2 of them (i.e., 1 regular die plus 2 Benefit Dice). Furthermore, you can't roll Benefit Dice after the check has been made. The following situations allow you to roll Benefit Dice:

- When using a Trait that has the "Action Feature" Special Rule, you gain a Benefit Die for the check, but only once per scene.
- If the character's Signature Quality would logically be of assistance to the character

making the check, you can mark off one or both of the Signature Quality's boxes to gain one or two Benefit Dice, respectively. Used boxes are replenished between episodes.

EXAMPLE: While using MENTAL BLAST 5, I opt to check off one of the boxes beside my character's "Psionic Warrior" Signature Quality in order to gain a Benefit Die. I roll the regular die and the Benefit Die, netting a 3 and a 7. Obviously, the 7 is the optimal choice here, so I use it as my check roll, giving me a result of 12.

- When your character is in a vehicle (or is a transforming character in "vehicle" form) and is engaged in an opposed speed-based check against a non-vehicle character that doesn't have a speed-based Trait with a rating of 5+, you gain a Benefit Die.

EXAMPLE: My character is on a motorcycle and is being pursued by a GMC on foot. The GMC has CAPABLE ATHLETE 3. Since the GMC's relevant Trait isn't 5 or higher (which would have equated to super speed), I get to roll a Benefit Die for the check.

Linking

Normally, only one Trait can be used for any given check. However, there are some situations in which one other Trait could factor into the equation. This is called *linking*. To link Traits for a check, follow the procedure below:

Step 1: Determine which Trait will be the *primary Trait*. This is generally the most pertinent Trait to the task at hand. If the character's Trait with the "Action Feature" Special Rule is involved, it is always the primary Trait. The primary Trait uses its full rating and all of its Special Rules.

Step 2: The remaining linked Trait is considered the *secondary Trait*. The secondary Trait will add to the primary Trait's rating based on the Tier it (i.e., the secondary Trait) belongs to: Human +1,



Zero-Rating Traits?



As you have certainly noticed earlier, the chart of the Trait Ratings starts at 1 and continues from there. So what about being mediocre at stuff, or even bad, or an absolute beginner?

Unlike many RPGs, *Cartoon Action Hour* does not use ratings for "average" or "below average" competence, strength, smarts, knowledge, and so on. It just doesn't concern itself with things that characters may not be good – or simply average – at. It's all about cartoon heroes and cartoon heroes have to rock at what they're doing! You've never heard about a cartoon hero only doing an average or so-so job, have you? We're pretty certain you haven't.

A character with a Rating of only 1 or 2 in a Trait may initially seem on the weak side, but is actually quite good. In fact, all PCs and major GMCs are good at several things. If one of the character's Traits doesn't cover the task at hand, you can (in most cases) default to a rating of 0.

Even a zero rating can be meaningful. The more precise definition for a Trait at 0 would be "untrained". It is considered "average" or "untrained". All PCs can attempt actions and even crucial checks (see page 40) with a Trait that is technically 0. Remember that with rolling a Boon (natural 12), plus "Give It Your All!" and maybe a bonus from a Standard Quality, even a roll with such a "zero Trait" may achieve a fantastic result after all.

Of course, there are things that simply cannot be tried untrained, without knowledge or preparation. No matter how hard a character may try, he's not going to teleport across town unless he has the appropriate Trait that allows him to do so. Conversely, he might very well be able to persuade someone to do something, even if he has no appropriate Traits. Ultimately, it all comes down to common sense.

Here are some sample actions that should be possible for a character to try, even if he doesn't possess an applicable Trait: running, dodging, searching a place, using your normal senses for perception, applying logic, operating a simple machine, handling a simple mechanism, lifting something heavy, swimming, maybe even riding or boating (if those things are widespread in the setting or tied to a character's background, like "Nature Boy" or "Grew Up in the Wilderness"), a basic familiarity with computers or even jetpacks (again, if the setting justifies that!).

Here's how you deal with a check using a Trait your character technically has no rating in:

- You just roll a single d12, add nothing, and see if you make it.
- You can still declare you are adding "Give It Your All!" to a check with a zero Trait.
- You can also apply the +2 bonus from any Standard Quality to it, but must declare that you are doing so before rolling, as with every beneficial usage of a Standard Quality.

Note: You cannot have an Action Feature with a rating of 0. You also cannot imitate or copy another character's Action Feature or any similar signature powers and abilities.

Superhuman +3, Cosmic +5. The secondary Trait's Special Rules are disregarded for this check, unless they are adverse. Adverse Special Rules affect the effectiveness of both Traits. For example, if either Trait has the "Fickle" Special Rule (see page 107) and the Fickle roll fails, neither Trait can be used for the check.

EXAMPLE: My character desperately needs to diffuse a bomb. Luckily, he has DEMOLITIONS EXPERT 4 to rely on. He also has STEADY HANDS 2, which would assuredly play into his ability to pull this task off. Given that knowing how to disarm the bomb is probably more crucial than steady hands, I'll use DEMOLITIONS EXPERT 4 as the primary Trait and STEADY HANDS 2 as the secondary Trait. The latter is a Human Tier Trait, so it grants a +1 bonus to the check result. I roll the die, getting a 5. Adding the full 4 from DEMOLITIONS EXPERT and the +1 from STEADY HANDS, the check result is 10.

Teamwork

In the cartoons of yore, we were treated to numerous moral lessons about helping a friend in need, cooperating with your teammates and relying on one another to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. It would therefore be completely at odds with the source material if we were to ignore these lessons in the game.

In game terms, one character can lend another character a hand. This must be declared before the check is actually made. If this takes place during an action scene, the assisting character loses its next turn. This grants the character making the check a bonus to the check result and is treated just like linking, with the assisting character's Trait being treated as the secondary Trait.

A couple of things need to be stated up front, however. Let's take a look.

- The assisting character cannot link together its own Traits and then use that total to assist

another character. For example, if I wanted to help out my ally, I could not link my character's FAST REFLEXES 8 (primary Trait) and SUPERLEAPING 6 (secondary Trait; Superhuman Tier) to add a total of 11 to the other character's check result. Instead, I would have to choose one Trait or the other, which would be +3 either way in this instance.

- The character making the check can link its primary Trait to its own secondary Trait before adding the bonus from the assisting character's Trait. So, for example, I could link my character's STRONG 4 (primary Trait) to METAL SHOULDER PADS 1 (secondary Trait; Human Tier) before adding in the assisting character's STOUT 3 (secondary Trait; Human Tier). Altogether, this would add 6 to the die roll for the check.

Flubs

If you roll a natural 1 (i.e., the die actually lands on "1") while making a check, a flub occurs. The action automatically fails and you may not alter it using Oomph. In other words, you're stuck with it!

Furthermore, if the flub happens during an action scene, the character automatically gains a Setback Token. The person who flubbed gets to describe the flub – the character falls on his face, drops his weapon, gets hit by a counter-attack, becomes tangled up in some vines, etc.

Boons

If you roll a natural 12 (i.e., the die actually lands on "12") while making a check, a boon occurs. When this happens, double the character's Star Power score (see *Star Power*) and add it to the check's result.

Activation, Deactivation and Reactivation

In its normal state, a Trait is said to be *Activated*. Certain effects in the game can cause a Trait to be temporarily *Deactivated*. A Deactivated Trait cannot be used for any reason until it is *Reactivated*. The effect causing the Deactivation will specify how long it lasts.

Action Scenes

Anyone who has ever watched a retro-toon can tell you that action of some kind is never too far away. Whether it's a thrill-a-second chase, a sprawling battle between armies, a one-on-one fight, a race against time or some other segment of the story designed to get the viewer's adrenaline pumping, action scenes were plentiful. Not only were they plentiful, they were also vibrant, dynamic and fast-paced!

In *Cartoon Action Hour*, sequences of this nature are called action scenes. Whenever the excitement begins, the Game Master will announce that an action scene has begun.



Who Goes First?

When the GM announces an action scene, it should be determined which side acts first or second (or even third or fourth if more than two sides are involved). In many instances, the situation should make it obvious as to which side kicks things off. For example, if there's an ambush, the ambushers will usually act first.

When it's not obvious, the order is based on the individual characters' Star Power score, with the highest one going first, followed by the next highest and so forth.

In the case of a tie, heroes always go before villains. If more than one character on the same side has the same score, the players (for PCs) or the GM (for GMCs) decide the order between them.

Turns and Rounds

As soon as it's time for a character to act, the person playing that character decides what they want the character to do. When it becomes that character's chance to act, it's referred to as being his turn. As for how much the character can do during his turn, there's no exact time limit or anything of that nature. Rather, a turn should usually be limited to the character performing one check (usually a crucial check; see below) and possibly performing some other minor action (running, leaping, etc.).

The order in which the character does things is of no importance, thus he could, for example, make an attack and then leap to higher ground or leap to higher ground and then make an attack.

When all the characters involved in an action scene have taken a turn, the round is completed and a new one begins, generally using the same order.

Crucial Checks and Setback Tokens

When the success or failure of a check could cause a character to either receive or deal a Setback Token (see below), it is called a crucial check. Generally speaking, anything that could harm or hinder a character will be a crucial check, which means that most of the ones made during an action scene should qualify.

The following instances are examples of crucial checks:

- Attempting to attack another character
- Attempting to capture another character
- Attempting to pursue a fleeing character
- Attempting to outwit another character
- Attempting to confuse, frustrate or befuddle another character
- Attempting to traverse dangerous terrain (leaping from one vehicle to another, hopping from rock to rock, climbing a cliff, etc.)

Conversely, these instances probably shouldn't be crucial checks:

- Attempting to pick up an item
- Attempting to spot a hard-to-see object
- Attempting to push open a heavy door

How Crucial Checks Work

Read on to find out exactly how to carry out a crucial check.

Standard Crucial Checks

Some crucial checks are standard checks (leaping from one airship to another, bounding over a chasm, etc.), wherein failure means that the character making the check gains a Setback Token.

• For standard crucial checks, the character must make a standard check and if he fails, he gains a Setback Token.

Opposed Crucial Checks

Most crucial checks are opposed checks (attacks, attempts to outwit each other, chases, etc.), wherein one specific character gains a Setback Token if he fails. The *acting character* (i.e., the one whose turn it is) is attempting to force a Setback Token on the *reacting character* (i.e., the one he's attempting to give a Setback Token to).

• For opposed crucial checks, the characters must make an opposed check. If the acting character succeeds, the reacting character receives a Setback Token. If the reacting character succeeds, he doesn't gain a Setback Token.

EXAMPLE: I'm playing a PC named Valorus in an action scene against the GMC known as Sludge Lord. The GM states that Sludge Lord is attempting to nail my character with an OOZING PUNCH 4. I inform him that Valorus is going to dodge by using DEXTROUS 3. I roll a 7 and add DEXTROUS 3, for a total of 10. That is the DN that Sludge Lord is now facing. The GM rolls an 8 and adds OOZING PUNCH 4, for a total of 12, which is higher than my total DN of 10. Since I lost the check, Valorus gains a Setback Token.



Reacting

When making an opposed crucial check, the reacting character should be able to decide how he is going to respond to what the acting character is attempting to do. This will greatly affect which Trait he'll use.

Let's look at one of the most common crucial checks imaginable: the acting character punching the reacting character. The reacting character could do numerous things to avoid a Setback Token, including: block the attack, dodge the attack, brace yourself and suck it up, trick the acting character into making his attack hit someone else, grab the acting character's arm, etc.

About Setback Tokens

During action scenes, characters acquire Setback Tokens. Setback Tokens don't necessarily represent damage that the character has suffered (although that can certainly be the case as well). Rather, they can represent any type of impediment imaginable, from a character becoming subdued by vines to a character getting so flustered that he can't even see straight. Anything that sets a character back is worthy of resulting in a Setback Token; hence the name.

Whatever the case may be, each Setback Token gained by a character brings him one step closer to failure.

Individual Setback Tokens have no actual effect on the character. However, a character can only safely acquire a number of Setback tokens equal to his Star Power score. If he acquires more than that, he is Defeated (see Defeat below). So, for example, a character with Star Power of 3 will be Defeated when he acquires his fourth Setback Token.

Kargorr: Setback Tokens! Fooey! These designers should just call them Damage Tokens and be done with it!

Sarah: You're such a dummy, Kargorr. I've never watched the series you were in, but in my series, the action wasn't all about causing physical damage to enemies. The action sequences were more varied than that and could be finished without an ounce of pain.

Bravesteel: Very true, Sarah. The parent groups and censors kept the overt violence to a bare minimum, especially in the non-syndicated cartoons.

Defeat

Heroes always win, right? Well, not always. In fact, it was quite common for the heroes to come up short during confrontations with the villains. They often found themselves captured, trapped, or otherwise disposed of in a temporary fashion. That's what kept viewers on their toes, after all. More often, though, it was the dastardly antagonists who fell at the hands of the heroes, but there was always that sense of doubt.

In *Cartoon Action Hour*, when a character goes down for the count in any way, it's referred to simply as Defeat.

As mentioned earlier, gaining an amount of Setback Tokens higher than the character's Star Power score causes the character to be Defeated. A Defeated character no longer participates in the scene. The participant controlling the character who caused the Defeat can describe the Defeat however he wishes (within reason and the boundaries of good taste). If that participant is a player, he can opt to leave it up to the GM instead.

★ Ideas for Describing Defeat ★

- The attack targets loose boulders, which roll onto the character, trapping him.
- The attack knocks the character unconscious.
- The character becomes so flustered that he cannot contribute to the scene in any meaningful way.
- The attack flings the character into a wall, which crumbles on top of him.
- The attack cuts down a tree, which topples over onto the character.
- The character is tricked into thinking the enemy has gone elsewhere and thus follows the trail away from the location in which the scene is taking place.
- The attackers dog-pile the character, capturing him.
- The attack's impact causes the character to be sent back into vine-laden trees and he gets tangled up in them.
- The character being chased is caught by the pursuer.
- The attack forces the character to flee (villains only!).
- The attack sends the character over the edge of a cliff, delaying him long enough for the villain to get away.
- The attacker goads the character into moving onto a trap door that leads to a secret prison cell by way of a grav-tunnel.



Upon being Defeated, the character is unable to do anything at all until the scene is over. At that point, he can get back up; remove all Setback Tokens the character has accumulated. This is true even if the character has been captured and is now in enemy hands.



Kargorr: What manner of incompetence is this?! Setback Tokens don't carry over from one scene to the next?! This makes no sense whatsoever!



Bravesteel: Have you been away from Cartoon Land for so long that you've forgotten how things work there? While it's true that injuries and anguish last for extended periods of time here in the real world, but in Cartoon Land, heroes and villains tend to brush themselves off lickety-split.

Insta-Defeat

It is entirely possible for any character to be taken completely out of the scene with only one crucial check. In fact, it was a rather common occurrence in the retro-toons – the hero knocks the evil henchman out with a single punch, the villainous cretin ambushes the hero with a thump to the back of the head, one character ends the fight by stuffing a garbage can over the enemy's head and so forth.

This is emulated in the game rules with *Insta-Defeat*. A character is in danger of being Insta-Defeated any time he gains a Setback Token as the result of an opposed crucial check.

If the acting character succeeds in the check and his check result is higher than the reacting character's DN by an amount equal to or greater

than the reacting character's Star Power x2, he is Insta-Defeated. Thus, a character with Star Power 3 would be Insta-Defeated if the final DN is at least 6 higher than his DN.

An Insta-Defeated character is automatically Defeated (regardless of how many Setback Tokens he has accumulated) and can no longer participate in the scene.

★ Oomph ★

Oomph is an expendable resource that can be spent to bend the game rules in various ways, all of which are described in the "Spending Oomph" section below. You can utilize the Oomph counters found in the back of this book or you can employ the use of beads, coins or pieces of sugary sweet cereal.

It's important to note that only PCs have Oomph listed on their bio-files; GMCs instead draw upon a collective pool of Oomph available to the GM (see below).

Base Oomph

Each PC starts every episode with a number of Oomph equal to his Star Power score. The player can spend his character's Oomph as he sees fit (see below).

The GM doesn't have a constant pool of Oomph to draw upon. Instead, he receives an Oomph pool on a per-scene basis. The exact amount is equal to the number of PCs in the scene, plus the Star Power of the GMC with the highest Star Power present when the scene begins (excluding Goons; see page 47). The GM can spend the Oomph in his pool to benefit all non-Goon GMCs. The GM's Oomph pool dissipates entirely once the scene ends and doesn't carry over into the next scene.

Earning Oomph

More Oomph can be earned by both the players and the GM. Let's look at how this can be done.

How Players Do It

The following is a list of ways for players to earn Oomph for their PCs. Each method below will grant one point of Oomph.

- **Qualities:** When one of the PC's Qualities could be considered a hindrance, the player or GM can opt to make it impact the situation negatively. If no check is involved, then it should be roleplayed out and cause story-based complications. If a check is involved, the DN is increased by 2. Either way, using a Quality in this fashion does not require the player to mark off one of the Quality's boxes.

- **Genre Tropes:** When a player roleplays in accordance to the conventions of the retro-toon genre (e.g., "My character steps onto the miscolored rectangle on the floor that's obviously a trap door."), his PC gains a point of Oomph.

- **Miscellaneous:** This covers whatever else the GM might give you a point of Oomph for (witty dialogue, clever ideas, fetching some soda, etc.).

How the GM Does It

The GM has more limited means of gaining Oomph than players do. Each method below will grant one point of Oomph.

- **Qualities:** When one of the GMC's Qualities could be considered a hindrance, the GM can opt to make it impact the situation negatively. If no check is involved, then it should be roleplayed out and cause story-based complications. If a check is involved, the DN is increased by 2. Either way, using a Quality in this fashion does not require the GM to mark off one of the Quality's boxes.

- **Master Villain:** If the series' master villain is involved in the scene, the GM can add two points of Oomph to his pool instead of taking his turn. This represents him taking time to scheme and plot against his enemies.

Proofs of Purchase

If a PC has any points of Oomph remaining at the end of an episode, they are converted into Proofs of Purchase on a one-for-one basis. Furthermore, if the PC participated in the After-Show Message of the episode (see *After-Show Messages*), he automatically gains a free Proof of Purchase.

Proofs of Purchase can be used to improve your character's abilities between seasons. For more information on this, see *Character Improvement*.

Spending Oomph

What good is earning Oomph if you don't know what you can spend it on? Below, you'll find the list of ways to spend it.

Generally speaking, players spend Oomph to help their own character. However, teamwork and cooperation has always been a theme of the retro-toons and it just wouldn't seem right if helping out your allies was disallowed. As such, a player may donate Oomph to another character, with the following caveats:

- The donating player's character must be in the same scene as the character receiving the Oomph.
- The donating player must narrate a plausible explanation (well, plausible for a retro-toon). If more than one player donates Oomph, only one of them must do so.
- It requires an expenditure of 2 Oomph to effectively donate 1 Oomph (e.g., if a player wants to donate 2 Oomph, they must spend 4 Oomph).

The GM can spend her Oomph on any character she controls without the need to donate (villains aren't fond of sharing anyway). She can, however, donate Oomph to players, but only if there's an ally GMC in the scene with the character being donated to.

Try It Again!

Sometimes, Lady Luck has a way of smiling on heroes because, well, they're heroes... or villains. Regardless of whether they fight on the side of good or on the side of evil, they are clearly a cut above other characters.

After your character fails a check (or just doesn't get as high a result as you'd like), you may spend 1 Oomph to re-roll the die, taking the new result if it's higher than the original result. A check can only be re-rolled once and a die cannot be re-rolled if it rolled a 1. If the check involved Benefit Dice, they are not re-rolled; only the base die is.

Give It Your All!

When the chips are down and all hope rests squarely on the shoulders of the character, he can dig down deep to find the strength to persevere and prevail.

By spending 1 Oomph before you make a check, you can add your character's Star Power score to the result. This may only be done once per check and cannot be done at all if the original die rolled a 1.

Suck It Up!

Even the most valiant heroes get banged up, pounded on, hindered, or otherwise placed in peril. This inevitably leads to acquiring unwanted Setback Tokens (see page 40). The good thing about heroes, though, is that they are resilient and can come back from the brink of defeat to put the bad guys in their place.

You may spend 2 Oomph to remove a Setback Token from your character at any time during your action. This can only be used once per scene and cannot be done at all if the character has already been Defeated.

Not So Fast!

It takes a lot to put a hero or villain out of the action with just one attempt.

You may spend 2 Oomph when your character is the recipient of a "big hit" and would become Insta-Defeated. As a result, the character receives a Setback Token instead. If, however, the character already had a number of Setback Tokens equal to his Star Power score, he would become Defeated anyway. This can only be used once per scene.



Lousy Shooting!

Goons can't seem to hit the broad side of a barn. Don't believe us? Watch any scene in which a gaggle of them are unleashing a barrage of gunfire at the heroes. Now count how many of those shots actually hit their intended targets. How many did you count? That's right – zero. Believe us now?

When a Goon Squad (see page 47) makes a check that represents a ranged attack against your character, you may spend 1 Oomph to reduce the check result by 6.

Scene Editing

The retro-toons were laden with continuity errors, screwy plot devices, unlikely coincidences, odd uses of character powers/devices, and other such strangeness. That's where "creative control" comes into play.

You may spend 1 Oomph to use this option when you want to somehow retcon something about the story or even one of the characters. The GM can refuse to allow an alteration if he feels it will ruin the scene.

Unlike the other options for spending Oomph, creative control is not very specific. That is, it doesn't truly limit how it works. With the other options, everything is strictly defined in how they work. Not so with creative control. There are numerous ways to utilize creative control during the game. Below, we'll discuss the two most common ways.

• **Scenic Alterations:** You can make a convenient change to the character's environment. If your character needs to take cover, state that he dives behind a nearby stack of crates (even if the GM never said there was a stack of crates present). Need to make a quick escape? Declare that there's a manhole right beside your character. Is your character being pursued through labyrinthine corridors? Make a blast door slam down in between the character and the pursuing villains.

• **Trait Alterations:** You can make an existing Trait do something that it normally couldn't do. For example, if your character (who has QUARTER-STAFF 2) is in a deep pit and you can't seem to find a way out, you can declare that one end of his staff shoots out energy and flies him out.



Sarah: Scene editing can be a lot of fun as long as the player using it is inventive!

Kargorr: Poppycock! Players shouldn't be allowed to tamper with the game system so flagrantly!

Sarah: So, you mean that I shouldn't be able to suddenly have makeup appear on your face... like *this*? Hey, GM, I'm spending a point of Oomph.

Kargorr: You can't fool *me*, child. You forget that I'm a galaxy-conquering tyrant, not some muttonheaded ignoramus!

Sarah: [giggles] Okay, Kargorr. If you don't want to believe *me*, you don't have to. It's your *choice*.

Kargorr: I'm *telling* you – I *won't* be bamboozled! I *know* there's no make-up on my face. It's just a ludicrous *trick* intended to make be look like a *nincompoop*.

Sarah: Whatever you say, Kargorr. See ya later.

Kargorr: [makes sure Sarah's gone] Does somebody have a mirror??

Losing Oomph

Just as players can gain and spend Oomph, they can also lose it. This only happens if a player purposely has his character *act in such a way that totally goes against the spirit of the retro-toons*. Examples include displaying gratuitous cruelty, excessively cursing and making comments of a sexual nature.

The Game Master *must* warn the offending player directly, allowing him to change his mind. Should the player insist on carrying on, the GM should take away a point of Oomph.

Some actions go beyond a simple curse word or act of cruelty (sexual assault, cannibalism, etc.). In the unlikely event that a player decides to have his character go down such a path, the GM should disallow the action outright. After all, there's simply no way that the censors would ever let such a thing hit the small screen.



Characters with a Star Power of 1 are known as Goons... and for good reason. They are notoriously easy to defeat. As mentioned in the Star Power section, a "character" of this type doesn't actually represent one specific character. Instead, it represents a small group of a given character type (e.g., Serpent-Men, V.Y.L.E. Soldiers, King Olokk's Bodyguards, etc.). These are called *Goon Squads*. The exact number of Goons in a Goon Squad is completely and utterly irrelevant.

Let's look at how Goons are handled in the game.

Game Stats

Goons are not formatted the way other characters are. That is, they don't have Traits or Qualities. They are defined by the following game stats:

Star Power

Their Star Power is always 1. Characters with Star Power of 1 are never statted out as regular characters; they are always statted up as Goons. There are no exceptions to this.

Goon Rating

The Goon Rating is the most important aspect of the character. This rating is used for everything the Goon does in the game and is treated like a Trait rating in every respect. The Goon rating is almost always 0, but can be as high as 2 on rare occasions.

Special Rules

These are not the same as the Special Rules taken by other characters. You'll find descriptions of these Special Rules in the section called *Creating Goons*. (page 122).

Checks

Goons always use their Goon Rating when they make checks. Furthermore, they roll two dice and use the lowest result.

Oomph

The GM cannot spend Oomph to assist Goons in any way, nor does the presence of Goons contribute to the GM's pool of Oomph.

Action Scenes

The following rules apply to Goons in action scenes:

Mob Mentality

During action scenes, the members of a Goon Squad cannot do separate things. They act together as a team, embarking on the same action. For all intents and purposes, treat the Goon Squad like a single character.

Multiple Goon Squads

It is possible to have multiple Goon Squads in the same scene (even multiples of the same type of Goon). As a rule of thumb, there should be one Goon Squad per opposing character in the scene (if any Goons are included at all), but that is ultimately up to the GM. Each Goon Squad acts autonomously.

For example, an action scene involving three PCs would typically have three Goon Squads (one for each PC). These Goon Squads can be of the same type (e.g., three Squads of Robot Sentries) or any combination of types (e.g., one Squad of Scout Bots and two Squads of Robot Sentries). Each of those three Goon Squads can perform different actions during their turn.

Setback Tokens

Normally, a character can safely suffer a number of Setback Tokens equal to his Star Power. This is not true of Goons. A Goon Squad is Defeated when it receives its first Setback Token.

Vehicles

In the retro-toons, starships zipped through the cosmos, tanks rumbled over the land, jets streaked across the skies and watercraft traversed the oceans. While not a part of every single series, vehicles had a huge impact on most of them. In fact, some series actually revolved around vehicles.

The simple rules below will enable you to use vehicles in your games of *Cartoon Action Hour*.

Vehicle Traits

If a Trait has the "Vehicle, Minor," "Vehicle, Moderate" or "Vehicle, Major" Special Rule, it is considered (you guessed it!) a vehicle. After the

character is created, you will need to create the vehicle as well. Rules for doing so are found on pages 114 – 115.

The bulk of what a vehicle can do lies within its own Traits. That's right – vehicles have Traits too. While in the vehicle, the character can access these Traits as if they were his own. That is, they act as additional Traits for the pilot or driver to use.

Linking

You cannot link a Trait that has the "Vehicle" Special Rule. You can, however, link to the vehicle's own Traits.

EXAMPLE: My character has **SIDEWINDER TANK 6**. I plan to link it with **MASTER ARTILLERIST 4** to blow a hole in an enemy bunker. Unfortunately, I can't do that. I'll have to link **MASTER ARTILLERIST 4** with one of the **SIDEWINDER TANK's** own Traits. One of its Traits is **MASSIVE CANNON 6**, so I use that instead. Thus, I link **MASTER ARTILLERIST 4** with **MASSIVE CANNON 6**.

Special Rules

A vehicle's own Traits can have Special Rules, with the exception of "Accessory" (see below).

Accessory?

A Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule can be given the "Accessory" Special Rule. If you do so, all of the vehicle's own Traits are bound by the rules governing Accessories. A vehicle's own Traits cannot be given the Accessory Special Rule regardless.

Vehicle Qualities

Just like characters, a vehicle can have its own Qualities. These usually represent various features and quirks such as "Open-Topped," "Wheeled," "Cargo Hold," "Walker," "Ejector Seat," "Docking Bay," etc.).



Vehicles and Speed

A regular character is probably going to come up empty if pursuing or being pursued by a vehicle. Therefore, if a character is in a vehicle or is a transforming character in vehicle form, he will get a Benefit Die when in an opposed "speed" check against a character whose relevant "movement" Trait is 4 or less. Characters with a "movement" Trait of 5 or higher will cancel that Benefit Die out, as superhuman levels of speed put them on par with the speed obtainable by vehicles.

This means that a vehicle with a movement Trait of 4 is effectively faster than a character with the same movement Trait rating.

Destroying Vehicles

When a character in a vehicle suffers a Setback Token, he can negate that Setback Token by Deactivating the Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule for the rest of the episode. Any characters on or inside the vehicle automatically bale out.

Playsets

When playing with action figures, you could always pretend that a shoebox was the villains' secret lair or that the Styrofoam packing that came with your parents' stereo system was your heroes' headquarters. Such impromptu settings were acceptable... but it was always better to have a playset for such things. These playsets spilled over into the associated cartoons as well. What better way for toy companies to get kids to want a playset than to have it factor prominently into the show?

In *Cartoon Action Hour*, a playset is much the same as with those purchased as settings for action figures. They are places that appear regularly in the series.

What Playsets Do

A playset consists of Traits that can be accessed by its owners (see below) who are present at the location. The Traits can be used exactly as if they belonged to all the owning characters.

Ownership

When creating a series, players can invest in one or more playsets. These are known as *heroic playsets*. Heroic playset creation is described on page 123. All PCs and ally GMCs are said to be owners while physically at the site and thus have access to its Traits.

The GM will create one or more playsets during series creation as well. These are known as *villainous playsets*. Villainous playset creation is described on page 123 as well. All non-Goon enemy GMCs are said to be owners while physically at the site and thus have access to its Traits.

Using Playsets Without Ownership

It is possible for a character without ownership to use one of a playset's Traits while present at the location. First of all, the controller of the character must think up a creative but plausible way to do it ("I throw my axe at the lever to make it go down and thus open the TRAP DOOR."). Secondly, the controller must spend a point of Oomph. Using other people's toys comes with a price! Each character can do this only once per scene.

Transformation

What would the retro-toons be if not for transformation? There would have been no robots that turned into vehicles or vehicles that popped out a bunch of hidden weapons seemingly from nowhere. We'd have been deprived of wizards capable of morphing enemies into frogs and princes who held aloft their mighty swords to become powerful warriors. And let's not forget about dinosaur-like humanoids that turned into... well, actual dinosaurs.

In short, the cartoons of the 1980s were overflowing with transformations. For this reason, we had to include rules for handling them.

Required Special Rules

In order for a transformation to take place, the character initiating the transformation will need to have one of several Special Rules attached to the appropriate Trait. The Special Rules are as follows:

- **Transform Self:** This Special Rule represents the character morphing himself into another form (such as a vehicle, a monster, etc.). It is available in three different levels of quality: Minor, Moderate and Major. The levels dictate how powerful the alternate form is.

- **Transform Others:** This Special Rule represents the character turning other characters or inanimate objects into another form (such as a toad, a mouse or even into stone). It is available in three different levels of quality: Minor, Moderate and Major. The levels dictate how powerful the alternate form is (for transforming allies) or how weak the form is (for forcibly transforming foes).

Forms

The character's normal form is known as his *base form*. Generally speaking, it's the most powerful form; the one most suitable for action and adventure. If, for example, the character is a robot that turns into a car the robot should be its base form. Or if the character is a scientist who changes into a hulking rage monster, the rage monster should be its base form. The game stats you created for the character act as the base form's game stats.

The form the character turns into is referred to as his *alternate form*. This can be virtually anything imaginable – a hot rod, a gargoyle, a rock, an audiocassette or even a weakling prince. It is possible for a character to have more than one alternate form. An alternate form has its own Traits and Qualities, though some may be retained from the base form. (see "Deactivating, and Activating Traits and Qualities" below).

The character's Star Power always remains the same, regardless of which form he's in.

Deactivating and Activating Traits and Qualities

As mentioned previously, each form has its own Traits and Qualities. When a character switches from one form to another, he deactivates the Traits and Qualities of his old form and activates the Traits and Qualities of the form he turns into. The character may retain the base form's Traits and Qualities that are mental or personality-based

in nature (such as PERCEPTIVE, FAST THINKER, CHARISMATIC, etc.). It's possible for an alternate form to also retain other Traits and Qualities as well.

Transformation Time

Transforming is an immediate effect, unless the "transformation" Trait has an adverse Special Rule that says otherwise.

If your character's Trait transforms himself (as opposed to another character) into something else, there is no limit to the amount of time he can spend in the alternate form. Once again, adverse Special Rules can alter that.

If, however, the character's Trait transforms other characters or inanimate objects into other things, the effects wear off at the end of the scene and the character or object reverts back to the base form. Special Rules can extend the duration.

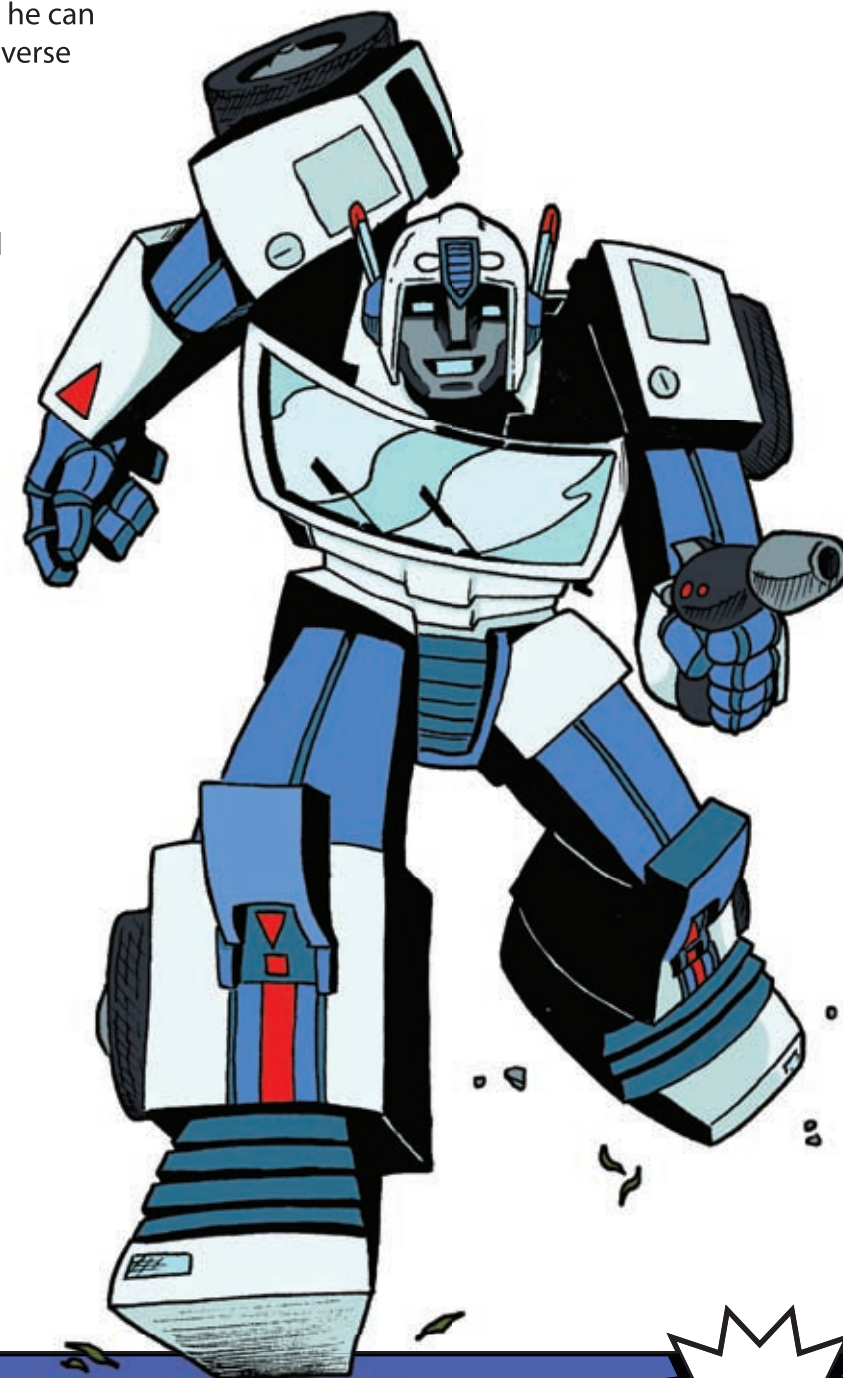
Consensual or Non-Consensual

This only matters to "transformation" Traits that morph other people or objects into an alternate form. Self-transformation is automatic and no check is necessary (again, barring any Special Rules).

What it comes down to is the question of whether or not the target *wants* to be transformed.

If the target is cool with being transformed or is an inanimate object, the character with the "transformation" Trait, simply makes a standard check using the Trait in question. The base difficulty is 0. If the check succeeds, the target character or object is transformed.

If, on the other hand, the target character isn't so keen on becoming something else, an opposed check is in order. The character attempting to force the form change uses his "transformation" Trait, while the resisting character uses a Trait that represents either his willpower or stamina. If the acting character succeeds, the target character is changed into the alternate form, whether he likes it or not.



Setback Tokens

Setback Tokens carry over from one form to another. So, if your character acquires two Setback Tokens in one form, they'll stick around if he switches to his other form.

Vehicle Alternate Forms

Normally, vehicles are destroyed in lieu of the pilot suffering a Setback Token from physical damage (see page 40). However, when the character is the vehicle, this isn't the case. Instead, the character is simply Defeated as normal upon receiving Setback Tokens equal to his Star Power +1. He is treated as a character rather than a vehicle in this regard.

Rewards for Alternate Forms

Alternate forms certainly have their uses, even though they aren't as potent as the base form. After all, the rage monster we mentioned at the onset of this section would be useless in a laboratory (unless, of course, you wanted it smashed up!), whereas the scientist alter ego could get stuff done.

There is another reason for characters to spend time in their alternate form(s). You can earn Oomph for it.

If your PC overcomes an obstacle it's not particularly suited for in an alternate form, you earn a point of Oomph for it (GMCs get zilch). The GM is the final arbiter of what constitutes "an obstacle," but it will usually be something at least relatively significant to the story (getting the space station owner to lower his force field so the character's ship can be repaired, defeating a villain, etc.). This reward may only be given to a character a number of times equal to his Star Power score.



Kargorr: Hahahahaha!

Sarah: What's so funny?

Kargorr: The thought of rewarding characters for transforming into wimps!

Sarah: You're not real bright, are ya? In case you haven't been paying attention – which you clearly haven't been – most of the rules in the game were created to reinforce the way things worked in the cartoons that you, Bravesteel and myself were a part of. And in many of those shows, the characters would inexplicably spend a decent amount of screen time as their weaker alter egos... so that's why this rule was included – to encourage players and GMs to have their characters use their lesser forms despite the obvious limitations.

Kargorr: Feh. What a lame excuse for stupidity.

Linking Across Forms

It wasn't unheard of for a character to use capabilities from both forms as he transforms. In game terms, if the character transforms during a check, whoever controls him can link an appropriate Trait from both the base form and the alternate form. It costs one point of Oomph to do this.

EXAMPLE: I'm playing a giant transforming robot named Nosedive and all hell has broken loose in Manhattan. The evil robots are tearing up the city and all the heroic robots have come out to thwart them. Chaos ensues. During the battle, Pai Lynn (a recurring ally GMC) falls from the rooftop of a skyscraper that is crumbling to the ground. Nosedive is currently in his jetfighter alternate form, so I decide to soar over to save her, since this form has MACH SPEED 7. As Nosedive reaches her, I want him to transform into his robot form and catch her. The robot form's SUPERIOR REFLEXES 5 will help if I link it. I pay my point of Oomph and link them together for the check.

Gestalts

Let's start with a simple definition:

ge·stalt
gə'SHtält,-'SHtôlt/
noun
Organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.

Gestalt in Cartoons

When a team summons awesome power and merges together to form an even larger super awesome power. Imagine five lion-like individual ships forming together to create a giant robot. That is gestalt.

Though not a part of many series, gestalts were a significant, even defining feature of some series. Gestalts are easy to incorporate into your *Cartoon Action Hour* series, for heroic and villainous characters, but do bring with them some new rules.

Requirements for Gestalt Forms

In order for players to create gestalt-based characters, certain conditions must be met:

- The series must allow gestalts (look in the "Other Rules" section of the Series Guide).
- If the gestalt is formed by the characters' vehicles rather than the characters themselves, each character will be required to have a Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule. For more details on making vehicles gestalt-compatible, see the information on page 116.
- Only characters with a Standard Quality called "Gestalt" (followed by the name of the Gestalt he is a part of and what part of the gestalt he creates – left arm, head, torso, etc.) can be part of a gestalt. It can only be used while the character is merged with the other characters in the gestalt form.

EXAMPLE: The series allows the PCs to combine to form a gestalt, so after talking to my fellow players and getting their agreement to be part of a gestalt called Giganticus, I write the following as one of my character's Standard Qualities:

Gestalt – "Giganticus" (left arm)

Merging

When all the characters with the same "Gestalt" Standard Quality are in the same location and not Defeated, they may merge into the gestalt form, so long as they all agree. This requires each of the merged characters to skip its next turn while they combine together. This is a very dramatic sequence, so the controllers of the characters should ham it up and embrace



the coolness of their gestalt with their descriptions!

In the cartoons, however, the characters didn't usually merge into the gestalt form until absolutely necessary. Instead, they tended to take on their adversaries singularly until it was apparent that they had no choice but to combine in order to triumph. In order to assume gestalt form, the characters must have acquired more Setback Tokens between them than the number of characters that make up the gestalt. Therefore, if the gestalt form is made up of five characters, the members would need to have acquired at

least six Setback Tokens before they can merge. This requirement can be circumvented if each character spends a point of Oomph.

If the characters' vehicles form a gestalt rather than the characters, the gestalt form cannot be assumed unless all the characters have access to those vehicles. If, for example, the characters are exploring a narrow cave or are at a fancy dinner party with officials and politicians, the gestalt will be unavailable.

The Gestalt Form

The following rules apply once the gestalt is formed.

Gestalt Traits

When the characters merge into the gestalt form, their normal Traits are *Deactivated* and an entirely new set of Traits is activated. These are referred to as Gestalt Traits and every member of the gestalt have full access to them.

The same holds true if the characters' vehicles form the gestalt. Neither the character's Traits nor the vehicle's Traits are in use while merged – only the gestalt's Traits matter.

Qualities

A gestalt form doesn't have its own Qualities. However, each merged character (or vehicle in the case of vehicle-based gestalts) has the "Gestalt" Standard Quality. This can be used to reflect the gestalt's size or imperviousness while the character is merged. It cannot be used when the character isn't merged.

No other Qualities can be used, unless the GM gives special permission.

Controlling the Gestalt

You may be wondering exactly which member controls the gestalt and decides its actions. The answer: every single member.

When it comes to each merged character's turn, the person controlling that character can act as normal, but may only use the gestalt form's Traits.

Oomph

While it may seem obvious, it needs to be stated nonetheless. While acting in gestalt form, each merged character may only use their own Oomph. The other members of the group may donate Oomph as per the rules on page 44.

Attacking the Gestalt Form

An enemy attacking a gestalt form must target a specific body part/area. That is, the attacker chooses one of the merged characters and targets it individually, just as with any other attack. The rules for crucial checks do not change.

Setback Tokens are given to the individual characters. They are cumulative with any Setback Tokens the character had prior to merging. So, for example, if a character accumulated two Setback Tokens before merging and an enemy deals out another one after the merge happens, the merged character will now have three.

Once the gestalt form is assumed, if a merged character is Defeated, he can no longer participate, but the gestalt form lives on. This means that individual characters can be Defeated, but the remaining characters are still in gestalt form using Gestalt Traits.

A gestalt form is Defeated only when every merged character is Defeated. This is true even for vehicle-based gestalts.



Kargorr: Gestalt forms are powerful, but a strategic genius such as myself will quickly figure out that the best way to cut them down to size is to focus your attention on one specific merged character until he is Defeated and then move on to another character and do the same thing! Each merged character you Defeat means one less enemy action per round that you have to deal with! Muhahahahaha *cough* *hack* hahahaha *huff*!

Hazards

In *Cartoon Action Hour*, characters will encounter all manner of dangers. While much of the danger is brought on by capable adversaries, there are other hazards that exist. This section discusses how to deal with some of them in the game.

Falling

The threat of falling off of tall structures, into deep chasms, or out of airborne vehicles is always a tense, nail biting experience... which is why the retro-toon writers used it as a dramatic hook so often.

Preventing the Fall

In game terms, a character that falls should usually be given a chance to make a crucial check to grab onto something or land in an acrobatic fashion, with an appropriate base difficulty based on the situation at hand. As a rule of thumb, however, a base difficulty of 6 should suffice in most situations. The Trait used should usually reflect the character's reflexes, agility, quickness or ability to think quickly.

For the most part, it's treated as any crucial check, unless the fall is extremely far (off the side of a mountain, over a skyscraper rooftop, etc.). In that case, failure indicates that the character is Insta-Defeated instead of simply gaining a Setback Token.

Soft Landings

One staple of the retro-toon genre was the "soft landing" -- a wagon full of hay, a swimming pool, a pile of feathers, or anything else that fits the bill. Whenever a character falls into something that provides a soft landing, no damage is done. And if there isn't something soft, you can always spend Oomph for the "Scene Editing" option (page 46).

Drowning

Okay, perhaps "drowning" isn't really a good term to use, since characters don't die from it (or from *anything* for that matter). In *Cartoon Action Hour*, the closest a character can come to drowning is being Defeated, which is still an unpleasant fate for a hero or villain.

The only time this ever seemed to come into play in the retro-toons was during action scenes. As such, during other scenes, characters can pretty much stay underwater for as long as necessary (within reason, of course). During action scenes, however, things get more tense. At the beginning of each of his turns, an underwater character must make a crucial check using a Trait that represents stamina, endurance or physical fitness. The base difficulty starts at 2 and increases by +2 every turn thereafter.

The GM can whip out any number of fun retro-toon clichés for characters who have been Defeated by "drowning" -- he washes up on the shore, he was saved by primitives, he woke up long enough to grab onto a piece of driftwood, etc.

Fire

In most cases, fire was used in the retro-toons for two purposes.

The first purpose was as a plot device ("Oh no! The building burned down with the top secret documents still in it!"). The second purpose was as a barrier ("We can't get through that way... the hallway is an inferno!"). In game terms, fire is divided up into two categories:

Normal Fire: Because fire was considered extremely terrifying to children, you never saw people get burned up in the retro-toons. Structures, robots, and vehicles were fair game, but not organic beings. Every turn an inorganic character or object is exposed to fire, it gains a

Setback Token. Traits don't protect against this damage (there's just too much fire around), unless specifically designed to keep the character safe from fire and heat. Fire damage should be described as the character coughing from inhalation or having black smudges on him.

Fire Attacks: Fire-based attacks (flame-throwers, dragon breath, etc.) are treated like any other type of attack, even against organic characters. The damage is attributed not to exposure to the flames, but to some type of chain reaction from them. For example, the flamethrower catches the wall on fire, which spreads to the ceiling, scorches the rafters, and causes one of the beams to fall down and land on top of the character. Unlike with "normal fire," Traits can protect against this type of fire damage. It makes no sense in the real world, but that's just how things worked in the retro-toons.

Quicksand

It would seem that, in the world of the retro-toons, quicksand was practically everywhere. Sometimes, it was called something else and themed to various types of terrain, though let's not kid ourselves -- it was the same darn thing as quicksand. They could name it a "sinkbog" until doomsday, but they couldn't fool us. We were too savvy for that.

In game terms, falling into quicksand always triggers an action scene if one wasn't already in progress. A character stuck in quicksand must spend his turn attempting to get out by the usual cartoon methods (grabbing a low-hanging branch was always the trustiest ways to escape). A crucial check must be made, using an appropriate Trait. The base difficulty should start at 2 and increase by +2 every turn thereafter.

If the character is Defeated by quicksand, the GM will need to devise a way for him to survive. Perhaps someone fishes his unconscious body out or maybe the quicksand leads to a subterranean underworld.

Optional Rules

The following rules can be used at the GM's discretion.

Commercial Breaks

"We'll be right back after these messages."

That's a phrase that we all hated to hear while watching our favorite Saturday morning cartoons. Upon announcing the commercial break, the networks commenced to bombard us with advertisements for whatever products their sponsors wanted us to beg our parents for the next time we went to the store. The wait, however, was unbearable, for we just *had* to find out the fate of our hero who was last seen hanging from the cliff by one hand... or in some other equally precarious situation.

It seems only right then that these commercial breaks would play a role in a roleplaying game that emulated the cartoons of yesteryear.

When you call for a commercial break, everyone can get up and stretch their legs, make a quick dash to the kitchen to replenish the snack supply, or chitchat about the episode in progress. More importantly, there's going to be a roll-off. Both you and the player whose character has spent the most Oomph since the last commercial break (or since the beginning of the episode if this is the first commercial break) roll a die. Alternatively, you can select a random player. If you roll higher than the player, roll on Commercial Break Table 1. If the player rolls equal to or higher than you, he rolls on Commercial Break Table 2. Follow the instructions given by the result of the table rolled upon.

Commercial Break Frequency

The frequency of which commercial breaks occur is entirely up to you. You may decide not to use them at all or you may wish to spring 3 of them upon the players in a given episode. The average amount is 1 or 2 commercial breaks per episode.

Commercial Break Table 1	
Roll:	Result:
1-4	No Effect!
5	Snack Commercial! A random player must go refill drinks and retrieve snacks for everyone. In return, however, that player's character receives a point of Oomph.
6	Time to devise a new Trick! One villain GMC of the GM's choice gains a new Trait at rating 4 (for Human-Tiered series), 8 (for Superhuman-Tiered series) or 12 (for Cosmic-Tiered series) for the rest of the episode. This rating may be given one Special Rule.
7	Bad Situation! The DN for the next check made by any PC is increased by 2. If the players think they're going to be cute and attempt a meaningless feat in order to suffer the penalty on a roll that doesn't matter, you may choose to hold the effects off until the next check instead.
8	Commercial for the villainous action figures! Until the next commercial break, non-Goon villain GMCs receive a +1 bonus to all checks they make.
9	Lost momentum during the break! A random PC loses a point of Oomph.
10	Continuity error! The GM may change one fact about the current scene upon coming back from commercial break. Generally, this alteration should not favor the PCs.
11	Commercial for villainous playset! The GM's Oomph pool increases by 2 for the scene that follows the commercial break (whether it's a continuation of a scene in progress or a new scene altogether).
12	Overly long commercial break! Roll twice on this table, applying both results. Re-roll "no effect" results and duplicate results.

Commercial Break Table 2	
Roll:	Result:
1-4	No Effect!
5	Schoolhouse Rock 'N Roll! The network plays an educational music video during the commercial break. Until the next commercial break, the PCs receive a +2 bonus to checks they make that utilize any Trait that is mental in nature.
6	Time for Time-O! The network plays a music video about nutrition and other health facts during the commercial break. Until the next commercial break, the PCs receive a +2 bonus to checks they make that utilize any Trait that is physical in nature.
7	Kid Power! The kids watching the show want the villains to fail so badly that it actually affects the show. A random player gets to force a villainous GMC to subtract 4 from his check total. This must be declared before the roll is actually made and must be used before the next commercial break. It can only be used once.
8	Commercial for the heroic action figures! Until the next commercial break, the PCs receive a +1 bonus to all checks they make.
9	Commercial for heroic action figure with variant accessories! A random PC gains a new Trait at rating 4 (for Human-Tiered series), 8 (for Superhuman-Tiered series) or 12 (for Cosmic-Tiered series) for the rest of the episode. This rating may be given one Special Rule.
10	Continuity error! A random player may change one fact about the current scene upon coming back from commercial break. Generally, this alteration should favor the PCs. If the change is too far-fetched, the GM can force the player to revise it.
11	Commercial for heroic playset! The PCs gain an additional point of Oomph.
12	Overly long commercial break! Roll twice on this table, applying both results. Re-roll "no effect" results and duplicate results.



Kargorr: Commercial breaks are the worst! When people tune into a cartoon, what do they want to see?



Bravesteel: I don't know, but I have a hunch that you're going to tell us.



Kargorr: Correct, buffoon! But back to my point, when people tune in, they want to see... ME! They don't wish to be assaulted by insipid commercials for action figures (unless, of course, they are action figures of me) or dreadful public service nonsense! They want to see me! And commercial breaks just take precious screen time away from me, thus depriving viewers of what they want to see.



Bravesteel: [rolls eyes] ...which is you.



Kargorr: Which is me, yes!

The Movie

The restrictions placed upon animation studios proved to be nightmarish for the writers, who had to create viable stories within the constraints of ultra-strict guidelines. Syndicated series had a little more wiggle room than network series, but writers still faced pretty severe limitations.

The largest chunk of freedom came from animated movies of the more popular licenses. The writers were no longer in thrall to the censors, though boundaries of good taste still had to be maintained. Still, the additional freedom was certainly liberating for them. Through this medium, they could craft edgier stories with minor cursing, enhanced violence and even death. Furthermore, the stories tended to be more epic in scope and the animation quality was boosted to the moon. In short, the animated movies were simply a cut above the series proper.

In some cases, the animated movie signaled a dramatic shift in tone for the associated retro-toon series, acting as a catalyst for things to come.

The Movie Rules

The GM may declare that the next one to three sessions will represent an animated movie. She should let the players know a head of time. Something so epic shouldn't simply be sprung on them the night of the session.

The following rules can be selected by the GM for purposes of emulating the movie.

- All PCs begin the movie with 1 or 2 additional Oomph; GMs receive an equal amount of additional Oomph per scene. The movie should be where all the coolest stuff happens and that begins with the characters having more cinematic leeway.
- Setback Tokens from physical damage don't automatically go away at the beginning of the next scene. Instead, characters lose one Setback

Token for every subsequent scene they are involved in.

- When a character is Defeated by an action that could cause him actual harm (frustration or being outwitted, for example, don't count), that character should be made to make a check using a Trait that represents either his willpower or durability. The base difficulty number is equal to the rating of the Trait that caused the Defeat (no Special Rules can modify that number). If the Defeated character fails the check, he is dead.

- After the movie concludes, characters that played a role in it may immediately be improved or changed, as if it was the end of a season (see pages 132 - 133 for details about doing this).

Trait Usage Limitations

Things can get dreadfully stagnant when a character uses the same Trait over and over and over again, especially if no creativity is being

imbued into it. That creates boring, repetitious gameplay that can potentially drag the whole game down. This optional rule encourages players and GMs to utilize more than just one or two Traits.

Unless used in a creative way, a Trait can only be used three times per scene. For each use beyond that, the DN for any task using that Trait will cumulatively increase by 2. Such penalties go away after the scene ends.

Lingering Effects

Given that an Insta-Defeat represents particularly severe trauma of some sort, the GM may rule that an Insta-Defeated character begins the next scene with a Setback Token. This reflects the fact that he's still worse for wear even some time later, which certainly has happened in the retro-toons on occasion.



Detailed Example of an Action Scene

We shall now take an in-depth look at a full action scene in play, a scene as it might unfold at the gaming table whenever a group of friends plays *Cartoon Action Hour*. Participating in the following scene are four people in total: Norbert, who is acting as the session’s GM; the players are Sabrina, who is playing Azlara the Karztec warrior princess, Theo, who is playing an odd steam machine-being called Full-Steam, and Melissa, who is playing the cowardly, but very quick Globbit by the name of Motor-Mouth. Sometimes the three players will say things as themselves, out of character, and sometimes they will speak as their respective PC, such as saying “I will now try to open the door,” or “I’ll whack him hard with my club, causing him to fly away like a golf ball ...” (That is always the character talking, not the actual person at the table.) Norbert, the GM, is explaining all the various goings-on around the PCs, the location, the weather, sounds, and so forth. He is also privy to all sorts of information that only GMCs can really know, and he is playing all the GMC parts as they come up. He, too, will be using both in-character talk and out-of-character talk.

You should know that the group is playing in the *Warriors of the Cosmos* series, one of the countless possible cartoon settings for the game, and also one that will be further supported and fleshed out in books by Spectrum Games. *Warriors of the Cosmos* is set on the fictitious planet Iconia, a world where many strange 1980s stereotypes and cartoon clichés happily co-exist. You will encounter primitive barbarian warrior types alongside beast people, fantastical monsters, robots, cyborgs, magicians and dimensional travelers there. A very good basic mix for our example; very lively and colorful, as exemplified by the make-up of the trio of player-characters themselves.

The three PCs already belong to the “Guardians of Iconia,” and are on a mission for the good King Rastor of Haven. The context of the scene here is that the three have helped a hidden city of peaceful Mountain Trolls against inroads made by Nekrottus’ evil minions. The Blackskull Empire, i.e. the mighty political entity ruled by Nekrottus, had previously tried to trick the unsuspecting Mountain Trolls into trading them a rare ore from their old mountain mines for boxes of old used weapons. The Empire was basically about to give worthless junk to the Trolls, who were acting very impressionable and naïve (not that it matters very much, it was the whole idea here), and expected large quantities of a new mineral that only the Trolls had: “trollanium”, or whatever you wish to call it--something that the minions of Nekrottus wanted to build better weapons. It also helped their cause immensely that the Trolls’ hideaway was positioned right on a cold, mountainous border to Haven, the last unconquered little kingdom on the whole planet. There was no established relationship between the Mountain Trolls and any outsiders save the player-characters and the agents of the Empire, and since the Empire troops had gotten there first, they had even made an attempt to present themselves as good and honest traders, and told the Trolls that the Haven people were bad guys. It was all part of a long-term plot to add the Trolls to the Blackskull Empire forces and gain a decisive bridgehead on the border to Haven. In true cartoon fashion, the Blackskull Empire side was unscrupulous and deceitful, and the junk weapons they were offering the Trolls was made up of outdated gear they had wanted to get rid of. Those weapons would always have shattered after a short while, leaving the Trolls asking for more of the same. However, the heroes, our three PCs in this adventure, had swiftly intervened and got the Troll King’s ear. In an earlier scene, a non-action scene as it were, Azlara’s diplomacy and general friendliness had opened a lot of doors to the PCs, and since no hostilities took place between the Trolls and the PCs, the Trolls now trusted the heroes, and had built fortifications against the returning Blackskull Empire soldiers. As a matter of course, Nekrottus’ current generals did not like the mountain-dwelling Trolls getting restless and distrustful, let alone stop the trade all of a sudden, and ally with the detested Guardians of Iconia. So, the Empire was sending two floating gunboats to a snow-covered rock plateau. It was time for them to demonstrate force and beat the Trolls into submission. The heroes knew the Blackskull Empire troops were coming that way. The bad guys could only access the Trolls’ gloomy cave city from the plateau, by landing there and getting into the main entrance cave by force.

The short time until the bad guys’ return was used by the heroes to rally all the Trolls inside the hollowed out mountain, getting them organized to build rock barricades, rock pits, and rock booby-traps of various shapes and sizes. Quite a bit of work, and everything obviously had a rock theme there. As mentioned earlier, the Trolls liked Azlara and were now clearly on the PCs’ side. Most of them however were busy shutting off the tunnels into and out of their cave city, guarding entrances, or setting up fortifications farther inside. The heroes were expecting their opponents in the large main entrance hall. Their aim was to surprise and beat back the enemy as much as possible. If they could keep the Blackskull Empire away from the Trolls’ city, and the precious ore by extension, that would eventually mean a big win for them this time. Would they be able to pull it off? It was now really about to get exciting and dangerous, as the Blackskull Empire had hundreds of minions to overrun the poor heroes. It was easy to see that the brood of Nekrottus wasn’t going to suffer the Trolls’ insult. They were coming towards the defenders with overwhelming force.

In order to fully understand which Traits and Qualities the players are talking about, you probably want to have the three heroes’ character stats handy as a reference. So here we have added a brief section of these three characters as they would appear on a bio-file. Note that these stat blocks do not include the full backstory or “quick bio” of each hero. Those will all be found in the *Complete Guide to Warriors of the Cosmos*. Only the core, essential parts are given here, out of consideration for space. You only need to know that in this example of play, the three heroes are still brand-new, 22-point PCs with Star Power 3 each.

AZLARA
Star Power: 3



- Qualities**
- ☐☐ Karztec Princess
 - ☐ Has taken a vow to free her people
 - ☐ Has an unflinching code of honor
 - ☐ Doesn’t care for technology

- Traits**
- MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM 4 (Advantage – allows her to see distant places; Disadvantage – requires total concentration and a check using the jewel’s rating versus a base DN of 5)
 - WILDERNESS KNOWLEDGE 4 (Situational Boost – when used with animals)
 - CURVED SHORT SWORD 3 (Action Feature)
 - WILL OF IRON 3
 - VERSATILE COMBATANT 2 (Situational Boost – when linked with SPEAR)
 - ANIMAL RIDING 2
 - FAST REFLEXES 2
 - SPEAR 2
 - OBSERVANT 1
 - STRENGTH 1

MOTOR-MOUTH
Star Power: 3



- Qualities**
- ☐☐ Fast-Speaking Globbit Knight
 - ☐ Prefers to be underground
 - ☐ Insanely curious
 - ☐ Tends to be a coward

- Traits**
- AUDIO-SENSITIVE ANTENNAE 6 (Action Feature; Situational Boost – when underground)
 - INSANELY FAST SPEAKER 4
 - FASTER THAN HE LOOKS 3
 - FIT INTO SMALL PLACES 3
 - STUBBY SWORD 2 (Situational Boost – when linked with FASTER THAN HE LOOKS)
 - KNIGHT’S ARMOR 2
 - SWORD-FIGHTER 2
 - BRAWL 1
 - TOUGH SKIN 1

FULL-STEAM
Star Power: 3



- Qualities**
- ☐☐ Rapid Machine Giant
 - ☐ Crude mechanical body
 - ☐ His confidence borders on foolishness
 - ☐ Likes racing
 - ☐ A real happy-go-lucky personality

- Traits**
- HEAVY 5 (Situational Boost – when used as a defense; Situational Boost – when linked with RUN FAST)
 - MIGHTY FISTS OF IRON 4 (Action Feature)
 - PUFF OUT STEAM 4 (Area; Oomph-Powered)
 - RUN FAST 4
 - CALCULATE EXACT PATH 2
 - MAKE LOCOMOTIVE SOUNDS 2
 - UNDERSTAND MACHINERY 2

Norbert (GM): By the following afternoon, you three heroes are waiting for the inevitable confrontation. All of you have taken positions in the main domed cave right after the entrance through which you entered originally. Let’s say you are lying in wait, more or less, ready to greet Nekrottus’s servants when they get there. You can all discern the distinctive roaring sounds of Blackskull Empire barges hovering over the mountain. These sounds are getting closer and closer, and one of two armed barges is indeed making it all the way to the big ledge there ... well, it’s going over the ledge and towards the main cave entrance.

Theo: Haven’t we closed that also?

Norbert (GM): There was no way to permanently close it, or seal it with magic for that matter. Not in the short intervening time, I mean. There are some light barricades at the entrance ...

Melissa: That’s not so great. Can these guys fly their ship, their barge, right into the main cave we are in?

Norbert (GM): Those things are good at hovering. Let me check here, well, it turns out that they could sort of go in there, but the barge in question is also slow and hard to maneuver, and the Empire pilots probably think it’s unwise to go in there, or even land. Then they would have to restart their craft again later. There is also always a slight risk of hitting rocks left and right.

Theo: So where are they going?

Norbert (GM): They—the bad guys on board of the barge here—are about to disembark. You can guess that. This is a landing party, fully armed. Their hovering craft is seemingly waiting in place for a while, a short while of course, right outside of the cave. Then a blazing energy bolt goes off from that craft’s cannon, hitting the middle of the barricade made of old wood, sacks, and some rubble.

Sabrina: Oh no!

Norbert (GM): Oh yes. The Blackskull Empire guys here are pretty miffed and they have to be able to do something. A single well-placed shot of their cannon cuts into the barricade, and it is immediately breached. The hovering ship rocks, vibrates, and readjusts itself slightly after firing, edging even closer...

Theo: Isn’t that a bit too detailed for animation in the Eighties?

Norbert: Good point. Well, I said “slightly.” There is just one more jolt going through that barge, which basically means the frame with the ship in it is shaken a bit in the animation. It’s buzzing and booming threateningly now. The sound of the energy gun, the colors, the effect... that’s effectively a bit of stock footage, and a stock sound effect to go with it. From your hiding places, you guys can see the matt black metallic craft as it’s blocking the view from the cave entrance. That’s how close it is now. A few more seconds pass, during which two metallic hatches on the side of the barge open with a screech, and dozens of enemy troopers are spilling from there onto the snow-covered platform. They look well-trained, motivated, armed and they mean business.

Sabrina: Looks like we’ll all be getting our money’s worth tonight.

Norbert: Money...? Oh, wait. I see what you mean. Yes. And they’ll also get theirs, I am sure.

Melissa: Is there a way for us to stop the bad guy troops from entering our cave?

Theo: *(as Full-Steam)* Yahoo! I want to ram them and knock them off of the platform... *(stops, looks around, and reconsiders)* No, wait a sec. That would be much too brutal for an Eighties cartoon. And I can’t just make opponents fall from the side of a mountain.

Norbert: I was just about to remind you myself. *(smiles)* Okay, since that is not in-genre, it’s not an option. What do you really want to do instead, Full-Steam?

Theo: Let’s see... even though Full-Steam is excitable and impulsive, he lets the opponents come to him first.

Norbert: Very well.

Melissa: But we can still block their way here somehow, can’t we?

Norbert: The important word here is “somehow”. Yes, somehow it would be possible. Think of something. Make up a way how your Traits could do that, how they could enable you, so to say. Then it’s also a matter of rolling high, and all that.

Theo: Can you tell us again what they are doing exactly, at the moment? Can they just rush through the cave?

Norbert: Maybe... Though I’m going to tell you I wasn’t originally going to make that happen just like that. Instead, the troops coming in are mainly overcoming only the barricade that their shot has destroyed. Not much of an obstacle left there right now. They are making it about halfway into that big hall. It is still your time to intervene.

Sabrina: Do they have the initiative now, and we’ll defend?

Norbert: Oh, technically, in this new edition, it is Reacting, not defending. And no. They don’t actually get the initiative here. In fact, there is no stat for initiative. It is a simple decision to say which side is going first in a round. Your characters however are prepared, you being heroes and all, so I will let you act first in this round.

Theo: So, we can come up with an action at this point, and they’ll react.

Norbert: It is basically that, yes. As you’ve probably guessed by now, we are starting a big action scene involving everyone. Your PCs did so much prep work, you know your enemies, and you have seen them arrive here, so naturally I will let you act first. There is even another reason for that: That first wave of opponents is all Goons. The turn order can be decided according to everyone’s Star Power score. Since all Goons are Star Power 1, your Star Power is definitely higher, so you get to go first.

Melissa: Sweet.

Norbert: Hmmm... it is rather advantageous. But acting first is not always superior. Let’s see how this plays out. Many ways to go here, you know.

Sabrina: Hey, I’ve got another idea.

Norbert: Oh, please tell me. I’m always open to ideas.

Sabrina: For this battle scene, well, I assume this is very likely going to be the big and final fight of the episode, can I establish a new small detail about my character?

Norbert: I’m pretty sure it will be good. You know me, you know I hardly ever say no outright.

Sabrina: Can we make it so that in this scene, Azlara is not on foot, but instead riding on the back of one of the big old horned bear-things we encountered yesterday?

Norbert: That... wow, that would be fantastic, by the way. I know it would look terrific in a cartoon of the era.

Theo: You want a new mount now? Some kind of battle steed?

Norbert: No horses needed here, I think. This is Iconia. So, you are referring to the big grumpy watch-bears that were guarding the gates to the Trolls’ city?

Sabrina: Sure. Didn’t you say that the Mountain Trolls have many of those bears as pack animals, as mounts, for coaches, and so on?

Norbert: I did. Exactly. So, what is your plan?

Sabrina: Well, I want to use one as my new riding animal, just for this one scene... it would go well together with my character’s riding skill, and her sword is even a curved sword, kind of a scimitar, and that would be a fitting slashing weapon used by a cavalry. It is very effective hitting in a slashing motion from above, especially used from horseback.

Norbert: I would think so too. Very good observation.

Theo: I want to suggest adding another detail.

Norbert: Sure. There’s still time for that.

Theo: Couldn’t the bear she is riding into battle be the very same horned bear that she encountered earlier in the same episode, in the scene where we were all standing in front of the big wrought iron fence?

Norbert: That would be nice. Yes, sure, I declare it is in fact the horned bear from before. The one that Azlara first swayed to not attack her by giving it the sweet-smelling small fruit from her backpack. Totally cool. The kids would recognize it’s the same creature.

Sabrina: Right. So, would I now be able to add something extra? Should I add the bear’s stats to mine?

Norbert: There is no need to do that. This bear-like animal is just a temporary companion to Azlara right now. For simplicity’s sake, and to keep it from being super-powerful, I say it can be directly expressed by your Trait of ANIMAL RIDING 2. Maybe use that with a Quality very soon. You can of course choose to link one of your other Traits to ANIMAL RIDING for one action, or link ANIMAL RIDING as a +1 bonus to another Trait, maybe to Azlara’s CURVED SHORT SWORD, if you want to swing at something cavalry-style.

Melissa: Motor-Mouth is just shaking visibly in his little boots, and he is having a hard time keeping his teeth from clattering, but he is holding up nicely just yet. I think he is definitely going to use his speed in a fight. He’ll use FASTER THAN HE LOOKS, and hopefully his STUBBY SWORD and KNIGHT’S ARMOR will be able to give him a bit of an edge.

Norbert: It is all well and good. Remember that you are all heroic characters. You’re special because you are the PCs. Now, the way I’m going to handle this is to first of all, divide the attackers into Goons and non-Goons, because different rules and conditions apply to each. Enemy GMCs that are dominant recurring bad guys, and those who are on the level of commanders of goon squads, basically do not act together with the Goons. It’s a wave of Goons coming at you first, then after those are defeated, you will meet the Enemy GMCs.

Theo: All right. Gotcha. Let’s see this play out.

Sabrina: Are we taking a defensive action against the oncoming Goons now?

Norbert: Well, you *are* defending the cave city of your new-found Troll friends, that is true. However, you are the acting side next, so it is more like you guys attacking.

Melissa: The acting side?

Norbert: Indeed. You’re the equivalent of attackers, even though you might be taking defensive positions at the moment. There is a reason for this: The Goons are leaving the hovering barge and rushing across the primitive barricades, and into the big hall. They are moving rather swiftly for Goons. They are in a hurry, probably under a lot of pressure from the Blackskull Empire leaders in charge. Let me add that if they are not stopped, they will most likely reach the entrances to the passageways on the other side of the hall. There are further barricades set up there, but those can be crossed or pushed aside eventually. If the Goons make it into the next few corridors and further down into the Troll settlement, they can do some terrible damage there, and many of the Mountain Trolls would be hurt. So it’s your task to slow down or stop the other side’s movement forward. That is why you can appear as the active characters first, having the initiative safely on your side. In rules terms, your characters will be *acting*, and the Goons will be *reacting*.

Sabrina: Got that.

Melissa: And who goes first? I mean, which one of us--? Is it the fastest?

Norbert: Maybe.

Theo: Why do you always say “maybe”?

Norbert: Let’s see. It works like this: There is no rolling for initiative or anything like that. Heroes will act before GMCs, so that is also working out nicely in your favor. Additionally, the order of actions is tied to the scores in Star Power. Your scores, that is. But you know that all of your PCs are tied at Star Power 3. They are all equally important as stars of the cartoon series.

Melissa: So what do we do then? When is it my turn to roll something?

Norbert: Just a moment. Since you all have the identical Star Power, we could use any of a bunch of different methods to establish a turn order: go alphabetically, go clockwise or counter-clockwise round this table where we are sitting, use the characters’ ratings in a speed- or reflexes-based Trait as a foundation, or something else. I’ll say you can even use an entirely democratic coordination and discussion out of character here. You, as players, can decide the turn order amongst yourselves. That is what I’d prefer myself if I were you, actually.

Theo: Or just go clockwise...?

Norbert: Well, if you are all in favor of that. Does anybody here have a better idea?

Melissa: Does Oomph become a factor in this, maybe?

Sabrina: What about our Earned Oomph so far?

Norbert: Wait a moment. No, Oomph is not decisive here. That’s for something else. Your scores in Oomph will become meaningful soon for all the specific tricks or boosts in combat, if you need those at all. But not for the turn order; that is based upon Star Power entirely, plus the players coordinating. The benefit here is pretty much that Star Power does not fluctuate. It doesn’t move up and down like Oomph. However, Oomph has all of its own special functions and applications. It is powerful enough, as far as I can see. Well, I just need to know who is doing what next. You pick the Traits and describe what you intend to do. Remember that this is one simple dice check. Everybody gets to use one action in a turn, but you can link two Traits, and use Qualities and so forth.

Melissa: But the Goons won’t be so hard to beat, right? So, using Qualities in our favor probably won’t be necessary just yet.

Norbert: Probably. Goons may also get a favorable die result. It’s your call. You must know that adding a bonus from a Standard Quality must be announced before you roll the check, and there are some applications of Oomph that work similarly, also. Additional effort, for example. That’s the option called “Give It Your All!” now.

Theo: Yes, I know that. I made notes earlier.

Sabrina: Me, too.

Norbert: Great. So you know how it works.

Melissa: We still haven’t figured out or turn order, yet.

Norbert: That’s true. So how--?

Theo: Wait, I have one question still.

Norbert: I’m listening.

Theo: There are a lot of Goons running around, but is there an equal number of Goons for each one of us to attack?

Norbert: Plenty of Goons to go around. You each get about a dozen. This could also be eight or nine, or fifteen per PC. It doesn’t matter. It’s a horde, divided into smaller units or packs. Effectively the same number of Goons per PC. Don’t worry about that. They are all the same size, and identically dressed and armed, and their movements come from the same repeating stock animation.

Sabrina: Hey, are these Goons the Goop Zombies that Kazgull and Sure-Shot were talking about last time?

Norbert: No, not Goop Zombies. While Goop Zombies are also fighting as troops on the Blackskull Empire’s side, these Goons now are indeed much faster, and better armed. They are not zombie-like at all.

Theo: So what are they?

Norbert: These are the standard regular Blackskull Empire military. They can get quite mean and dangerous... but, well, probably not for you heroes.

Melissa: What do they look like?

Norbert: Humanoid. Trim and agile. They are about the same height as Azlara, and certainly shorter than Full-Steam, who is a hulking wrought iron robot. They are short, though not as squat and hunched over as most of the Turgs. Regular troopers always wear shiny sci-fi armor in matt black, complete with black helmets and visors, with Nekrottus’s skull symbol displayed on the chest plate and the belt buckles, I’d say. They carry charged energy sticks that are remotely sword-like, and some of them have small sabers or battleaxes, and they carry blaster pistols on their belts, but don’t use them for now. It looks like it’s all going to be close combat. Think in terms of fists and swords and all that business.

Theo: Suits me fine. I think I know what Full-Steam is going to do.

Norbert: Very good.

Melissa: My character Motor-Mouth has fallen surprisingly silent at this formidable opposition. He is just standing there, or crouching, for a moment with his mouth visibly open. Knowing his nature, I’d say he is still so apprehensive that he’ll gladly let Full-Steam act before him. Full-Steam is much bigger and scarier.

Norbert: That much is for certain. But don’t forget that you are all Star Power 3 heroes, and built with an equal number of points.

Sabrina: I think it’s time for a battle cry. Have we got something like that worked out yet?

Norbert: Something like... “For Iconia!”, “For Haven!”, “For justice!”?

Sabrina: By the power of... good? No, wait, that’s not quite it.

Melissa: Your character could also shout something in her native Karztec language.

Norbert: Maybe. But were Eighties cartoons known for using a bunch of fully developed fictional languages?

Melissa: Maybe not fully developed, I’ll give you that.

Sabrina: I want to keep it simple. Next time I might have a phrase. Well, you guys all know what it is about to happen. This time, only my horned bear will rear up and roar across the hall before I take my action.

Norbert: Oh, absolutely. You can do that. It’s a free and automatic effect, no die rolling.

Melissa: Cool. Next time I want to get a mount too. A mule or something.

Norbert: Hmm. You really want to have to deal with something that stubborn? (smiles) Okay, we’ll see. So, is it all right for Full-Steam to act first in this round, then we continue with Azlara and her bear-friend, and Pliggut Ploo, I mean Motor-Mouth, after that? It all happens pretty much parallel anyway. That’s three actions virtually at the same time.

Melissa: I’m fine with that.

Sabrina: Sure.

Theo: Full-Steam will use his amazing strength and metallic bulk to his advantage, combined with running. Let me check which Traits I have for that... ah yes, you know, I’ll pick RUN FAST as my primary Trait, and I want to use the bonus from linking HEAVY. My HEAVY Trait is a 5, so it’s superhuman and provides a whopping +3 when I link it, so I add that to the rating of 4 from RUN FAST. Now I’m at 7. Groovy. And you know what, to make double sure, I am going to apply my “Crude Mechanical Body” Quality to get another bonus.

Norbert: Very well. Makes sense. Keep in mind that these are only lowly Goons.

Theo: Sure... But to me, that is player knowledge, not character knowledge. How would Full-Steam, who is still new at this job, know how much strength to use, or how dangerous those minions actually are?

Norbert: That’s also correct. Good. Then you add the benefit from your Standard Quality, too.

Sabrina: I’m not sure I follow. Isn’t that three stats for Theo? The rules say you can only add two of your Traits for the same action.

Norbert: It’s all good. He’s using two Traits, RUN FAST and HEAVY, and the other +2 is from a Quality, not a Trait.

Sabrina: Ah, good. I have to keep that in mind.

Melissa: A Standard Quality is only going to help you out once in an entire episode. Theo, are you sure you want to tap into that Quality right now, as those troopers are only Goons? We don’t know what opponents are still coming afterwards, and I’m pretty sure Norbert is going to throw some heavies from the series at us still...

Theo: Ah, heck, I’ll do it. We are in the finale of this episode. We know we have to fight. Full-Steam even has other Qualities to tap into that he hasn’t used today.

Norbert: And I also recall that Full-Steam is rather impatient and foolhardy at times. So let’s go!

Theo: Cool. (grabbing a die)

Norbert: Okay, just let me roll for your opposition first.

Theo: How’s that? I thought we were the attackers now. You just explained that. If we are attacking a horde of Goons, why do you want to roll for them first? Doesn’t the active check come first?

Norbert: Well... not necessarily. A few things have changed in this edition. While it probably wouldn’t alter a whole lot if you rolled first, it’s customary now to get a result for the reacting side first—even if defending happens a couple seconds after attacking.

Sabrina: That’s confusing.

Norbert: No, wait. It is not that bad. It is all done to establish a Difficulty Number first. I’m going to roll for the defender, the reactive check, so we’ll have a number for the attacker to roll against. It will make the game quicker in the long run, after you’ve done it a few times. Really, it’s a good rule, and I think it takes care of that bit of hesitation between “attacker rolls” and “defender rolls”.

Sabrina: Okay.

Norbert: (rolls 2 dice) I’ll check for the Blackskull Empire guys now. Normal Goon rules apply. Nothing fancy going on there. It is two d12 and the lowest result applies. All right! A 10 and an 11. Must be a lucky day for the bad guys. The 10 is the number to roll against, as I add nothing.

Melissa: They just get the naked Trait rating?

Norbert: Pretty much. I add zero here because their Goon rating is 0.

Sabrina: Good for Theo.

Norbert: Now, Full-Steam’s turn. Theo, you know you can’t alter

or re-set the Traits you've picked for your active check. That is another consequence of the new active check rules.

Theo: Well, I don't mind. Full-Steam is rushing ahead like a freight train.

Norbert: With RUN FAST, linked with HEAVY, and the +2 from Mechanical Body, you are technically at a rating of 9. Anything but a Flub will be high enough for you.

Theo: (rolls) I got an 8! So, added to my 9, that gives me 17. Woo-hoo!

Norbert: That looks pretty effortless to me. Now, here is what happens in the scene: Full-Steam takes charge, huffing and puffing and storming right ahead with the power of his metal wheels, his black iron locomotive body ramming into a squad of armored troopers. He is hitting them head-on, and I would say that, in true 80s cartoon fashion, it looks as though the bad guys are charging single-file, so Full-Steam slams into the first one, who is knocked back hard, reversing the momentum that the villains may have had, and the troopers running behind the first guy are bumping into each other in a long line. You hear some loud crashing and bumping noises, and the Goons getting caught up in Full-Steam's charge result in a big pile-up right there... approximately in the middle of the cave. Of course, this is not a shockingly violent scene, so the troopers just get knocked out and pile up with dents and scratches in their armor, and helmets knocked out of place, or blocking their view... you get the idea. In an 80s cartoon, it was customary to have the camera shake... well, the frame with the background shakes violently for a few seconds, suggesting the impact. Full-Steam remains standing, entirely unharmed, looking triumphant.



Theo: Great. I like it.

Sabrina: That worked really well.

Norbert: It did.

Melissa: Immediately, off to a good start.

Norbert: Sorry, I forgot to say that I don't even have to go into all of that flowery description if something either succeeded or failed. The player, in this case Theo, can also describe a success vividly if he wants to. Next time I'll let you describe your own success. I just got a bit carried away.

Theo: Understood.

Norbert: Good. Who was next again?

Melissa: The Goons?

Norbert: Sure, yes. But Full-Steam's Goon Squad is already down, their bodies thrown into all directions across the main cave. I can now roll the dice checks for Sabrina's Goons, well, I mean the Goons opposing Azlara. I could also roll for the third and last Goon Squad right now, and keep those dice results here with me as the DNs for Azlara and Motor-Mouth each. And by the way, I can't re-roll any of those now.

Sabrina: Why not? You still have not spent any of your Game Master Oomph?

Norbert: You're correct. I haven't. But you're facing Goons, and I can't burn up any Oomph to help Goons, only name opponents, GMCs. There's a huge difference.

Sabrina: Ah, right.

Melissa: How much GM Oomph do you have in this scene, by the way? You haven't told us, yet.

Norbert: Um... (looking at his GM notes for the scene) In fact, I've got 6. That is owed to the GMCs in the background who have yet to appear. You'll meet them after the Goons.

Theo: Looking forward to it.

Norbert: Goons... Goons are terrible. Terribly bad, I mean. They are so incompetent and unlikely to roll good results that you can think of them merely as an obstacle. Something minor that would at best hinder of keep a hero preoccupied for a round. Not more. In other words, you guys would have to roll spectacularly poorly on your checks for you not to beat the Goons.

Melissa: Then why do you have to use all the dice-rolling against them to begin with?

Norbert: Hmm... good question. Just trust me with this for now. Actually, there is always a chance that one of you rolls a natural 1, a Flub. If a Flub occurs, you would immediately inflict a Setback Token on yourself. That rule always applies when you are rolling crucial checks, and in a fight like this one, all checks are crucial checks.

Melissa: Ah, I see.

Sabrina: So Goons can be used to keep a hero away, or slow them down...?

Norbert: They can also cost you resources, like burning up Quality usages or even Oomph. You never know. And natural 12s and 1s are a fun factor that could come in. Most of the time, though, beating a regular Goon Squad is a given. I still would like you to give me an idea how you do it, how you dispose of them.

Melissa: Right. I got that.

Sabrina: So, my character Azlara is next?

Norbert: She is. Just let me get that Goon Squad's result for you first. (rolls 2 dice) Here I've got a 6 and a 12. Of course, that 12 does nothing for me here since it is still the lowest of the two results that counts. Six and nothing.

Sabrina: Man, that's low. However, to Azlara, the oncoming group of black armored soldiers looks like quite a threat.

Norbert: Remember that to any non-player character in the cartoon world, they are.

Sabrina: Sure. I understand. Now Azlara is gathering her strength and decides to use her Trait called CURVED SHORT SWORD. It is a 3, and we've already talked about her using ANIMAL RIDING in conjunction with it.

Norbert: Right, because she is on the horned cave bear.

Sabrina: ANIMAL RIDING is only a human-Tier Trait. Correct?

Norbert: Yup.

Sabrina: So I only get a +1 bonus out of it here... Well, it's still a bonus, and better than nothing. I have a rating of 4 and roll... (takes a die)

Norbert: Remember that you could roll two d12s now. I checked your character's Traits, and CURVED SHORT SWORD is also your Action Feature. Remember that each one of you heroes has got one Trait with the "Action Feature" Special Rule.

Melissa: So she can always roll another die with that, a Benefit Die?

Norbert: No, not every time. It's a little different.

Theo: Yeah. I looked that up. Action Features can be used once in a Scene. Isn't that so?

Norbert: That's the way it is. You have to announce it yourself, and get a Benefit Die for a check, but only one check, one action per scene.

Sabrina: I thought it was once per episode.

Norbert: No, that would be a little weak for that Special Rule. The once-per-episode thing is your Signature Quality. We'll come to that later.

Sabrina: Uh-huh.

Norbert: So you'll just make a regular check here, using 4 plus the die result?

Sabrina: Hmm... now I'm tempted. Well, it's only Goons and a DN of 6. I am not using the Action Feature benefit.

Norbert: All right.

Sabrina: (rolls) It's a... oh, only a 2 on my die. So what does that do?

Norbert: Just checking... Hmm, you had 3 +1 from the Traits, so 4 and a 2. That's a 6 total. You got exactly as high as the Goons' defense. Well, you would still beat them in the check. It's a slightly strange result, but don't worry about it. There can't be a draw here. In *Cartoon Action Hour*, a tie will go to the acting character, and that's you.

Sabrina: Ah, that's how that works.

Norbert: Azlara did perfectly fine, but maybe she has also noticed it was a close call.

Sabrina: (as Azlara) Watch out, friends, these Blackskull minions are getting meddlesome around here! Plenty more where these came from.

Melissa: (as Motor-Mouth, talking fast) Aye, Princess. I... I... I'll be watchful. Oh yes, indeed. Very watchful. I'll be right

there with you in a moment, Princess. *(as herself)* So, Motor-Mouth is watching the combat unfold from several yards away. He's positioned somewhere crouching, half-covered by one of the larger rocks further inside, peaking out to catch the most important stuff. *(as Motor-Mouth)* Well done there, Princess! Great strike, Princess! So very... energetic.

Norbert: I'd like to hear what your attack looks like, Sabrina. Do you want to describe it for us?

Sabrina: Oh, sure. So Princess Azlara is expertly guiding and commanding her cave bear to carry her right into the middle of the onslaught. As the heavy animal gallops forward, she is holding on to a pommel on the saddle with her left hand... no, wait, I don't know whether the nice Trolls would have had sufficient time to make her a saddle... okay, so she is holding the reins or a leash or something, whatever is easiest to animate, and with her right hand she is making long dramatic swooshes with the CURVED SHORT SWORD like a cavalry general, cutting wide swaths into the lines of the grim forces of the Empire.

Norbert: The black-armored foot soldiers are probably trying to take cover, tripping and sprawling left and right as you meet them...

Sabrina: Well, we are in a kids' cartoon of a certain style, so of course she is not actually cutting into flesh and bone. Nobody is getting gravely injured, but Azlara is making her presence felt. With obvious determination and vigor, she makes repeated slashing motions with her blade, knocking over several of the Goons...

Norbert: That's good. I can clearly envision her doing that in the scene. It would look great in a cartoon of that era. She is doing her swordfighting thing while in the saddle, Goons are clumsily dropping to the ground left and right, tripping over rocks and sticks and whatever—hey, they even all look the same falling down because we are using tried and true stock animation for that!

Theo: Haha!

Norbert: Well, and her curved sword is helping her out a lot. It's just the right tool for the task, never failing to make the intended impression, while the horned bear-creature lands a well-placed paw strike of its own here and there.

Melissa: Nice... please let me do something cool as well. I hope little Motor-Mouth can follow suit. Just a shame he's such a scaredy cat.

Norbert: We'll come to Motor-Mouth in just a second.

Theo: Hmm, can I ask you a question, just to make sure...

Norbert: Anytime. Ask away.

Theo: So, I know that was a successful action for Sabrina and all, but are all of her Goons really Insta-Defeated now?

Norbert: They should be. They fall down, get stuck, dazed, unconscious, confused, and others just get scared and take cover, not fighting back anymore.

Theo: Because, I was just thinking if the Goon Squad's relevant DN was a 6 and Sabrina's total for her action was also a 6, the reacting side should take a Setback Token, and... wouldn't a group of Goons be able to soak a single Setback Token as well? Insta-Defeat doesn't happen until the reacting side had their DN exceeded by at least twice their number in Star Power. So I thought with Goons being Star Power 1 characters, that was not actually exceeded. The total for the action check would have had to be at least 8.

Norbert: A very keen observation. I am glad you brought that up. In fact, I did that math myself in another game session, and I had to look up what the rules say specifically about that kind of result. Goons are automatically Star Power 1, but the "twice their Star Power score or more" thing doesn't apply to them. They go down as soon as they take a single Setback Token, so to say. Special case. So it's still Insta-Defeat, all in your favor.

Theo: Cool.

Norbert: It speeds the game up and really reflects how swiftly Goons were taken out of a fight in an 80s cartoon, don't you think? Anyway, if those guys had been GMCs with Star Power 2 or higher, it would have been a different matter.

Sabrina: Right. So I know I don't have to hit the Goons again?

Norbert: Correct. You don't, and you shouldn't. The entire squad is defeated.

Sabrina: I see.

Melissa: Cool beans. Is it my turn?

Norbert: It is. Time for Motor-Mouth to take his action. Is he going to come out from behind his rock there, or lend some moral support, to do something else? As I said before, there is more than one Goon Squad in this scene, it's one per character. Half a dozen or so of them come rushing towards Motor-Mouth, too, and you all know that.

Sabrina: Aren't you rolling for them, also? How well they defend?

Norbert: Sure. I still have to make that die roll. Okay, checking for the third squad of Goons right here. *(rolls two dice)* What do I get now? It's... a 9 and an 11. Pretty obvious. The DN is 9 this time. Hey, Motor-Mouth, I think you can take them on. The odds are definitely in your favor.

Theo: Get them!

Sabrina: Yes, let's wrap this up.

Melissa: Okay. So I was thinking about this situation for a moment, trying to gauge the risks, and figuring out which Traits and whatever would help me out. All right. You know that Motor-Mouth, my character, is usually frightened and inefficient in a fight. He's gotta do something, though, and maybe Full-Steam's and Azlara's obvious successes have inspired him a little.

Norbert: That makes sense, also.

Melissa: Numbers-wise, I want to go for something similar as Full-Steam this turn. DN 9, you say?

Norbert: That's what you're up against. It's basically one of the better results for unmodified Goons.

Melissa: I know.

Norbert: Hey, it's what I rolled. Just going with what the dice give me.

Melissa: So my opponents all count as a 9. I got that. What is poor Motor-Mouth to do? You know, earlier I was thinking he could even waive any direct combat actions, and use his feared ability of being an INSANELY FAST SPEAKER on the bad guys.

Norbert: Yeah, you could use that. There is nothing that prevents you from doing so. INSANELY FAST SPEAKER is also a solid Trait for your character. Nothing to sneeze at. It's a 4, world-class.

Melissa: Yeah, sure *(hesitating)* ... But you know what, now that he is in that intimidating half-lit cave, with the din of battle already going on as it were, fast-talking is not what I envision the character doing at this point. Maybe I'll use that later. I mean, just talking...?

Theo: Go ahead. Motor-Mouth's friends surely know that he has it in him to talk his opponents into unconsciousness at times.

Sabrina: *(chuckles)*

Norbert: Yes, so I've heard.

Melissa: Or his jabbering could enrage the troopers even more... there's always that risk.

Norbert: Uh-huh. To me, that would be rolling a natural 1 for example.

Melissa: And we don't want that to happen, do we? So, Motor-Mouth is not going to use INSANELY FAST SPEAKER for his attack just now. I already had another idea. With this character, my forte is certainly the whole being fast business. Motor-Mouth is known to the fans of the show for two things, primarily: speaking fast and moving fast. He definitely has velocity as his main advantage, and I want to exploit that now. He's also got a STUBBY SWORD and some armor, but those are his weaker Traits. Just like my character, I am a little frightened, so I'll rather play it safe and link one Trait to another.

Norbert: Good, I see your point.

Melissa: So... linking, yes. That's easy. I am taking the following two things from my Trait list: FASTER THAN HE LOOKS, as that covers running speed really well. So that is a 3 by itself. And as my link, I was thinking it's good that he FITS INTO SMALL PLACES. That's another Human-Tier Trait, so only a +1 to my 3, but it counts nonetheless.

Norbert: Sure, a simple +1 can make a heck of a difference. You'll get 4 plus whatever you roll. You want to do that now?

Melissa: I really don't feel like being squashed by those Goons. So, maybe I can boost this even further. Hey, I got some handy Qualities. From my Standard Qualities, I could use... okay, here is what. You have to tell me whether this is even valid, Norbert. I'm not so sure. You can nix this if it doesn't apply.

Norbert: Sure.

Melissa: In addition to the combined rating of 4, I want to invoke my +2 from the Standard Quality "Tends to be a coward."

Sabrina: How is his cowardice a positive add-on now?

Melissa: Wait, I'll tell you how! There is a way I can make this fit in. It's only logical. Since little Double M here, Pliggut Ploo, is a well-known scaredy cat, I think I'll declare that he is specifically avoiding getting caught and sticking around enemy soldiers with swords or sticks or whatever. He's always concerned. So, that is going to help me out here as a positive modifier. I want to use the Quality positively, and wouldn't his cowardice make the guy run even faster, spurring him on?

Norbert: Ah, I see... Go on, I'll let you do that. Mark that Standard Quality as being used for this episode. That is all.

Melissa: Thanks... and so I'll add that extra +2 to my action. I have 3 +1 +2, a total of 6. Without the Standard Quality, I would have had to roll at least a 5 on my d12 to do something about the Goons.

Norbert: Right.

Sabrina: Melissa, are you going all tactical with this?

Melissa: Well, it's a big action scene, and what better time to really tap into those Qualities now. I still have others that I might use later. I'm taking the additional +2 now, so I've got 6, and only have to roll a 3 or higher.

Theo: It's not that big of a deal, I think.

Melissa: Yeah, but did I tell you about that session last month where for the whole afternoon, I was only getting 1s and 2s every time it was my turn? *(laughing slightly)* Come on, that blue die here has let me down a few times. *(assertively)* Anyhow, with a good section of the big cave already filled with hapless Goons that you defeated, Motor-Mouth is about to undertake the very risky task of running towards the third squad of troopers, almost suicidal, before slipping away at the last moment, zipping to the side in a fraction of a second...

Sabrina: Does he have super-speed?

Melissa: Well, almost. It can look like super-running in a cartoon. It's very fast if I roll high enough. *(continuing)* So, he is like, zipping and flipping around crazily, dodging Blackskull Empire swords and axes, racing through the lines of legs and weapons before the troopers can hit him.

Theo: I don't know. Isn't that more like defending? You should probably save that maneuver until later when it's your turn to react. You are not the reacting character now.

Melissa: Ah, never mind. I figured it is attacking after all. Let me explain: My aim is to cause a lot of confusion there among the groups of Goons, deliberately running past them and away from them again to draw them all into another direction, not letting them catch me, of course. I am going to exhaust them, misguide them, getting them preoccupied with me, making them hit each other, or run into boulders and rock walls by mistake because I am that fast. So I am acting, not reacting.

Norbert: With just a tiny bit of luck, you can do that as described.

Melissa: Cool.

Sabrina: Hey, isn't Motor-Mouth also clad in traditional KNIGHT'S ARMOR, a chest plate and all that? Are you sure he can easily zip around with his armor and equipment attached?

Theo: Yeah, how does that work?

Norbert: Hey, it is *Cartoon Action Hour* we are talking about here; "cartoon" really being the operative word. In the cartoons of the 80s, something like the approximate weight of armor never seemed to matter, and rules-wise, your Traits usually don't get into each other's way. I mean, as long as Motor-Mouth doesn't have an adverse Special Rule like Fickle or Situational Setback, something that specifically says that the armor is impeding him, there is no adverse effect. It's just like running around in normal clothing, or naked... haha.

Melissa: *(as Motor-Mouth)* Yeah, how could you guys ever doubt my amazing ability to use Globbit celerity? *(as herself)* I am going to roll this now. We cannot risk letting the Goons slip through...

Norbert: You're not taking a Benefit Die with that by any chance?

Melissa: That would be great, but no, not now. It is one straight die check. One d12. As I said, I need to roll at least a 3. *(rolls her die)* It's... a 10! Yay, definitely high enough. Added to my 6 from Traits and Qualities, 16 total.

Norbert: Yes, that is... how much? Seven more than the Goons' number in that case. You manage to soundly confuse them in one turn. No question.

Sabrina: Brilliant.

Melissa: Having quickly yelled "Come on, you dullards! Come and get me if you can...", or something like that, Motor-Mouth is pulling a Speedy Gonzales on those guys now. Running wildly back and forth in the main cave, expertly avoiding all the barricades and rocks on the ground, he is teasing and annoying the heck out of the Empire's soldiers. At the end of this turn... how long was that, anyway? Six to ten seconds, maybe? At the end of this turn, the remaining Goons are standing or crouching there somewhere, utterly puzzled at

the little squeaky running creature that always eludes them. Some are hurt, some have knocked themselves out by running into solid walls, some have clumsily tripped over their peers' weapons...

Norbert: ...yeah, or they can't really follow you running anymore because they get stuck among all the rubble, or trip over the sprawled out bodies of the previously knocked out Goons. This means lots of Goons crashing into other Goons. Utter hilarity. The kids at home are cheering.

Theo: Just what we needed. Well done.

Norbert: *(sighs)* Once again, there's proof that it's a hard life being a minion in the ranks of the Blackskull Empire. Looks like those guys in the black armor definitely bit off more than they could chew.

Sabrina: Have we won now?

Norbert: Haha, you wish! There is no time to rest at all. I'll have to challenge you heroes a whole lot more. You beat or discouraged a horde of Goons. But again—Goons! They are only the advance guard that gets sent out before the heavy hitters arrive. And that's exactly what I was going to present to you now.

Melissa: All right, are we keeping the initiative order here?

Norbert: We can. It's easy on the bookkeeping.

Theo: Yeah, let's show the friends of Nekrottus what real Guardians of Iconia are made of! Everything so far was just a practice session.

Sabrina: Ah, well. I'm ready. Who are we getting as opponents now?

Norbert: Just a moment. I have your opponents on my GMC sheets right here. All are capable Blackskull Empire villains. There will be three of them, just as there were three individual Goon Squads. The fight here is meant to be a simple one. There are only two waves of opponents. The Goons were the first wave. Now that those are disposed of, this leaves the full-fledged villains.

Melissa: Are they about as powerful as our characters?

Norbert: That's the idea. But remember that their numbers need not exactly match yours. They may have more points, and specific assets of evil, you know. I cannot tell you every detail.

Melissa: Understood.

Norbert: Three villains, since today you are a group of three PCs, and that's because I am such a sweet and lenient Game Master. After all, I could have picked five or six villains with Star Power 3 each, a really massive force. But I am keeping things somewhat simple, so there will be three major GMCs. I figured each of you could face one of them, but they'll get to take active checks next. They act, you react.

Sabrina: So you are going to tell us which one is going directly for which player-character?

Norbert: Yup. I have to. I am going to introduce them first. In just a few words. Then they'll do something... they get to use one active

check against you guys. After that is settled, you can take turns reacting to them. So... keeping our method of determining DNs for defending first, and this is important, we'll do it this way: After I'm done describing to you what is coming your way, you must pick Traits to use in a reactive manner. Then you'll roll and figure out the DNs for the villains' actions. In the turns after that, I'll roll dice again for the opponents, simply to determine new DNs, and you roll against those. Is that clear?

Theo: *(slowly)* Umm, I think you may have lost me there for a minute or so.

Norbert: Come on, it's easy... Reactions are determined first. We'll do that to get the hard numbers before the attacks hit, so to say. Only this time, I have access to a whole range of fancy Traits, plus Linking, and maybe Benefit Dice, and re-rolling, and so forth. GM Oomph is at 6. You guys still have your default Base Oomph each.

Melissa: So, 3 again per character?

Norbert: 3 points of Oomph. That's right.

Theo: And let's see those mean old villains.

Norbert: I hope you'll like them. I've really been looking forward to using these guys. The mood changes significantly as the Blackskull Empire theme comes on, accompanying the bad guys' arrival. First of all, you all notice that there is now a slow-going levitating oval of yellow energy that comes floating from somewhere outside into the center of the cave. This oval is acting like a solid platform, carrying three human-sized characters. It seems like they are using this strange tech to move past the unceremonious piles of beat up Goons. Sorry, I just don't see major GMCs wading through the results of the damage you've just caused. That would be a little beneath them, as these guys are in effect generals in Nekrottus's army.

Sabrina: Can we just hit the energy platform?

Melissa: Yeah, that would be kind of cool here, so that way we may take out all three of them, just knocking them off the floating disc or whatever that is...

Norbert: You're thinking in terms of tactics and efficiency. I can't say I don't like that. I would probably try to go for the same if I were in your shoes. But it's not your turn now. So, no attacks on the energy platform. I am only using it as a visual effect for a few seconds. The platform makes its short flight just as you three are surveying the situation in the cave, making sure that the Goons are knocked out, prone, or retreating slowly. So that's already happened. No changes. The platform touches the rocky ground in the middle of the room and simply dissolves in a small flash. You'll recognize an old familiar face. It's a grizzled, thin, gangly Buzzardoid male in Nekrottus's employ.

Melissa: Oh no. I know him. He's dangerous.

Norbert: Yup. You spot him right there, in the middle of the trio. It's that crazy, unpredictable fiend called Buzzard Man. Crazy in a

bad way, that is. The other two are slightly newer. You might have faced them a handful of times before this season, or at least spotted them from afar in a battle, and if you weren't in a battle...

Melissa: ... Motor-Mouth wasn't.

Norbert: Okay, so you know their faces and basic descriptions from the records in the royal enemy library in King Rastor's palace in Haven. It's as simple as that. This time the evil overlord has sent two other leaders. Both are grim, cold and scheming, possibly helping on this mission to counterbalance Buzzard Man's craziness.

Sabrina: Come on, who are they?

Norbert: Simple. You all see... Eye-Catcher and Chillout. That would be bad news, if you guys weren't such formidable heroes.

The GM has now pulled out a sheet of paper with the full game stats for the three villains that are about to square off against the heroes. The stats for the GMCs in question are organized mostly the same way as the ones for player-characters. We'll use the same short format here. The players do not see these stats, especially the exact Trait names or numbers.

BUZZARD MAN (GMC)

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Flying Commander
- ☐ Insane birdman
- ☐ Unpredictable behavior
- ☐ Despises the Sky Realm

Traits

BIRD-LIKE EYESIGHT 5
SHARP CLAWS 4
WINGED FLIGHT 4 (Action Feature; Situational Boost – when locked in aerial combat)
OPPORTUNISTIC COMBATANT 3
BUZZARD STAFF 2 (Accessory; Advantage – can also shoot an energy ray at rating 4)
AWKWARD-LOOKING AGILITY 2
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SKY REALM 2
SHOOTING 2
PILOTING 1

CHILLOUT (GMC)

Star Power: 3



Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Frosty Servant of the Empire
- ☐ Thinks that the Blackskull Empire is really a force of good
- ☐ Radiates a slight aura of cold
- ☐ Secretly in love with Frostina, a commoner in his village

Traits

ICE SWORD 5 (Action Feature; Advantage – when this weapon causes a Setback Token, roll a die: if you roll an 11 or 12, it causes two Setback Tokens instead; Accessory)
 MASTERFUL COMBATANT 4
 SURVIVE IN AN ARCTIC SURROUNDING 4
 ARMOR 3 (Advantage – has several ice-blades jutting from the shoulders and forearms; Accessory)
 ATHLETIC 3
 HARDENED TOUGHNESS 2
 PHYSICAL MIGHT 2
 SHARP MIND 2

At the end of the first round of the action scene, just as the Enemy GMCs have made their entrance, all relevant characters are at “full strength.” Their statuses in game terms are:

Azlara	<i>Oomph:</i> 3	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none
Full-Steam	<i>Oomph:</i> 3	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none
Motor-Mouth	<i>Oomph:</i> 3	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none
Buzzard Man	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none	
Chillout	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none	
Eye-Catcher	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none	
GM's Oomph: 6 (<i>The three enemy characters will all draw from the GM's pool of Oomph.</i>)		

Norbert (GM): (*continued*) ... Buzzard Man surveys the scene in the cave, his eyes glancing over the piles of defeated Goons. You can all tell he has got that crazed, menacing expression on his face. Just like the last time you fought him.

Theo: Is he attacking yet?

Norbert: Not quite. I’d like to give you a talking bit first. The villains don’t just pop up and hit you. I want them to say something first, just a little bit. So Buzzard Man gives off this one loud squawking noise, then adds, “Looks to me like the rebels want to play hardball for a change. What do you say, Chillout?,” and Chillout gruffly remarks, “Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear! In all my many years as a commander...”

EYE-CATCHER (GMC)

Star Power: 3



Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Three-Eyed Bounty Hunter
- ☐ She has loyalty only to one side... her own side
- ☐ Susceptible to bright light
- ☐ Covets money above all else
- ☐ Quiet confidence

Traits

ENHANCED SIGHT 5 (Advantage – can see through objects that are less than a foot thick)
 MASTER OF TRACKING 4
 MIGHTY FIGHTER 4
 MAN-CATCHER 3 (Accessory; Action Feature)
 SLINKY ARMOR 3 (Accessory)
 RUGGED 3
 PHYSICALLY FIT 2
 STRONG-WILLED 1

Theo: Hey, what? How can he have been a commander for many years? I thought he was a relatively new character.

Sabrina: Right. Chillout was among the villains added to the show earlier this season ... So isn’t all of that still happening in the same year?

Norbert: Very funny. Have you guys ever noticed how strangely time passes in a cartoon? You don’t even have to worry about that. “In all my years ...,” that’s just a cliché thing that army characters like to say.

Sabrina: Got it.

Norbert: Well, so he says, “In all my many years as a commander, I have never had to lead such puny and incompetent foot soldiers. We really have to rethink that unit’s training regimen as soon as we get back.” Eye-Catcher, the three-eyed lady, also looks very irritated now. She shouts, “I can’t believe it. Who is beating back our forces in here? I only see a girl on a bear, a fighting oven, and over there in the corner, I think that’s one of those Globbit troublemakers. I heard that lot are only good at hiding and screaming...”

Melissa: (*as Motor-Mouth*) Hey! I heard that.

Norbert: I’m sure she wanted you to hear that. Anyway, Chillout gruffly responds, “Enough talk. We’ll teach them a lesson they won’t easily forget,” and the three villains break their formation and start darting through the cave. Let’s see... Buzzard Man is the flyer. He takes off on his big wings and has no trouble covering the short distance to any of you. He’s also got keen

eyesight like a bird of prey, and looking at his stats here, he’s quite nimble. This time he decides on attacking Azlara, maybe because she is riding that bear and looks like the most dangerous target. Sabrina ... I mean, Azlara ... What do you do?

Sabrina: Here is what: You all know that I possess the MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM, a magical gem from my home country, and one that has served me well in many ways in the past. Certainly, if I concentrate on the power of the MYSTICAL JEWEL, it may swiftly create an aura of protection around me, keeping me from harm.

Norbert: Interesting ... Defending with only the jewel? That’s new, and totally doable.

Theo: Time to roll your dice, isn’t it?

Melissa: But the defense rolls have to be figured out first.

Norbert: Yes, thank you. That’s exactly what I’d like you to do. And I remember that the MYSTICAL JEWEL comes with its own special conditions. As a matter of fact, if you want to use it at this point, look at the Special Rule for it: Requires total concentration and a check using the jewel’s rating versus a DN of 5. That’s still applicable. Give me that extra roll. That’s only to activate the power you want.

Sabrina: (*rolls*) I’ve got an 8. Added to the Trait rating, I’d have a total of 12.

Melissa: So she has made it.

Norbert: Um ... sorry, no. Sadly, a basic difficulty number of 5 here means that this works like a rating before rolling a check. With a rating of 4, she would almost always beat DN 5. But that’s not the applicable total. I have to roll a d12 myself and add it to 5. You could do it yourself if you wanted to, but here I’ve already got all those shiny dice in front of me, and since this rating represents something magical working against you, I’ll roll it. (*rolls*) I’ve got ... a 6. Lucky you. 6 added to my 5 gives me 11. Your check result beat that, so we are good to go. The trick worked, and the jewel in your hand weaves a bright shimmering shield of light right in front you, where you are likely going to need it next. But we don’t know the jewel’s effectiveness, yet. That is a separate roll ... just a moment, please.

Theo: Sorry to interrupt you here, Norbert, but I was peeking over at Sabrina’s bio-file, and the way I understand it, that Disadvantage with the extra DN is connected to situations where she’s trying to use the MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM with its Advantage, the thing where she can see faraway places with the help of the amulet or whatever. So maybe she shouldn’t even have had to roll a check there.

Sabrina: Too late for that, I assume. I just rolled it. Or can I use that result for something else?

Melissa: Does it even matter?

Norbert: Now, let me take another look at that ... Hmm, well,

the text is not that clear there. In fact, it may mean both! The Disadvantage goes in tandem with the Advantage spelled out for the Trait, or it applies to all checks with the MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM. The rules don’t always spell out exactly if and when two different Special Rules affect each other, but ordinarily, they should. When you have an adverse Special Rule and a non-adverse one, I mean, provided we are talking about one and the same Trait. The text is in fact wide open to interpretations, but you know what, guys ... You’re probably right in assuming that the author’s original intention was to have that extra DN 5 for the jewel’s special property, like seeing things and places that are far away. Otherwise the Trait would be fairly limited in its power. Nevertheless, I can salvage this. No problem. The roll is still good, and as your GM, I’ll decide that it applies here also. I think it’s fair because Sabrina’s character is using the jewel during a frantic action scene, and there might be other mystical energies and force fields close by that are impeding the item somewhat.

Melissa: Are you just trying to be clever today?

Norbert: What do you mean, trying? Haha. Well, as a matter of fact, here’s what we’ll do: That additional check is appropriate here, in this very scene, because creating a force field to shield yourself on the fly is very probably one of the more unusual applications of this Trait. Normally, I could have or should have asked you to spend Oomph on this for some Scene Editing to get the same effect. I agree that rolling against a 5 plus a die roll result is on the difficult side. Actually, you have about a 50 percent chance to succeed there every time. If you’re cool with that, Sabrina, we’ll keep that result and you don’t have to spend Oomph.

Sabrina: That Oomph might come in handy very soon. I’d rather keep it this round. So, yes.

Norbert: Fine. That’s good. So we can continue from there?

Melissa: Just do it. You’re the GM.

Norbert: Right. But I want everybody to feel included and understood.

Theo: Yeah, it’s perfectly fine with me.

Norbert: So ... in terms of the goings-on in the cartoon, we, or the television viewers rather, are all looking at the shot of Azlara still trying to activate the jewel in her Karztec amulet or whatever it is. The horned bear stands perfectly still even though it’s also scared and aggressive, and Azlara is sitting in her saddle there, and can’t do anything but concentrate on the MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM. Will it obey her this time?

Sabrina: Hmm. I already checked on my sheet whether or not I’ve got a Quality to help me along with this check, but there is none that really fits for using the jewel, and I want to save those usages for a little later. Guess I take the risk. Just a normal die roll. Here goes ... (*rolls*) Oops, that’s only a 3. That means, added to the rating in MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM, a 7 total. Can I re-roll that?



Norbert: By spending a point of your Oomph, you can.

Sabrina: Well, Azlara doesn't want to get knocked right out of the saddle. And holding on to my Oomph may not be that clever, either.

Theo: True. You may want to spend the Oomph at some point, and Norbert has told us that this is pretty much the finale.

Sabrina: Okay, re-roll please. That's just a d12 roll again?

Norbert: Correct. The rule is called "Try It Again!" in the book. You repeat your die roll and take the second result only if it's higher than the originally rolled one.

Sabrina: All right. I like that. So I know I'm not going to make myself worse with this.

Norbert: That's the idea. 1 point of your Oomph goes away. So you're at 2 Oomph now, and the worst that can happen is that you get the same result a second time. So roll please.

Sabrina: Still a bit of a risk, but the odds aren't bad. *(rolls)* It's an 11. Yowzah. So, that means 15 total.

Theo: Nice.

Melissa: That should make a pretty solid defense for the villain to face.

Norbert: We'll see in a moment. Right, so you've got a 15. That is relatively high. A stiff opposition to whatever Buzzard Man might try in this scene. But he wouldn't be such an impressive and

recurring bad guy if he didn't also give it his all. Let me take it one step at a time... *(looks up Buzzard Man's game stats)* All right, friends. As I said, he is crazy, and he'd really like to prove something here and show the other villains how it's done.

Theo: Let's watch him goof it up, man. Sabrina, I'm keeping my fingers crossed for you and your bear.

Sabrina: Thank you.

Norbert: All right. Buzzard Man will use his Trait for flying, along with some extras. Don't let this overwhelm you. First of all, he's got the benefit of WINGED FLIGHT to build momentum. WINGED FLIGHT is his most obvious Trait, and he's got it at a rating of 4. He's taking his BIRD-LIKE EYESIGHT as a Linked Trait, which gives him a +3 bonus right there, getting his base up to 7...

Melissa: Oh dear, this doesn't look so good...

Norbert: Hey, it's only my first real big villain maneuver, and knowing my luck with dice lately when I roll for villains... Anyhow, he's at 7 with that, then I take the bonus from his BUZZARD STAFF because it's an Accessory of his action figure, another +1 here, and I'll use up the box for his Standard Quality called "Insane Birdman"... bringing him up to 10 before rolling...

Sabrina: What--?

Theo: Oh, poor Azlara is going to be toast soon.

Melissa: What was that again with keeping your fingers crossed?

Norbert: I'm only using standard rules here. Your character has got the same chances when you combine Traits and Qualities. So, 10 for Buzzard Man, and... haha, I'll say he goes for broke and also throws in his Signature Quality because it fits.

Theo: I knew it!

Norbert: All right. Technically, the Signature Quality is "Flying Commander", so it makes sense that he's going to take it along with a check based on WINGED FLIGHT. Flight, flying, wings, aerial stuff... sure thing, it's his specialty. "Flying Commander" could give him one or two Benefit Dice, but I am only tapping into it once, for one Benefit Die. I'll still get to roll three dice because WINGED FLIGHT comes with the Action Feature Special Rule...

Sabrina: *(grumble, grumble...)*

Norbert: ...yeah, it's his Action Feature, and it even includes a Situational Boost for aerial combat. Don't worry, I am not taking that Benefit Die. I'm limited to three dice at once, and I'd also say it isn't entirely aerial because you're inside a cave, and Azlara is still on the ground riding an animal. If you were both flying or using flying vehicles, that's when he'd have access to the boost. But he's got a 10 plus... *(rolls 3 dice)* Dang! You know what? I've just rolled two 3s and a 4.

Melissa: Haha! That'll teach the evil birdman.

Norbert: So, 10 +4, a total of 14. Matched against Sabrina's DN 15 for reacting. Close, Sabrina, very close. The MYSTICAL JEWEL really helped you out.

Sabrina: Whew. So what happens?

Norbert: I'll describe it, as I'm responsible for these GMCs and basically everything that they do. Apparently, Buzzard Man was going for that big flying charge, gaining momentum and looking really intense and powerful for a few seconds in the scene, with his evil grin and all. He propelled himself through the air, going in a straight line, staring at you with his BIRD-LIKE EYESIGHT, and holding the BUZZARD STAFF in front of him like a spear, or rather, like a medieval jousting lance. Right upon impact with your jewel's new force field, the tip of his staff is stopped and bounced back as if hitting a rubbery, flexible surface... insert a dumb cheesy sound effect here if you want... and you all see him unceremoniously hurled back several feet. This messes up his intended flight trajectory, and he curls up in mid air, losing a bunch of feathers, doing a few flips and almost collides with one of the stalactites nearby. All in all, his ego is slightly bruised. He shakes himself... "Ouch! Squawk. Ouch!" But mind you, he is still ready for action next turn.

Sabrina: I see. And no Setback Token here?

Norbert: No, nobody takes a Setback Token because this was Buzzard Man's action, and your reaction. Everybody's still safe, so to say. The action in general continues...

Sabrina: Oh, I already know what I'd like to give the bird-guy as a counter now...!

Norbert: Good. I'm sure you've got a great idea. Make a note and hold on to it for a moment. We have to continue with the next attacker, the next action in the group, you know.

Sabrina: Right. I'm patient.

Norbert: Remember that all these little actions and combat maneuvers happen simultaneously, or almost simultaneously. That's very important. However, we have to resolve everybody's dice rolls one by one, and also, the viewers watching the cartoon episode can't see all these things happen at once. Each of the heroes will be featured... kind of in their own little spotlight mini-scene.

Melissa: Sure, that is how it is always done.

Norbert: We've only played out Buzzard Man's failed aerial assault. It's obvious that he didn't manage to spear Azlara. The MYSTICAL JEWEL OF AYAM proved quite powerful... at least for this one turn. Well done. Up next, oh yeah, we've got none other than the ice-cold fiend, the wintry warrior, Chillout.

Melissa: *(as Motor-Mouth)* Brrrrr. Oh goodness... he's giving me the chills all right.

Norbert: Don't let that be one of your concerns at the moment. He is not about to hit you.

Melissa: Oh good.

Norbert: You'll get to face Eye-Catcher in a bit.

Melissa: Man...

Norbert: It'll be great fun. Don't worry about it. Next we have... Full-Steam, preparing, getting to decide on a reaction for Chillout. *(towards Theo)* OK, Theo. Your character knows that Chillout will be his opponent in one-on-one combat next. He, I mean Full-Steam, also knows that Chillout will most probably go for a heavy hit with his weapon, the infamous ICE SWORD. That's a huge bluish sword with mean edges that can freeze opponents instantly. It's the weapon he is basically known for, and is wielding with great precision and mercilessness.

Theo: *(moans)* Aw, man. That's tough. And let me take a quick guess here, the ICE SWORD that he's got is also conveniently his Action Feature?

Norbert: You are right. Conveniently, perhaps. And old Chillout also appears to be the one villain most prepared and most at home in a cold, windy climate up here in the mountains.

Theo: That's so typical.

Norbert: It's not so bad. There are many things you can do to stop him, or evade or whatever. And don't worry too much about the Action Feature. It gives me one Benefit Die in this scene, and since a character can only have one Action Feature, you are evenly matched.

Theo: Okay. Thanks, Norbert. So... I know the ice attack is already underway; he is coming for me with a sword of ice or something. Is he running also?

Norbert: Taking great confident strides. No running. He doesn't have to, or maybe doesn't want to. He is just covering a few yards there, readying his trademark weapon and swinging it left and right. He, too, looks very dangerous.

Melissa: Isn't Full-Steam a big brutish machine, all made of iron and stuff? Maybe Chillout's blade won't even affect him so much?

Norbert: That's a big "maybe" right there. In a cartoon world, you don't know. You never can tell. It looks like Chillout has singled out Full-Steam as a target because he is wide and heavy and easy to hit, and he's also emitting steam and soot and heat, which he doesn't seem to like at all.

Theo: I think I know what I am going to do.

Norbert: Good. Just before his action, Chillout looks at you intently and says, "What the heck are you supposed to be, you black oven? I'll make sure that your furnace is frozen shut, and you won't bother us again..."

Theo: *(as Full-Steam)* Keep dreaming, baldy.

Norbert: Hahahah. So you ready yourself for his action. What are you going to do?

Melissa: *(as Motor-Mouth)* Punch him with your MIGHTY FISTS OF IRON, big Choo-Choo!

Theo: *(as Full-Steam, mocking anger)* Ah, for Chrissake, Pliggut! We as Guardians of Iconia don't alert the bad guys to our battle plans and special moves, you understand? *(as himself)* Now I have to scrap that for this turn... Anyway, I gotta think of something more evasive. Defense, not offense. What could help me here? Give me a second...

Norbert: I'm pretty sure that Full-Steam could simply defend himself with his HEAVY Trait, maybe linked to something else? Or just run into another direction? React with RUN FAST?

Theo: Naw, I don't want to do that. I am not fleeing this fine battle. I'd rather confront him.

Norbert: *(comparing notes and peeking at the Full-Steam bio-file)* Okay. HEAVY would be my first choice if I were you now, Theo. It even comes with a Special Rule that states you get to roll a Benefit Die with it if you're using the Trait for a defensive purpose.

Theo: Defending by being HEAVY? That's not so elegant, actually. *(laughs)*

Norbert: Well, I was thinking HEAVY as in "solid" or "immovable". If a normal weapon comes down on your character, it is more like a stick hitting an old steam-powered locomotive from way back when...

Theo: But... but... no, I'll do it my way. Full-Steam is still a bit concerned about getting frozen, or a layer of ice sticking his iron body to the ground if Chillout succeeds. I'll save my Traits HEAVY and MIGHTY FIST OF IRON for later when it's my turn to attack, as it were. Instead, I want to spend one point of Oomph to activate my ability to PUFF OUT STEAM.

Norbert: Oh, you want to quickly create a lot of steam to obscure yourself, making yourself harder to it?

Theo: Pretty much, yes.

Norbert: Go right ahead. That's a new move.

Theo: Right. So... What do I do? I've got... yes, I've got PUFF OUT STEAM at 4. It also has "Area" as a Special Rule, but that is moot now because it only helps me when I'm the active side. And... well, I'll go for the bonuses from Standard Qualities since we're all doing that now. To everyone who knows Full-Steam and has watched him on our show, it's a well-known fact that "His confidence borders on foolishness". A Standard Quality. I'll mark it and take the +2 bonus from that, as I think it totally applies. And I'll do the same for one of my two boxes of "Rapid Machine Giant". That allows me to roll two d12 and take the highest. That

should do the trick. 4 +2 is 6. I can use up my Signature Quality for this, right?

Norbert: You absolutely can. I won't stop you.

Theo: I am taking the "Rapid Machine Giant" Quality since it will explain that I can PUFF OUT STEAM very rapidly at times... and now I need big billowing clouds of smoke to disappear behind.

Norbert: Quite unusual, but understandable.

Sabrina: Isn't his smoke going to impair our vision as well? More importantly perhaps, our breathing?

Norbert: Naw. Not a big deal, I think. It's just another cartoon ability, and being a hero and a Guardian of Iconia, I'm relatively certain that our friend Full-Steam can create his smokescreen very precisely, and make it appear only where he really wants it, and only block the view of his opponent, or several opponents. Remember, real physics don't apply.

Theo: I'm rolling now... *(rolls 2 dice)* Kaboom! I've got... a 5, and a 10. Added to the 4 from the Trait and the +2 bonus, that's 16 total.

Norbert: Nice. You guys really know how to play. The villain will have his work cut out right now. Chillout now has to get to at least 16, and he very well might. For his action this turn, Chillout is indeed using his ICE SWORD Trait. A rating of 5, with a bonus of +1 from MASTERFUL COMBATANT. And he's using it as an Action Feature... We have to think of promoting his action figure, too! *(aside)* Kids, remember that there now is an all-new fearsome villain figure of Chillout with an ice-sword made of unique blue glow-in-the-dark plastic. Chills galore. *(to the players)* Rolling my dice right here. *(rolls)* Bah, I only got a 3 and a 6. The 6 is the result that counts. So, that's 12 total. Luckily for your character, I am not re-rolling that.

Theo: Yes! He's only swinging at my smoke. Choo-choo!!

Norbert: Suddenly, Chillout can't see where Full-Steam is standing. He was so sure of himself... but no, he didn't get his wish. In vain, he savagely swings at a bit of white smoke generated from the vents on Full-Steam's massive shoulders. You all can feel the waves of deep-freezing cold cutting through the already cold mountain air, but it's only a brief effect and doesn't cause any Setback Tokens. It looks like the ICE SWORD is only making Full-Steam's locomotive steam freeze up, turning it into tiny glistening ice crystals.

Theo: Reaction successful. Now let's see how our pal Motor-Mouth is doing.

Norbert: Okay, this is going to be a bit difficult for him, also. Like I said before, Melissa, the third and final baddie is now rushing towards your character. Maybe Eye-Catcher has even caught a glimpse of her fellow generals' unsuccessful actions against the heroes, which I'm sure enrages her even further. With grim determination and all of her three eyes focused on you, she wants to catch Motor-Mouth with her fork-shaped pole weapon.

Melissa: Oh dear! She has a double size advantage on me, and from what she said earlier, I know she already hates Globbits.

Norbert: Ah, maybe not outright hatred, but she definitely thinks of you as a nuisance and an easy target. How are you going to react to her aggression?

Melissa: You know that Motor-Mouth is usually best when he decides to just run or hide. However, I want him to go for something new. Something not seen so much on Warriors of the Cosmos. Maybe the quick victory over so many Goons, and the unorthodox defenses demonstrated a moment ago by both Azlara and Full-Steam have had a beneficial effect on Motor-Mouth's way of thinking in a battle. He does have fighter-like Traits, after all. I want to use a bit of those.

Norbert: Not a problem. Just tell me which ones, and then you'll roll just like the others to establish a DN.

Melissa: Fine. I was thinking that this turn, faced with the new danger, Pliggut Ploo could draw his famous STUBBY SWORD. So, that's a rating of 2, and a +1 bonus from SWORD-FIGHTER. Those two I want to link. But it'll still be a Globbit type of move. So, imagine Motor-Mouth taking a stand, positioning himself somewhere close to the middle of the cave, amidst everything else that's going on now. He wants to find a spot where he can take a secure standing pose, balanced, and there sticks out his small sword, sorry, his STUBBY SWORD, clutching the handle with both his hands like a lifeline at sea, cramping up in that position. He hopes that he can make happen exactly what he remembers from taking lessons to be a SWORD-FIGHTER. When he is holding his sword like that, its point should be at about belly height for a human such as Eye-Catcher.

Norbert: Approximately, yes. Go on.

Melissa: *(as Motor-Mouth)* Guys, I hope I'm not going to regret this... too much. *(as herself)* So, he is standing there, almost stiff with fear, turning his head to the side with both eyes squeezed shut, entirely ineffective and ridiculous, you know? And he is visibly shaking in his boots, with a cheesy sound effect to accompany that. Looks like I only have STUBBY SWORD at 2 and a +1 bonus.

Sabrina: Roll your die then.

Norbert: Indeed. But before you do, and please don't take this the wrong way, I am taking Motor-Mouth's "Tends to be a coward" Quality to act against him on this turn.

Melissa: Say what? You didn't do that to the others.

Norbert: It just arises from the context in that situation. Motor-Mouth is just not that efficient a swordfighter due to his well-known cowardice. And he's scared of pretty much everything in this cave at this point. You can try for a heroic maneuver with your Traits just as described. But with the Standard Quality affecting you adversely this time, your opponent gets a +2 bonus to their action check.

Melissa: *(sighs)* OK, now I remember.

Norbert: You'll get something out of it in any case...

Melissa: What? An Insta-Defeat?

Norbert: No, a new point of Oomph. I am giving a one-time bonus of +2 to Eye-Catcher now, but in return you earn a point of Oomph. Of course, you cannot spend that newly gained point right now, for the same reaction.

Sabrina: That seems fair, but it's a tough situation for Motor-Mouth nonetheless.

Melissa: I guess I'll brave it. Here's my d12 and I got... a 10. Wow! That's not so bad. A 2 +1 and the 10 from the roll, 13 total.

Norbert: Eye-Catcher has to roll against a DN 13 now. Fine. You've all had pretty similar numbers on your reactions now. Did you notice? Kind of in the same range there. In any case, Eye-Catcher is coming now. In order not to stretch out the fighting too much, she is rather going for that big attack, so her action will seem kind of front-loaded. I'm using her MAN-CATCHER at 3, and she has got ENHANCED SIGHT 5, which provides her with a +3 bonus when I link it, and she is making the most of this situation since she's a MIGHTY FIGHTER, linking it for another +1. That's a legal three-Trait combo because MAN-CATCHER is defined as an Accessory. 3 +3 +1, she's at 7 now. She could also take a Benefit Die from MAN-CATCHER being an Action Feature, but don't worry. I decided I'm not going to exploit it this turn.

Theo: But she also has another +2 from exploiting Motor-Mouth's cowardice Quality.

Sabrina: Oh crud.

Norbert: Correct. So she has got 7 +2, a 9. She only has to get a 4 or higher on a die roll to inflict a Setback Token on Melissa's character, Motor-Mouth.

Melissa: This is just what I need. But all right...

Theo: By the way, why didn't you just take MIGHTY FIGHTER as the primary Trait this turn, and add all the bonuses to that? That would seem more organic to me, more intuitive.

Norbert: Perhaps, Theo. However, I realized that MAN-CATCHER has to be the primary Trait because the Action Feature Special Rule dictates that. As for the randomizer here... *(rolls)* Haha! A classic bumble by the bad guys. I rolled a 1. A Flub. So, all my bonuses and prep didn't work at all. In addition, Eye-Catcher will take one Setback Token herself for failing so spectacularly. Also, and this should please you quite a bit, since her flubbed check involved a Trait that's an Accessory, that Trait is Deactivated for the remainder of this scene.

Melissa: She's getting a token? I thought she was the active side in the conflict.

Theo: It happens that way when you roll a natural 1.

Norbert: That's it. And her MAN-CATCHER is out of the scene as well. So how does this work in the cartoon--? Give me a moment. You're both using your weapons, so... all right, here's what I'm imagining: Eye-Catcher wanted to hit you with a dramatic lunge with the long two-handed fork, and in a strange twist of fate, Motor-Mouth's fear actually made him stick out the blade of his STUBBY SWORD at just the right angle... for himself, that is. The villainess totally overestimated herself in true villain fashion, and the fork-like thing on the MAN-CATCHER is getting caught in a weird way on Motor-Mouth's sword. This results in... Eye-Catcher being hoisted off the ground and forcefully flung through the air, like an unintentional pole vaulter, except that there is no mat for her to land on. She crashes down somewhere on the hard rocky ground. The MAN-CATCHER falls down a crack in the cave, somewhere where she cannot easily retrieve it.

Sabrina: (as Azlara) Nice job, Double M!

Melissa: Motor-Mouth hears her sudden fall, then opens his eyes, looking around... (as Motor-Mouth) Hey, I did it! Did you see that? I stopped a villain. Yay. (clears her throat quickly) Of course, I kind of knew all along that I'd do that. I'm a noble knight of the Globbit people after all. Brave and unshakable! Oh yes, exactly. That's what I am.

Theo: (as Full-Steam) Yeah, little buddy. We knew that.

Sabrina: (as Azlara) Everybody still standing? Good. Now let's pull together and give them a beating in return.

Norbert: We still have Azlara facing Buzzard Man. You're both ready to go. Same thing for Full-Steam, who can now retaliate on Chillout, continuing to produce steam or something... and over here, Motor-Mouth and Eye-Catcher, squaring off. Only Eye-Catcher has taken a single Setback Token, and that's from the Flub. Bad luck. Now the sides are switched. Your heroes can act, and the villains react. Going back to Azlara...

Sabrina: Yes, sure. Azlara is gathering her strength and courage. I think she'll switch weapons before her action, sheathing her CURVED SHORT SWORD and replacing it with the SPEAR. That way the kids at home can also be reminded that the Azlara action figure has both weapons...

Norbert: Sweet.

Sabrina: So, I think I'm going to... yeah, I'm retaliating with my Trait called VERSATILE COMBATANT, which grants me a Situational Boost when I link the SPEAR to it.

Melissa: Very clever choice.

Sabrina: Okay. VERSATILE COMBATANT linked with SPEAR is not that high. The two Traits give me a 3, that's 2 +1. Should I use my "Karztec Princess" along with that? That could dramatically increase my chances of scoring a high total, but maybe hurling a SPEAR is not that princess-like in this world? I'm not sure.

Norbert: I'd let you use it, but once the box next to a Standard Quality is marked, it is used up for that episode.

Sabrina: I know. It's not an easy decision. Okay, I'm not tapping it this time. I have one Benefit Die from the Situational Boost Special Rule.

Norbert: Yes, you do. This is exciting. But don't roll just yet. I have to do the DN for the other side first, only to maintain consistency. All right, with Buzzard Man reacting to you, I'll say he certainly thinks he's the better fighter with a spear. The BUZZARD STAFF is also a kind of spear, don't you think? Then again, he knows that the BUZZARD STAFF hasn't been successful against your mystical energy shield just a moment ago. Since he is crazy, he drops his signature weapon to the ground right next to him, leaving it there for a moment. In a flash of overconfidence, he is going to rely on his Trait named OPPORTUNISTIC COMBATANT, with his AWKWARD-LOOKING AGILITY linked to it for +1. That's 3 +1, and for an extra edge, I'll tally his box for the Standard Quality "Unpredictable behavior". 3 +1 +2, that's 6, pretty solid, and here's his die roll for... (rolls) an 8! He's got a 14 total.

Sabrina: (as Azlara) Pshaw. This reminds me of quail-hunting back in the grasslands of the Karztec realm. Let's see you dodge this one, bird-brain... (as herself) Hand me that other die over there please. (rolls 2 dice) A 2... and a 12! That was about time.

Theo: Woohoo! Critical.

Sabrina: My 3 from the Traits added to 12 is 15, and I get a +6 bonus since my Star Power is 3. That's a 21 total.

Norbert: It is, absolutely. That's the first critical success in a while. By the way, since your characters are all equals at Star Power 3, you automatically know that your bonus when rolling 12s is a flat +6. It's always twice your number in Star Power. Unfortunately, these villains are also Star Power 3.

Sabrina: So, is Buzzard Man out?

Norbert: Well, you were going to run him through with an Olympic-level javelin, weren't you? (smiles) Of course, I can't have impaling scenes and bloodshed on a 1980s retro-toon. You throw your spear across the big cave, at Buzzard Man, who had just got up from his previous mishap, and was hopping and zig-zagging around. What was your total again, Sabrina? A 21? Good. So your total and Buzzard Man's total happen to be seven steps apart, 21 to 14. As you probably know, that difference exceeds double your opponent's Star Power. Even if your total had come out one less, you would have got the same effect. Setback Tokens don't matter. He is Insta-Defeated.

Melissa: Whew. Good. So that takes care of the crazy guy.

Norbert: It will certainly help you guys if he stays down. I agree. I have all my GM Oomph still left, but I am not taking any to use "Not So Fast!" on Buzzard Man. I was going to save it for something else. Okay, one opponent knocked out. Well done.

Sabrina: And what happened to him? Is he badly hurt?

Norbert: Just a second... well, he still sort of evaded your thrown weapon, Sabrina, but he got disoriented and misjudged his height and angle, so he hit a big spiky stone and crumples to the ground in a sad pile of feathers and things.

Melissa: Serves him right, I say. We can get him out later.

Norbert: Up next, we have to find out how well Full-Steam is doing against Chillout, or the other way round. By the way, you can now hear Eye-Catcher say, "Sometimes I wonder why our master has promoted that Buzzardoid to the rank of general... Lousy fighting skills."

Theo: I can't wait to show the ice warrior what kind of steel I am made of.

Norbert: It'll be your turn in just a moment. Chillout has to weigh his options here. He's already been duped by an opponent he's not that familiar with. So which Trait am I going to use here? SHARP MIND? Or PHYSICAL MIGHT? ICE SWORD again? I am not so sure. Okay, he's just going to make do with ATHLETIC this time. When you come back to put the smack-down on him, that's what he is using to duck, to evade...

Theo: But I haven't told you what I was going to do next.

Norbert: I'm sorry if I got a little ahead of myself. I didn't mean to. It's true that you can still pretty much do anything for your action. What do you want to do?

Theo: Thanks for reminding me. I thought I should just step out from behind that curtain of white smoke that I generated before, and whack Chillout with the MIGHTY FISTS OF IRON. I'll wait for him to come really close, and then—bam! It's lights out, hopefully. I don't think I'll go very far with subtlety at this point. Also, I want to utilize the Benefit Die I'm getting from my Action Feature, and I'll take the other Benefit Die from the second box in "Rapid Machine Giant." So, a best-of-three roll... Is that legit?

Norbert: Right. You can do that. It will burn up your beneficial effects from your Signature Quality, and the Benefit Die from MIGHTY FISTS... That's okay. What else are these things for than for spending? I am rolling Chillout's reaction with ATHLETIC now. That's simple enough. (rolls) It's a 9, added to 3 would bring him up to 12. You know what? I will use 1 Oomph to re-roll that. (rolls again) A stupid 4 this time, no improvement. Well, it was a gamble. That 1 point of Oomph from my GM Pool goes into the big cartoon void. It did nothing. (Norbert's pool of GM Oomph for this scene is decreased from 6 to 5.)

Melissa: Haha.

Norbert: The new DN you are facing is... well, 12. Not more.

Theo: All right. Three dice at one... come on, I want this to be good. The kids may not buy my action figure if the Action Feature fails to defeat the villain on the show, you know. (rolls 3 dice) That's a 1, a 5, and an 11. The 11 counts, and is added to 4, for a total of 15.

Norbert: Your character steps through the remaining cloud of smoke as you intended, and Full-Steam's gigantic forearms come into view. His fists piston-punch Chillout in the arm and shoulder region. Must be quite painful. You are hitting him in the non-spiky parts of his armor, and he is having some trouble holding on to his sword. One Setback Token.

Theo: Well, I was hoping for a 12, naturally. Maybe next time.

Norbert: You are still locked in combat. This fight could go either way. I can't tell.

Melissa: So what's my opponent doing? She's still there with her long weapon, right?

Norbert: She certainly is. After her embarrassing fall, she gets up, rubbing her butt for a moment to get a cheap laugh. From the audience at home, I mean. She was going to use her MAN-CATCHER on you, but that is out of the scene, remember? So she can't use that Trait anymore. I say she picks up an old gnarly branch off the ground, something that serves as an impromptu club, and starts swinging it at you, using MIGHTY FIGHTER as the primary Trait this time, enhanced by a +1 from being STRONG-WILLED. And I'm using up her box from "Quiet confidence" to get a +2. MIGHTY FIGHTER is rated 4, so that'll be a 7 total before rolling a check. To complete the combo, she is using a Benefit Die from her Signature Quality on this. Wait for it... (rolls 2 dice) I rolled a 7... and an 8. The DN for you is 15 now.

Melissa: That much effort for a reaction? Oh well. Pulling out all the stops. Motor-Mouth is going to use SWORD-FIGHTER linked to FASTER THAN HE LOOKS, the latter being the primary Trait, so I'll have 4, and I'm taking a Benefit Die from my Signature Quality to increase my edge a little. Maybe he can use his speed to run past the shaft of the wooden club, striking Eye-Catcher's hands or thighs or poking her before she can hit him back. I roll... (rolls 2 dice) What now? Only a 3 and a 4? I don't like that. I can do better than that. May I spend that 1 point of Oomph that I just gained from having my "coward" Quality turned against me? I may, of course. So here goes... (rolls 1 die again) It's a natural 12. Woot! So, Motor-Mouth gets 3 +1 +12, and +6 since it's a Boon. That's 22 total.

Norbert: Good. With a 22 total, you easily beat Eye-Catcher's effort, which was a 15. In fact, you'd score an Insta-Defeat with that since the result is so high... But I want to use the GM Oomph to keep Eye-Catcher in this scene.

Theo: No way!

Melissa: Aren't you stealing my thunder here, old friend?

Norbert: I've wanted to keep that Oomph moving. I'm taking 2 Oomph out of my pool to turn Melissa's big hit into a normal hit, a normal success, which gives Eye-Catcher a Setback Token. She is at 2 Setback Tokens now, see? Again, your heroes have each taken their actions, and the action-reaction sides switch again. Only that with Buzzard Man unconscious or too dazed to fight, it's a 2-against-3 situation. And let me adjust my number of available Oomph over here. (Norbert's pool of GM Oomph for this scene is decreased from 5 to 3.)

Sabrina: Folks, what are we going to do? There are still two major bad guys who could kick our behinds. A teamwork action, maybe? I think Motor-Mouth is in trouble there, being chased by that witch with a big stick.

Melissa: Hey! *(as Motor-Mouth)* I can fight just as well as you, noble princess, don't forget that. We're all Guardians of Iconia.

Sabrina: *(smiles)* Yes, certainly.

At the end of the second round in the action scene (the first having been the heroes taking on the Goon Squads), the statuses of the various characters look like this:

Azlara	<i>Oomph:</i> 3	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none
Full-Steam	<i>Oomph:</i> 3	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none
Motor-Mouth	<i>Oomph:</i> 3	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> none
Buzzard Man	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> Defeated	
Chillout	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> 1	
Eye-Catcher	<i>Setback Tokens:</i> 2	
GM's Oomph: 3		

Theo: Two on three characters, you say? This probably boosts Full-Steam's confidence.

Norbert: It might. But the villains are not letting up. Remember they work for Nekrottus himself. I'm pretty sure he is one of those "I don't tolerate failure" types. Overlord of Evil and all that.

Melissa: Okay, so who is doing what now? Because I think Motor-Mouth is going to run away from Eye-Catcher after all... maybe she'll trip and sprain an ankle when she is coming after me, and I'll win that way.

Norbert: Good idea, actually. *(laughs)* I'm coming to that in a moment. The problem is that it is now the villains' turn, of course. Same opponents for you as before—that applies to Full-Steam and Motor-Mouth. Azlara doesn't have to take a reaction now because her previous opponent is defeated, which means he is out of this scene to all intents and purposes. He doesn't get any screen time for now. Chillout is still determined to punish Full-Steam. He is taking him seriously now, and you can see him brandishing his ICE SWORD once more.

Theo: It would be swell if we could Deactivate that Trait, too. Can you just roll another 1 please, Norbert?

Norbert: We'll see.

Theo: All right, if the dude is swinging his sword at me, I'll brace myself with all my metal goodness that Fliggitz the Wise has outfitted me with. This time, I am indeed going to utilize what Norbert was talking about earlier. I'll get an automatic Benefit Die for HEAVY if I use that sucker on a defense. Maybe I should PUFF OUT STEAM at the same time? Would that be possible...? Ah, I'd rather not. Forget about it. It would use

up another point of Oomph, and the effect is not so great. So, nothing else. Just the 5 from HEAVY, and I roll... *(rolls 2 dice)* a 7 and a 10. I add the 10, and got a 15 total.

Norbert: That's DN 15. Looking pretty solid. Good job, Theo. Now let me play the bad guy's part, as usual. Chillout stares at you with those cold, cold blue eyes. His breath is coming out hard and heavy now, forming white plumes of icy air. The Trait he'll use on you this turn is the ICE SWORD, rating 5, and he'll get a +1 link bonus from his PHYSICAL MIGHT. I see that Chillout has not yet used his Signature Quality boxes, and being somewhat enraged and impatient, he really wants that success now.

Melissa: Oh dear!

Norbert: ...I'll mark both boxes he's got in that Quality, "Frosty Servant of the Empire." So he gets the highest of three dice this time... rolling... *(rolls 3 dice)* a 4, a 5, and another 5. Sorry, that's lame. I'll re-roll that with the power of the Oomph *(tallying one point from the GM Oomph, this decreases the pool of Norbert's GM Oomph from 3 to 2)*.

Sabrina: Poor Full-Steam. Looks like here comes disaster.

Norbert: Just wait until you all know what I rolled. All right, this is a simple re-roll, done with only one die, as Benefit Dice cannot be repeated for this action... *(rolls 1 die)* it's an 11. Much better, for Chillout, that is. The 11 added to 5 and 1 makes a 17 total. That is just slightly above Theo's DN 15, and causing a Setback Token.

Theo: Sheesh. It could have been an Insta-Defeat, also.

Norbert: There's always that chance. But I've got another surprise coming your way, unfortunately for Full-Steam. This is no ordinary sword, and how much fun would that be? It is the ICE SWORD. That Trait was built with an extra Advantage. I am going to read it to you if you don't mind: "When this weapon causes a Setback Token, roll a die: if you roll an 11 or 12, it causes two Setback Tokens instead." It's a rare Special Rule, and sufficiently villainous.

Theo: Yikes!

Norbert: Here is that extra roll. It is not another action, and not related to the Trait rating. *(rolls)* A 12! Sorry, but there it is. So your one Setback Token turns into two. In the scene itself, Chillout is looking very confident and brimming with evil pleasure. He sinks the blade of his ICE SWORD deep down one of Full-Steam's vast shoulder-vents, making a clunking noise. Don't hold this against me, I can hint at some actual damage because Full-Steam is so clearly a kind of machine... Full-Steam stops moving right there, looking mortified. About half of our iron friend's body changes colors from black to the spooky purple and blue of Chillout's design. His iron body is shrieking and rattling loudly and in a really worrisome way. "Eat ice, you quirky machine!" he shouts.

Melissa: Little Motor-Mouth is watching this from over in the corner. It is all in clear view, right? So he is getting worried sick, holding both hands up to the sides of his head, bending his

antennae slightly before realizing that hurts... and, um, he'll just shout something short. I don't want to frighten the kids too much or risk censorship, so he'll shout "Oh, no!! Choo-choo!"

Norbert: I totally dig that. It's clearly in character. Up next, Motor-Mouth is going to get a chance to prepare himself for Eye-Catcher's action. She may have lost her favorite weapon, and she's looking a bit the worse for wear, but it looks like she is out to get you.

Melissa: Always picking on the little guy, hey? Okay, so Motor-Mouth is about to react with his ability to FIT INTO SMALL PLACES. And I'm certain you'll let me do that extra-fast, so I'm linking FASTER THAN HE LOOKS to it. That gives me 3 and +1, and my roll. If this works at all, I would like Motor-Mouth to zip right past his opponent and everybody else in the cave, hopping into a crack in the cave wall, just some sort of naturally formed hollow... then he is going to cower in there, hoping that Eye-Catcher cannot reach him as long as he's in the hollow.

Norbert: Very nice. I sort of want this to work also. It's just funny. Please roll the check.

Melissa: Reaction check coming up... *(rolls)* it's an 8. I hope that's high enough. 4 + 8 is 12.

Norbert: 12 total, I see. You can hear Eye-Catcher sprinting behind you, just a few feet away, then a little bit further as you're gaining velocity. She is very angry now... imagine her going "Stop! You silly something! You crazy little rebel rogue... You can't get away from me...!"



Theo: Haha. That sounds rather like she's in love with him and wants to keep him as a pet.

Norbert: It probably does. *(chuckles)* Oh well. I cannot have her spew something profane on this show. Anyway, there goes Eye-Catcher, the fearsome bounty hunter, just running desperately, huffing and puffing. As a matter of fact, in order to get a hold of Motor-Mouth, she'll use her Trait of being PHYSICALLY FIT. That is rated 2. But she can easily get a bonus from her ENHANCED SIGHT. Again, that is +3. And why not use up one of her Signature Quality boxes, "Three-Eyed Bounty Hunter"? We've been having fun with those...

Melissa: Yes... *(moans)* I should have known this was coming.

Norbert: Hey, it's only a Benefit Die. Everything I'm using is strictly from the basic rules. I have to tap these Qualities at some point, and if I don't do it this turn, I might not get another chance later. Big finale, remember? So, the second box gets ticked. There. And I'm rolling... *(rolls 2 dice)* a 1 and a 4. No worries. That is way lower than your result, Melissa. 4 added to 5 is 9, which doesn't beat your reaction.

Melissa: Woohoo! I did it. I'll hide in the hole, and she cannot hit me. Ha ha!

Norbert: For the moment, well, that's the way it is. Eye-Catcher stomps the ground angrily. I bet she wishes she'd have her MAN-CATCHER in hand now, because she could poke into that hollow on the side, and probably use it like a fork or a claw. *(as Eye-Catcher)* "Come out, Globbit! I swear when I get you I'll use you

as a new toy for my pet tiger. Get out of there and I may yet be merciful. You hear me??"

Theo: Man, those villains are always so stressed out and predictable.

Norbert: Are they? Hmm. I am not that sure. Nevertheless, you guys are not done yet.

Sabrina: Is it our turn to act again?

Norbert: I was just about to tell you. Yes, that's right.

Sabrina: Fine. Since I was just thinking, since Azlara has had to wait here for a bit not doing anything, she could decide to face a new opponent now. Would it be all right for her to try and do something against Eye-Catcher? I'd like her to do that now because she is standing there threatening my friend.

Norbert: She is not effectively doing anything to him right now, except shouting. But yes, the threats are certainly there, and you are free to pick the adversary you like, also.

Sabrina: Yes. I like that. So, it's my turn?

Norbert: It is. No objections.

Sabrina: Then I'd like Azlara, who is still firmly in the saddle riding the imposing horned bear, to steer the animal a few yards over to where Eye-Catcher is standing. Actually, I was thinking that she could use her OBSERVANT Trait to look how she could best catch her opponent unawares. And ANIMAL RIDING would be my Trait to make the bear move exactly where I wanted it to, make it rear up menacingly... preferably without dropping me in the process?

Norbert: Sure, I see.

Sabrina: Yeah, so you'll let me link OBSERVANT to ANIMAL RIDING?

Norbert: Oh, I have no reason not to. What do you want to do first, observing or riding? So we know which one the primary Trait is.

Sabrina: Um, it's ANIMAL RIDING that I want to base this thing off of. Yeah, that's the primary one. ANIMAL RIDING at 2, with a +1 from OBSERVANT. That's still a little low for me. So, this time, hmm ... I am going to use a point of Oomph to "Give It My All!"

Norbert: Sure. As you wish.

Sabrina: The "Give It Your All!" adds my Star Power 3 to whatever else I have for the check. 2 +1 +3 gives me 6.

Norbert: Before you roll, let me get Eye-Catcher's reaction. We can easily roll these things at the same time, by the way. Eye-Catcher just uses a single Trait in her reaction. She is wearing SLINKY ARMOR, a Trait at 3. And I'll add my result of... (rolls) 9! 3 +9, 12 total.

Sabrina: And I rolled a 12! Beautiful. That should do the trick.

Norbert: Oh, I would think so. Can you give me the total, adding in the Boon?

Sabrina: 6 and a natural 12, that's 18, plus another 6. 24 total. Twenty-four!

Norbert: Ah, that is a sweeping success. Very, very good. You far exceed your opponent's total. Definitely an Insta-Defeat. While I do have 2 points of Oomph left for GMCs, I cannot alleviate the impact for Eye-Catcher here. I cannot use "Not So Fast!" anymore because I already did that for the same character in this scene.

Melissa: Yay! One more for the good guys.

Theo: Nice. That was quick.

Norbert: Hmm, exactly. Eye-Catcher drops to the ground, I'll say she is totally trumped. Overwhelmed. Sabrina, do you have any fancy descriptions for your success?

Sabrina: Oh, sure. I was waiting for that. Azlara makes her bear rear up, holding on to her reins herself, and the mighty horned bear is standing there proudly on its hind legs for a few seconds, casting a huge bear-shaped shadow over Eye-Catcher's form. The audience hears the bear growl and roar ... "Rrrraaaaawwr, raaaah-aaaawrh!" Afterwards, it drops down, using its weight and pinning Eye-Catcher adeptly with its fore legs, and staring at her, making sure she doesn't move or try out any tricks.

Norbert: Don't worry. It's done. She is probably scared stiff, and looking a little bruised because her armor was bent and dented and knocked around when she dropped to the ground.

Theo: And this leaves only the ice guy! Sadly, he is an icy warrior and not the ice-cream man. Hey, would my locomotive character even be able to eat ice-cream ...? Just an idea here. Well, back to the action at hand. Full-Steam wants to finish Mister Frosty... or what was his name again? Chillout? Yeah, so he wants to finish Chillout or at least get him to surrender in an gentlemanly fashion. Fat chance of that happening, eh?

Norbert: So what would you like to use for your action? MIGHTY FISTS again, or RUN FAST?

Theo: I've been thinking about that. I could basically ram into him, using brute force, and it would probably work. I bet you're all expecting me to do that, hmm? But Full-Steam has more Traits than that. Tell me if the following works, because I've had this other idea ... This is slightly more imaginative, and it could show all the children watching that the heroes don't just win by hitting the bad guys with fists or physical objects.

Norbert: All right, I'm interested to hear your idea. What is it?

Theo: One of Full-Steam's Traits is called UNDERSTAND MACHINERY. Pretty good, eh?

Melissa: Yes, but Chillout is not a robot, nor does he use anything major that is machinery.

Theo: I know. But that's not the point. I'm going to apply the Trait differently. I haven't yet had a chance to use UNDERSTAND MACHINERY for anything this whole session, but I believe it could come in handy after all. I'd like to spend 1 point of Oomph on Scene Editing before.

Norbert: Please do. What do you want to spend it on?

Theo: Just a little edit ... if you allow me. Didn't you say the bad guys all arrived at the cave in one giant floating barge? That floating ship that the Goons came out of? They must have used it to fly up to the mountain cave. So that ship must still be close by somewhere. Isn't it still hovering in place outside of the cave, or somewhere very close? It must be. So, I want that barge to be kind of close, in fact I want it to return and be positioned just outside of the cave entrance. I'll get that for 1 Oomph.

Norbert: Granted. You do.

Theo: And then ... ladies and gentlemen, and then, here's the thing ... I am going to make Full-Steam remember and focus on his ability to UNDERSTAND MACHINERY, and he looks sternly over to the big hovering vehicle, seeing that at least part of it is made of a shiny metal similar to his own. You know what, maybe, with that bit of Scene Editing in place, maybe this one time we could even make it appear as if that hovering ship was also steam-powered, because I am steam-powered. That would be cool. Chillout is currently standing between Full-Steam and the entrance, with his back turned to the entrance, I mean. With the other two generals soundly defeated, Chillout might be on his way out ...

Norbert: ... Right. He'll certainly be thinking about an escape by now.

Theo: Good, this is just what I need. Full-Steam will look at the ship and shout in a booming voice, "Come! Come now, my brother machine! Come here and take this frosty fighter with you. Take him home to the dark reaches where he'll have time to think about the error of his ways."

Norbert: Very nice. In this series, that is certainly a possibility, even though it may only work this one time with Oomph and creative editing.

Theo: That's all I want. So, it will be a check with UNDERSTAND MACHINERY on my action.

Norbert: Let me check what Chillout has got to resist or oppose your action. ATHLETIC, PHYSICAL MIGHT... no, I already used those. Maybe a bit too obvious. SURVIVE IN AN ARCTIC SURROUNDING? That's certainly a good Trait to have, but it doesn't apply to the task at hand. HARDENED TOUGHNESS sounds good, but I'd rather use that if he were physically hit, resisting something painful, or climbing back down the mountain. I'm going to go with one I haven't used so far: SHARP MIND. He is using his intellect to control the situation

and persuade the ship and its crew to do his bidding instead. It's SHARP MIND 2. And before I roll, I'll declare this is a check with "Give It Your All!," so Chillout has a +3 from his Star Power. (This decision decreases Norbert's pool of GM Oomph from 2 to 1.)

Theo: Okay, let's do it then. This seems to be the final, decisive roll-off. You should still roll your check first, even though I've said what I want my effect to be, sort of.

Norbert: That's perfectly fine with me. Don't worry.

Melissa: Wait! I have had another idea. We could add this in just for fun, even if it does not affect the final numbers much. With Eye-Catcher out of the picture because she's pinned by the bear... (chuckles) well, I was thinking that Motor-Mouth is going to give in to his unending curiosity again. He also doesn't want his team-mates to say he was crouching in a dark crack in the wall when the battle was concluded. He is going to peek out, step out of his hiding place, and climb on Full-Steam's broad back. Full-Steam has previously acted as a semi-vehicle and carried one or two of us player-characters when we needed swift transportation. In any case, I'd like my character to climb up there really quickly, and sit on Full-Steam's head and neck area. He and I could then team up, with me giving him a bonus through fast-talking. You know, that's my INSANELY FAST SPEAKER Trait.

Theo: As long as that doesn't foul up my nice plan ...

Norbert: INSANELY FAST SPEAKER? Nice. And suddenly I feel sorry for these villains again, but go ahead.

Theo: For a team-up action, what do we do again exactly? I forgot what that rule was.

Melissa: I think Theo still rolls normally, since it's his character who's leading the charge as it were. My character just assists and provides that bonus.

Norbert: That's pretty much it. If you want to do something like that as a team action, you two together against a single target, what you use is Full-Steam's Trait of UNDERSTAND MACHINERY 2 and a simple +1 from INSANELY FAST SPEAKER. Note that Motor-Mouth cannot do anything this turn but assist.

Melissa: Oh, and then I also want to give Oomph to Full-Steam since he is my big buddy, and I'm cheering him on ...

Theo: Um, great.

Melissa: I know that costs me 2 for 1 in Oomph when I'm donating to another player-character, but I don't mind using 2 out my current Oomph, and probably wouldn't use those points anymore this scene.

Norbert: Yes, I got that. So, Motor-Mouth is out 2 points of Oomph, and Full-Steam's Oomph increases by one.

Theo: Thanks.

Norbert: Okay, I’m rolling the reaction check for the villain ... (rolls) a 9 this time. Added to my 2 and +3 would make it 14, but I’ll burn up my last point from the GM’s Oomph pool to re-roll the check. (rolls 1 die again) It’s a 10. Okay, a little better. The total is 15. (Norbert’s pool of GM Oomph is decreased from 1 to 0. At this point, he cannot use any further Oomph to help villains.)

Theo: That’s still pretty high, actually. We have to do well to wrap this up nicely now. All right. We’ve got a 3 total with Motor-Mouth assisting me. And I have no Benefit Dice to use anymore. Bummer. Here’s the die roll ... (rolls) 11! Sweet. But that only gets us up to 14.

Norbert: So Chillout still eludes you this round ...

Theo: No, wait. I want to spend 1 Oomph since Motor-Mouth has just given me some out of friendship. There’s still a slight chance it will come up a natural 12.

Norbert: That’s literally a one-in-twelve chance.

Melissa: Motor-Mouth is holding on fast, talking to the bad guy all the while ... (as Motor-Mouth) Hey, you goof! Can’t you see you goofed up? All your friends are defeated. It’s over, pal. All over. Just give up already. Put the ICE SWORD away and leave our friends alone before Full-Steam is going to melt you. This is not your land to exploit and to ruin just because you want to. You should all pack up and leave now, and tell your big boss that we are the noble Guardians of Iconia, and we will never waver, never give up, and we’ll never allow you to enter the mountain city and hurt our new friends! (as herself) Well, and of course he is shouting all that in a squeaky voice and at double speed. Let the sound engineers handle that for the cartoon.

Norbert: I like that very much. That was very nice because it’s all in keeping with the way your character is written. I reward you with another point of Oomph for that, even though you can only use it later, or keep it in your account for an improvement for the next episode. Now, all I need is that re-roll. Theo, if you please ... I know this is unlikely, but ...

Theo: Absolutely. Okay, I’m taking my favorite die and dice shaker here ... Come on ... ! (rolls) Haha, I love it. I got a 12.

Norbert: No kidding.

Theo: It’s really a 12, plus the aforementioned 3 ... that’s 15, and +6. We now have 21 total.

Norbert: See how it’s all coming together? Well, with a final total of 21, you’re also exactly 6 steps higher than my 15. So, exceeding by twice my applicable Star Power, which means ...

Theo: Holy moly! We’ve got an Insta-Defeat. This is it.

Norbert: Yes, fortunately for you, all the villains are out. I’ve used up all my resources. It went quite quickly again, and I believe that is the way it was meant to be. Since you’re all in control of things, you can just finish this by describing the results of that opposed check.

Theo: Okay, me? Sure. Yes, my idea was that by talking directly to the vehicle of the Blackskull Empire, Full-Steam would persuade it to help us get rid of Chillout, who was running rampant and causing so much trouble here. As if the mountain climate around here wasn’t cold enough. So, the barge is hovering there, and suddenly, just when we need it as a new gimmick, a hatch opens on the side of the barge, just a small one. And I want a telescopic robot arm to emerge from that hatch, making a buzzing sound, with a robotic hoop at the end, which will wrap around Chillout’s waist, tightening and hoisting him up.

Norbert: All right. Why not? And then ...

Theo: And then that robot arm is pulling in again, taking Chillout with him, holding him in a tight, secure grip as if he were a piece of cargo. He can still have his sword, but it’s now entirely ineffective to him, and he can hang there with his arms flailing, looking around, helpless ...

Norbert: I see. (as Chillout) Ah, curses! You troublemakers! How dare you? Lemme go! Stop it. Stop it, I say! Nekrottus will hear of all this ...

Melissa: (as Motor-Mouth) Yes! I do hope that he will hear of it. Tell him the whole story about your sad, sorry defeat. You have nothing on us, you Blackskull buffoons.

Sabrina: (as Azlara) Careful, Motor-Mouth. While I understand you are happy and excited about winning now, I think we can all be glad that the servants of Nekrottus are leaving. I’ll be happy when that ship is out of sight again, and we better not let our guard down because they could soon be back with another assault.

Norbert: Good. Just as Azlara is speaking these words, the robot arm is pulling the trapped Chillout into the hatch, closing swiftly behind him. And finally, the hovering ship is turning around and pulling away towards the setting sun, quietly flying away ... somewhere far above the mountain peaks.

Theo: (as Full-Steam) A retreat! We got them to retreat! Tell the Troll King of the mountain that we’ve won.

Sabrina: (as Azlara) For the moment, good friend, we have.

Melissa: Now, what is happening to the other bad guys? They are still only a few yards away from us, right? Can we arrest them, take them with us?

Norbert: No, that doesn’t happen. Before the floating airship has moved fully out of sight, you can see that a panel on Eye-Catcher’s armor flashes up in a bright yellow. That must be something activated from afar. Blackskull sorcery, you’d assume. Even if she had been unconscious, this still works. It isn’t controlled by her.

Theo: Oh well.

Melissa: Just a light? What does it do?

Norbert: The yellow light engulfs her whole body, and that must

be very puzzling to Azlara’s horned bear, but never mind. The same kind of light appears right around Buzzard Man, who had crumpled in another corner of the cave, and it makes a short high-pitched “wheeee-ooo” sound, and they both disappear like ghosts. The Goons on the other hand, they will just wait a little while, then grumpily gather their things and armor pieces and march off as best they can. They have a long way to go on foot. The Trolls will not come out to loot them or anything like that. As you guys already know, the Mountain Trolls are a peaceful people and don’t want any of the Empire’s equipment staying near their home.

Melissa: And so, we will be on our way. Time for a scene change.

Norbert: Correct. Let’s all move to the post-battle talking scene. Maybe saying goodbye to the Troll King and his large family.

[This concludes this example for an action scene. Of course, this is all but an example, and with different decisions on the part of the players, different uses of Oomph and different dice results, the same scene could have gone all kinds of other ways.]



CHANNEL 3 SERIES CREATION

Before you and your group can even play a game of *Cartoon Action Hour*, you must *collectively* create the series itself. We stress the word “collectively” because it’s something that requires the participation of both the players and the Game Master. If all parties agree, however, the Game Master (or even one of the players) can create it solo (aside from PC creation).

The series creation process is broken down into several **segments**. Each segment focuses on one aspect of the series. You must finish one segment before moving onto the next one.

Segment 1: The Series Guide

Segment 2: Player Characters

Segment 3: Game Master Characters

Segment 4: Playsets



Kargorr: Humans are too lazy to create their own series! The game will lose its audience immediately!



Bravesteel: Not everyone has the time or inclination to create their own series. That doesn’t make them lazy. Besides, Spectrum Games publishes a wide variety of pre-made series supplements that allow groups to jump right into the action. If the group agrees to do this, only Segment 2 must be completed.



Kargorr: Hrmph! Slothlike humans.

Segment 1: The Series Guide

In this segment, you will define what the series is all about. All the key elements of the series will fall into place and you'll have a foundation from which to work as you forge ahead into later segments.

This segment is really intended for the GM to create, though she really should allow input from the players. After all, if the GM creates a series concept that the players hate, it will have resulted in a huge waste of time.

We have provided a blank Series Guide on page 184. Feel free to use it to record the relevant information.

There are multiple steps you'll go through to complete Segment 1.

Step 1: Name and Tagline

Step 2: The Series

Step 3: Dials

Step 4: Player Character Guidelines

Step 1: Name and Tagline

Every series needs a name. After all, how can kids ask their parents to buy the associated action figures if the series is nameless? It also needs a spiffy blurb and a short summary to give an even more complete indication of what a new viewer can expect.

Some groups prefer to come up with a name and base the show's premise on it. This is perfectly fine. You should feel free to skip to Step 2 and get back to Step 1 later.

The Name

When concocting a name, you should strive for something that would have been a marketable title in the 1980s. It should also give a good idea as to what the series is about.

While there isn't one single blueprint to follow, the retro-toons did have a few archetypes they relied upon.

One method of naming a show is to have it reflect the group, organization or race the heroes belong to (e.g., *G.I. Joe*, *Centurions*, *C.O.P.S.*, *Thundercats*, etc.). For series that focus primarily on one hero, it was common to name the show after that hero (e.g., *Thundarr the Barbarian*, *Bravestarr*, *Turbo Teen*, etc.). Similarly, some shows shared a name with the main hero as well as the group they belonged to (*He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, *Jayce and the Wheeled Warriors*, *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs*, etc.). A small handful of series actually did a flip-flop by being named after the villain(s) (e.g., *Inhumanoids*). The last naming archetype involved granting the series a title that describes both the heroes and the villains (e.g., *Transformers*, *Visionaries*, *Sectaurs*, etc.).

Not all shows followed any of the above formulas and boasted titles based on other aspects of the series (e.g., *Spiral Zone*, *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Lazer Tag Academy*, etc.).

The Tagline

Traditionally speaking, the tagline is a marketing tool used to draw interest to the series and further give an idea of what the series is about. While it's not a necessity, it is recommended that you whip one up for your series. Here are some examples from classic cartoons:

- "It's crime fighting time!"
- "A real American hero"
- "More than meets the eye!"
- "The evil that lies within"
- "Knights of the magical light"
- "Power extreme"
- "Mighty robots, mighty vehicles"

Step 2: The Series

It's not always easy to create a complete series framework from thin air. It takes some time and effort to bring a good series from a seed in the back of your mind to a ready-to-play series. But, you're in luck. In the section that follows, you'll find a plethora of ideas, hints, and suggestions for making your series come to life.

The Genre

The first step of series creation should be deciding on the genre. The genre acts as a great tool for you when running the game, as each one makes possible certain tropes belonging specifically to it. For example, if you decide that your series will belong to the fantasy genre, you can use such time-honored conventions as fire-breathing dragons, bold knights, towering castles, damsels in distress, and ancient wizards.

There's nothing limiting you to one genre, however. It's possible to create a thoroughly entertaining series by mixing genres. Imagine, if you will, how much fun it could be to combine the fantasy genre with the military genre. Visions of soldiers defending cities from hordes of green-skinned humanoids should be enough to entice even the most jaded GM. Here are some of the more common genres used by the retro-toons:

- **Fantasy:** High adventure in the realm of swords-and-sorcery.
- **Post-Apocalypse:** The end of the world... the beginning of adventure.
- **Military:** Battlefield action with militaristic leanings.
- **Sci-Fi:** High-tech thrills in the future or in the present (err... the '80s).
- **Horror:** Action with horror overtones.
- **Space Opera:** An offshoot of sci-fi, this involves a heaping dose of space travel, fast-and-furious action, and lots of cliffhanger situations.
- **Western:** Shoot 'em up in the Old West (or some facsimile thereof).
- **Superhero:** Leap over tall buildings in a single bound while clad in colorful tights and capes.

The Twist

Most retro-toons had some kind of spin that made them unique enough to catch the kiddies' eyes. Often, these were gimmicks or fads (as discussed in the "Gimmicks and Fads" sub-section later in this Channel). In any case, the twist is simply something memorable that sets the series apart from the crowd. It might be that the twist involves the associated action figures rather than the cartoon itself. In that case, you should probably formulate a way to integrate the effect into the series.

In many cases, these twists will affect how characters are made and should be reflected in the "Miscellaneous" sub-section section of the Character Creation Guidelines.

What follows is a collection of twists taken from actual retro-toons:

- The series features robots that morph into vehicles.
- The action figures feature faux holographic stickers.
- The heroes are all cat-like humanoids.
- Each character has a vehicle that is laden with hidden weapons and gadgets.
- The heroes all wear high-tech power armor that makes them huge and far more powerful than a normal human.
- The heroes are members of a pop band.
- The heroes each have a robotic companion.

Tech Level

The 1980s was a boom period in terms of technology. Personal computers first made their way into middle-class homes, and schools started teaching how to use them. The nuclear arms race was in full swing, with all the technological advances that entailed. Vehicle manufacturers began to incorporate more high-tech gizmos into the products. In short, technology was en vogue. This filtered into every form of entertainment at the time... including the cartoons.

This meant that most of the series featured technology to one degree or another. Some only used it as a backdrop, whereas others made it a focal point of the premise. Still others ignored it altogether, primarily the fantasy cartoons. When creating your own series, you should give the tech level some serious consideration. Believe me when I say that it will make a massive impact on the series' tone. It will also greatly affect the kinds of characters that the players will create.

It's difficult to pinpoint an exact tech level, as there are numerous nuances to factor in. For example, the tech level may be similar to 1980s earth, except that time travel is possible. Or perhaps the tech level is equivalent to that of the Old West, with the exception of the existence steam-powered vehicles.

When determining the series' tech level, it helps to keep a 1980s perspective. The series you're creating was supposed to have been on television during that era, so you should use that tech level as your basis. This is especially true when designing a series that features a lot of technology. The first hurdle to get past is that gadgets weren't as small and compact as they are now. They tended to be larger and chunkier, and this was reflected even in the cartoons set in the far future.

Series Goal

Quick! Name five retro-toons in which the heroes had no over-arching goal! Not an easy task, is it? That's because most series were designed in such a way that the protagonists had a very definite thing they were attempting to do. They were defending the world/kingdom from an evil tyrant, attempting to find their way back home from a far-away realm, or searching the world for something-or-other.

There were a few retro-toons that shunned this approach in favor of something more open-ended in nature. For example, one series featured

protagonists who wandered the post-apocalyptic landscape, attracting trouble as they went. They didn't have a goal that spanned the entire series; each episode had its own goal. The problem with this approach, from a roleplaying standpoint, is that it entails more work for you, the GM. You'll have to continually come up with new goals for each episode. While it can be said that you have to do the same when devising episodes for a goal-oriented series, it should be pointed out that at least they give you an inherent fallback. The episode's goal can simply be an extension of the series goal.

If you want the series to have a goal, you should labor to make it interesting enough to hold the players' attentions (and yours) throughout the series' duration. The trick is to create a goal that seem attainable, but not easily attainable. This enables you to craft episodes that can further the heroes' progress without the danger of them prematurely ending the series by actually completing the goal.

Antagonist Roles

Who are the villains? Will they be a ruthless terrorist organization? A network, of interstellar criminals? A despotic ruler with numerous lackeys? A seemingly untouchable government with evil intentions? A band of cutthroat pirates?

The antagonists' role will probably be strongly influenced by the protagonists' role. After all, it might seem out of place for the antagonists to be government spies, while the antagonists are sorcerers from a fantasy world. Still, stranger things have happened in the realm of the retro-toons.

Other Considerations

Want a few more things to mull over? Here you go...

Originality

While originality is never a bad thing, you shouldn't feel pressured to make every aspect of the series groundbreaking. Don't hesitate to borrow ideas from existing retro-toons or even from other sources. If you and your players are all huge fans of a particular retro-toon, there's no reason not to institute various elements of that series into your own. Not only will it save you some work, but it'll also help capture that retro-toon feel.

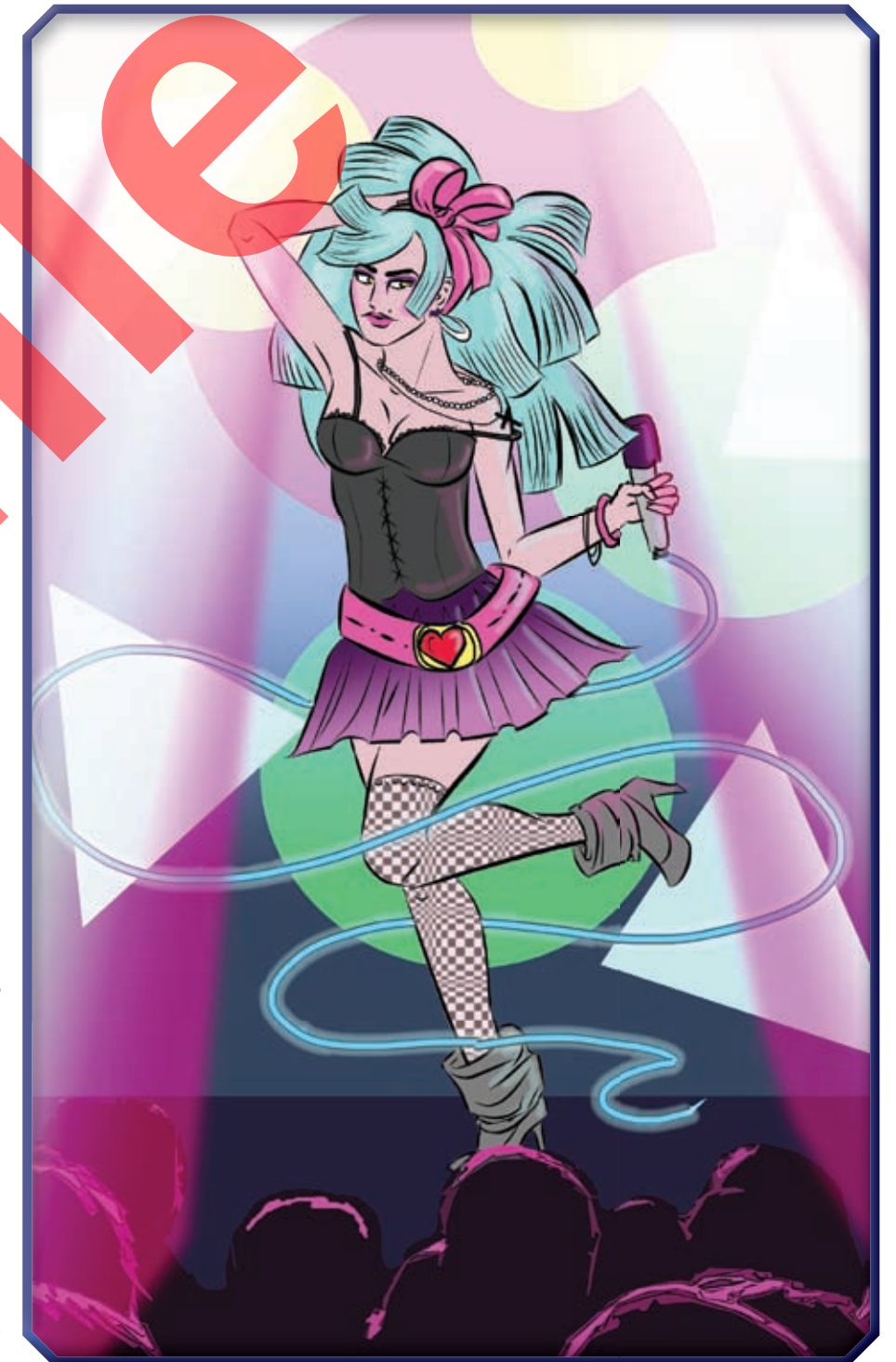
When borrowing ideas, though, you should labor to give them a twist of your own, just to keep your series fresh. If you're clever about it, the players may not even realize you were borrowing and will cite you as some sort of creative genius. Meanwhile, you'll be sitting back, soaking up all the adoration with a knowing smile on your face.

Gimmicks and Fads

The retro-toon producers often used gimmicks or fads to add interest to their series. There's nothing wrong with doing it for your own series. This often necessitates that you think about the action figures, since many retro-toons were created to sell a toy line. What kinds of gimmicks could you give your toys that could be integrated into the series premise? Classic cartoons have certainly explored many of the options (holograms, transformable robots, vehicles with hidden weapons, etc.), but

the surface has hardly been scratched. With a touch of imagination (and possibly some research), who knows what fads you can exploit?

Not all series need to have a gimmick, but it can spice things up if handled well.



Primary Setting

Where does the setting take place? Does it take place on a particular planet? A region of a planet? Or does it take place all across the cosmos? Perhaps an underground world? How about Earth itself?

The primary setting doesn't have to be the *only* setting in a series. The action could drift over into other locales, dimensions or even historical eras.

Step 3: Dials

By this point, you should have a good handle on what your series is about. Now, you have to take that knowledge and turn it into something concrete; something that firmly dictates how the series will "feel."

There are four factors, each with its own dial. The dial may be set to any of the listed numbers. Both the GM and the players should decide upon the numbers as they see fit. The GM has the final word on the matter in case of a disagreement.

Seriousness

Seriousness measure how much or how little comedic elements exist in the series.

- 1 The series is somewhat lighthearted with lots of levity, but the focus is still mostly on action and adventure. The comedic elements are just a bit stronger than in other series. *EXAMPLES: Gummi Bears, The Ewoks, Hero High, Dragon's Lair, The Real Ghostbusters, Hulk Hogan's Rock 'N' Wrestling, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*
- 2 The series is mostly serious, though comedic elements are present at times (often via "goofy" comic relief characters). Most retro-toons fall into this category. *EXAMPLES: Thundarr the Barbarian, GI Joe, Transformers, He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*
- 3 Comedic elements may occasionally creep into the series, but things are mostly played straight. *EXAMPLES: Inhumanoids, Sectaurs, Visionaries, Spiral Zone*

Dials and Published Series

In the official series books published by Spectrum Games, you'll see that each series has the dials listed. These are considered the default dial settings for the series, but the GM can alter them to better fit the group's play style.

The series seeds published here and elsewhere forego dials altogether, allowing the GM to set them at whatever levels she desires.

Realism

Realism dictates how grounded in reality (or faux reality) the series' tone and setting are. It must be noted that it's entirely possible for a series to take place in, say, a fantasy realm while still maintaining a realistic tone.

- 1 The series completely throws realism out the window in favor of the surreal, the nonsensical or the improbable. The setting likely has little in common with our known reality and may even be on the outer fringes of what constitutes being an action cartoon. *EXAMPLES: Captain N: the Game Master, Pac-Man, Madballs*
- 2 The series takes place in a reality that more or less resembles our own, albeit with some unrealistic elements (especially in terms of liberties taken with the laws of physics). This is the default level for the retro-toons. *EXAMPLES: Thundercats, Centurions, MASK*
- 3 The series adheres pretty closely to reality, despite a handful of indiscretions. By and large, though, it cuts out some of the more unrealistic elements that pervade most retro-toons. This is the least common level of realism for the genre. *EXAMPLES: Spiral Zone*

Violence

None of the cartoons of the 1980s were particularly blood-soaked, but some had more violence than others. Typically, the syndicated series were afforded more leeway than network shows.

- 1 The series either avoids physical conflicts like the plague or goes for a slapstick type of violence. It is clearly intended for younger audiences than the majority of the action cartoons. Death simply doesn't exist in the series. *EXAMPLES: The Littles, any of the Scooby Doo series that aired in the '80s.*
- 2 The series allows for some physical violence (punches and kicks can actually hit!), but weapons – especially bladed weapons or guns – only succeed indirectly against organic foes. Death only happens as poignant, non-violent sequences (like Jaga's death in ThunderCats) and even then, it's truly rare. *EXAMPLES: Visionaries, Bravestarr, Silverhawks*
- 3 While certainly still within the realms of the retro-toon genre, this series has a slightly darker edge to it in certain respects. Direct physical attacks are more common. The threat of death is real, though bloodshed is still a no-no. "The Movie" rule is in effect for this series (see page 59). *EXAMPLES: RoboCop: the Animated Series, Transformers: the Movie*

Continuity

While most retro-toons were episodic in nature, there was often a sense of history as the show progressed. Some series, though, were comprised of solely stand-alone in nature, while a few went the opposite route and offered episodes that were intrinsically tied together into one encompassing storyline.

- 1 The series is entirely episodic. Episodes never reference events that came before, making it very easy for the GM to write plotlines. After all, she needn't concern herself with maintaining any sense of continuity. *EXAMPLES: Thundarr the Barbarian, Dungeons and Dragons*
- 2 The series is mostly episodic, but past events can affect later episodes. The episodes are usually islands unto themselves, though multi-episode storylines happen from time to time. Most retro-toons belonged to this category. *EXAMPLES: GI Joe, C.O.P.S., Transformers, He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*
- 3 The series is completely serialized. That is, one episode flows directly into the next, creating one epic storyline that spans the entire season or even series. This level also accounts for one-shot mini-series as well. *EXAMPLES: Robotix, Sectaurs*





Step 4: Player Character Guidelines

Who will the heroes of the story be? Will they be soldiers in a military strike team? Martial artists bound together for the good of mankind? Secret agents employed by the government? Cosmic law enforcers who roam the galaxy while righting wrongs? Knights brought together by a benevolent king? Bikers who want to topple a tyrannical dictator?

Once you figure out what the heroes are expected to be, you can start setting things in stone, regarding how to create them.

Star Power

You'll need to determine what Star Power score the PCs will start with. In most cases, they all have Star Power 3, but this isn't a universal law. You can bring it down to 2 if you want the heroes to be relatively unspectacular or bolster it to 4 if you want them to be on par with the most powerful villains?

Alternatively, you can even have a "star of the show," allowing one PC to have a higher Star Power score than the others. You should balance this carefully during the game, though, by giving that character tougher challenges than the others. Before you take this approach, we encourage you to talk to your players first. If even one player feels uncomfortable playing second-banana to another hero, you should consider changing your course of action.

Tier and Trait Points

During the PC creation process (see Segment 2, pages 100 – 116), the players will receive a certain number of points to spend on Traits. In most cases, that number will be 18, 26 or 34, as dictated by what Tier you select for PCs.

• **Human Tier:** If the PCs are normal humans without powers or superhuman abilities? If so, they should probably be given 18 points to spend on Traits. This will make them formidable but not beyond the boundaries of human limitations.

• **Superhuman Tier:** If the PCs are expected to perform beyond the capabilities of humankind, they should probably be given 26 points to spend on Traits. This can represent superheroes, non-humans or even robots.

• **Cosmic Tier:** If the PCs are cosmically powerful, even beyond the likes of "ordinary" superhumans, they should probably be given 34 points to spend on Traits.

You may decide to grant points of a different amount, but the above guidelines can serve as a benchmark.

Remember that the Tier chosen will also affect the maximum rating players can give their PCs' Traits (4 for Human and 8 for Superhuman; Cosmic has no maximum).



Multiple PCs



The general assumption is that each player takes on the role of a single PC, but this doesn't have to be the case for every series. For series focusing on a large team or organization, allowing players to play more than one PC can be a lot of fun. A player doesn't have to play more than one character at a time (though that's certainly an enjoyable challenge in its own right). Rather, he can rotate characters in and out on a per-episode basis.

Other Rules

This section is where miscellaneous rules for PC creation can be inserted. While you're free to add whatever seems appropriate, here are some common possibilities:

Disallowed Traits: Certain Trait types are banned for the series. The types should be listed here. For example, "Technology-based Traits," "Magic-based Traits," etc.

Disallowed Special Rules: PCs aren't allowed to take particular Special Rules.

Required Trait: This indicates that all players must spend at least some of their Trait points on one particular Trait or type of Trait. **EXAMPLE:** All PCs must purchase a Trait that represents a magical weapon given to them by Kah-Ra.

Free Trait: All PCs are given a Trait that doesn't require Trait points. This Trait cannot be modified in any way. The Trait itself should be listed in this section. **EXAMPLE:** All PCs have the following Trait: MYSTIC ARMOR 3.

Free Modifiable Trait: This works just like "Free Trait," except that it may be improved with Trait points and can be given Special Rules, just like any other Trait.

Free Floating Trait: This indicates that the PC is given a free Trait that the players can define themselves... within certain parameters. It can be modified, just like a Free Modifiable Trait.

EXAMPLE: All PCs have a Trait at rating 3 that defines their primary military specialty (e.g., DEMOLITIONS, PILOT, RECON, etc.).

Excessive Trait Ratings: This allows PCs to have one or more Traits with ratings that exceed the series maximum. This is usually enacted to reflect gear that pushes abilities to levels beyond what humans can normally achieve (such as strength-

boosting power armor). Keep in mind that PCs don't automatically gain Traits at such ratings; they must be purchased with Trait points as normal. **EXAMPLE:** PCs are allowed to have one Trait at rating 6 or two Traits at rating 5.

Theme Adherence: This rule ensures that the players must stick to a particular theme or gimmick when creating characters. Upon selecting this rule, write down what the theme is. For example, on the Series Guide, I might write, "Theme Adherence (PCs must have bird motifs)" or "Theme Adherence (PCs must be humanoid dinosaurs from outer space)".

Catchphrases: If, during character creation, the character is given Upgrade #4, the new Standard Quality can be made into a catchphrase that the character tends to say. The person creating the character should simply write the catchphrase down in the appropriate Standard Quality spot on the bio-file, followed by "catchphrase" in parenthesis. This catchphrase can be used as a normal Standard Quality or it can be used after a check has been made (usually if successful, but not always). If used in the latter fashion, the character gets the normal benefits of using a Standard Quality for a single check the following round... and will earn a point of Oomph as well. If used in that manner, it still causes the Quality to be checked off. Regardless of which way it is used, the person controlling the character is required to actually say the catchphrase aloud (the hammier, the better!).

Gestalts: PCs are allowed to combine together to form a gestalt. Go to page 53 to learn more about Gestalts and page 116 to learn about creating gestalts.



Segment 2: Player Characters

This system is primarily designed to create PCs, though GMs can certainly use it to create GMCs as well. Before you even begin making the character, you should read the Series Guide and find out if there are any restrictions or additional rules specific to the series being played.

Once you've done that, follow the five steps listed below.

Step 1: Star Power and Base Oomph

Step 2: Qualities

Step 3: Traits

Step 4: Special Rules

Step 5: Upgrades

Step 1: Star Power and Base Oomph

Look at the Series Guide and find out how much Star Power PCs begin with and write it onto your bio-file. In most cases, they have Star Power of 3.

The character's base Oomph (i.e., the amount of Oomph he begins each episode with) will be equal to his Star Power.

Step 5: Choose Upgrades

You may now select a number of the following upgrades equal to the character's Star Power score. You may take each upgrade multiple times unless noted otherwise.

- **Upgrade #1:** Increase a Trait rating by +1. This is the only way a Trait rating can be raised above the series' maximum rating. A single Trait rating cannot exceed that maximum by more than two.
- **Upgrade #2:** Gain a new Trait at rating 1.
- **Upgrade #3:** Gain two new non-adverse Special Rules and allocate them between the character's Traits. These cannot be traded in for extra points for Traits.
- **Upgrade #4:** Select an extra Standard Quality.
- **Upgrade #5:** Give the "Versatile" Special Rule to one of your Traits. This counts as two upgrades and still counts against the number of non-adverse Special Rules allowed.
- **Upgrade #6:** Increase the character's base Oomph by 1.
- **Upgrade #7:** Contribute 5 points to creating playsets (see page 123).

Step 2: Qualities

During this step, you'll get to come up with three Qualities (one Signature Quality and two Standard Qualities).

Signature Quality

A Signature Quality sums up your character's primary role, specialty, gimmick or archetype in the story. It gives anyone reading it an instant handle on who your character is. You are allowed to include up to two aspects of your character in your Signature Quality. Generally speaking, the first segment gives an indication of the character's main personality characteristic or race and the second word indicates what the character's occupation or role is. This is not always the case, however.

EXAMPLES: "Overlord of Evil," "Crazed Sorcerer," "Human Battering Ram," "Ninja Commando," "Mutant Scavenger," "Hard-as-Nails Leader," "Robot Bodyguard"

Standard Qualities

Qualities represent other aspects of the character that helps make him who he is. A Quality can be a personality aspect, vulnerability, fear, tidbit about his past and so on. They can be used to serve as both a boon and a hindrance at different times. Come up with two such Qualities and write them down. Be careful not to create any that would make more sense as Traits. Otherwise, the GM will likely ask you to create another one instead. **EXAMPLES:** "Prankster," "Loves the Outdoors," "Was once a Knight," "In love with [insert another character's name]," "Afraid of the Dark," "Hates [insert foe's name]"

Step 3: Traits

Write down a selection of Traits that you'd like your character to have; between five and ten Traits should be about right. Then, assign a certain number of Trait points to the Traits on a one-for-one basis. The exact number of points you receive will be listed in the Series Guide, though the standard amounts are listed below, according to the maximum Tier allowed by the series.

• **Human Tier:** 18 points

• **Superhuman Tier:** 26 points

• **Cosmic Tier:** 34 points

A Trait rating can go up to the series' Tier maximum (4 for Human or 8 for Superhuman; there is no Tier maximum for Cosmic) by spending points on a one-for-one basis. You cannot bring a Trait rating above that maximum, except during the Step 5.

Step 4: Choose Special Rules

During this step, you can select Special Rules for your Traits. You receive a number of Special Rules equal to the character's Star Power score, though you may not take the "Versatile" Special Rule until Step 5. It still counts against the number of Special Rules allowed, so save a "slot" for it.

You can gain additional Special Rules by taking Special Rules listed as "adverse." Each adverse Special Rule you take allows you to choose one regular Special Rule, up to a maximum of three.

It could be that you don't see your character as having as many Special Rules as the amount you're allowed. For every non-adverse Special Rule you elect not to take, you may raise a Trait rating by 1 (keeping in mind the series maximum ratings allowed).

The list of Special Rules can be found on pages 104 – 111.

Other Sections

While not official "steps" in the character creation process, there are sections on the bio-file that are still important nonetheless.

- A Series Logo:** You can doodle a logo for the series or perhaps design one on your computer and place it here.
- B Names:** Place your character's name and your own name in this space.
- C Proofs of Purchase:** Proofs of Purchase are accumulated during the series and are used to improve your character. For now, leave it blank.
- D Miscellaneous Notes:** Good for whatever you want to put here. It's especially useful for vehicle or alternate form stats.
- E Character Illo:** Space for sketching your character.
- F Current Oomph:** Keeping track of how much Oomph your character currently has is crucial, so record it here.

Trait Rating Benchmarks

On this page is a collection of benchmark tables meant to help guide you when selecting your character's Trait ratings. Due to the wide range of things that Traits can represent, several tables are necessary and still don't cover every possibility.

Human-Tier

Superhuman-Tier

Cosmic-Tier

Skills/Abilities

This table is for Traits that represent the character's inborn abilities as well as skills that he has picked up over the course of his life.

Rating:	Description:
1	Good
2	Great
3	Awesome
4	World-Class
5	Tweaked
6	Enhanced
7	Beyond Human
8	Far Beyond Human
9	Monstrous
10	Otherworldly
11	Supreme
12+	Omnipotent

Equipment

This table is for Traits that represent the character's gear, magic items, etc.

Rating:	Description:
1-4	Most gear created using human science
5-8	Hyper-advanced, alien or magical in nature
9+	Gear beyond human scope

Weapons

This table is for Traits that represent the character's weapons. This table is also handy for characters with attack powers, as it's easy to compare an attack power's efficiency to a weapon found here.

Rating:	Description:
1-4	Most personal weapons fall into this category (swords, firearms, axes, etc.)
5-8	Weapons capable of causing a great deal of damage (bazookas, cannons, energy swords, etc.)
9+	Weapons of an unbelievable nature (blackhole cannons, nega-rays, etc.)

Protection

This table is for Traits that represent the character's armor, shields, force fields, etc.

Rating:	Description:
1-4	Minor armor (leather, chain, mail, ring mail, typical shield, etc.)
5-8	Major armor (plate mail, power armor, energy shield, etc.)
9+	Armor beyond human scope

Powers

This table is for Traits that represent the character's super powers or anything else of a similar nature.

Rating:	Description:
1-4	Standard (powers that are effective, but not outrageously so)
5-8	Powerful (powers that really define the character and his theme/gimmick)
9+	Series-Altering (powers beyond that are so effective, they'll change the series)

Sample Traits

What follows is a collection of Traits that can be used verbatim or simply used as inspiration for concocting your own. You don't have to choose from this list. In fact, it's usually preferable to come up with your own Trait names, as it not only flexes your creative muscles, but also helps to truly personalize your character.

Abilities, Skills and Perks

A REAL CHARMER
ACROBAT
ACTOR
AGILE
AIRCRAFT PILOT
AMAZING ENDURANCE
ANIMAL HANDLING
ARCHER
ARMORER
ART OF NINJUTSU
ATHLETIC
ATTRACTIVE
AUTO MECHANIC
BAD MO-FO
BIG BRUISER
BORN ENTERTAINER
BORN TO THE SADDLE
BOXING
BRAINIAC
BUSINESS ACUMEN
CAREFUL
CATLIKE AGILITY
CAVORTING
CHARISMATIC
CLEVER
COMPUTER EXPERT
CON ARTIST
COOKING
COOL UNDER FIRE
CRACK SHOT
CRAFTSMAN
DETECTIVE WORK
DIPLOMAT
DIVE FOR COVER
DODGING
EAGLE EYES
EIDETIC MEMORY
ESCAPE ARTISTRY
FAST AS LIGHTNING
FAST DRAW
FAST RUNNER
FORMIDABLE FIGHTER
FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES
GAMBLING

GOOD AT GIVING ORDERS
GOOD JUDGE OF CHARACTER
HARD TARGET TO HIT
HAS A WAY WITH WORDS
HIGH SOCIETY ETIQUETTE
HISTORY OF [INSERT TOPIC]
IMPOSING PRESENCE
INTIMIDATION
INVENTOR
JOURNALISM
KNOWLEDGE OF [INSERT SUBJECT]
LABORER
LAWYER
LORE MASTER
MANIPULATOR
MARKSMAN
MARTIAL ARTS
MASTER OF DISGUISE
MATHEMATICAL GENIUS
MEDICAL DOCTOR
MUSCLE-BOUND
NATURAL CLIMBER
NIMBLE
PATHFINDER
PERCEPTIVE
POLICE PROCEDURES
POWER LIFTER
PRANKSTER
QUICK WITTED
RESILIENT TO MIND CONTROL
RESOURCEFUL MIND
RUGGED
SAFECRACKER
SAVAGE FURY
SCIENCE
SCOUTING
SEARCH
SILLY ANTICS
SMOOTH TALKER
SNEAKY
SOLDIERING
STARPILOT

STEALTHY
STOUT
STRATEGY
STREET FIGHTING
STREETWISE
STRONG AS AN OX
STRONG SWIMMER
SURVEILLANCE
SWORD MASTER
TECHNO-GEEK
THIEF
TOUGH GUY
TRACKING
VEHICLE DRIVER
WEALTHY
WILL OF IRON
WILLFUL
WISE
WORTHY OF RESPECT
WRESTLING

Accessories or Built-In Gear

ARM-MOUNTED CANNON
BAG OF GADGETS
BATTLE AXE
CHEST PLATE
CLAD IN IRON
CLOAK OF UNSEEING
CYBERNETIC ARM
ENCHANTED RING
ENERGY BOW
ENERGY SWORD
GRENADES
KNIFE
LASER CANNON
LONG SWORD
MACHINE GUN
MAGIC AMULET
MASSIVE CLUB
MISSILE LAUNCHER
MYSTIC HELMET
PISTOL
PLATE ARMOR
POWER ARMOR
RAY GUN

RIFLE
ROCKET PACK
SENTIENT SUIT OF ARMOR
SHORT SWORD
SHURIKEN
SPY TOOLS

Powers

ACID-COVERED SKIN
ASTRAL PROJECTION
BLENDS INTO SURROUNDINGS
BRAIN BLAST
CAN SEE INVISIBLE OBJECTS
ELECTRICAL ZAP
ENERGY BLAST
FIRE BREATH
FLIGHT
FORCE FIELD
GHOST BODY
HYPNOSIS
INVISIBILITY
MIND CONTROL
MYSTIC
NEGATE POWER
NIGHT SIGHT
NO NEED TO BREATHE
SCALY SKIN
SHAPECHANGER
SPACE FLIGHT
SPELLCASTER
SUMMON [INSERT CREATURE]
SUPER VISION
SUPER-SPEED
TELEKINESIS
TELEPATHY
TELEPORTATION
THUNDER PUNCH
WALL-CRAWLING
WIZARD
X-RAY VISION

Special Rules

This section presents the available Special Rules that can be given to characters.

Accessory

A Trait labeled as an Accessory represents some manner of item.

Unlike other Special Rules, "Accessory" can be given to any Trait that represents an item (weapons, armor, vehicles, equipment, etc.) without it taking up one of the player's Special Rule choices.

The reason this Special Rule is "free" is because it's something of a double-edged sword. An Accessory is bound by the following rules:

- When linking, this Trait can be added as a tertiary Trait when appropriate to the situation. This is the only way in which three Traits can affect a check. Doing so adds its Tier amount to the result, just as if it was a Secondary Trait (i.e., +1 for Human, +3 for Superhuman and +5 for Cosmic).
- Rolling a Flub during any check involving the "Accessory" Trait (even when linked) causes the Trait to be Deactivated until the end of the episode. An immediate expenditure of 2 Oomph can reduce the Deactivation to being in effect until the end of the current scene instead.

A Trait is never required to have this Special Rule. It's perfectly feasible to have a Trait called PHOTON PISTOL without it. The Trait is still a piece of equipment; it's just not bound by the rules listed for Accessories.

Action Feature

A Trait with an Action Feature acts as the focal point of what the character can do. It's a central ability that more or less defines the character. For example, if a character is named Big Ram, his MASSIVE RAM ATTACK would likely be his Action Feature. When deciding upon an Action Feature, think of your character as an action figure and ask yourself which one of his Traits would likely be used as the toy's action feature or primary accessory.

Once per scene, when using this Trait for a check, you may choose to add a Benefit Die. Only one Trait per character can have this Special Rule.



Advantage

An Advantage is a minor miscellaneous benefit that improves the Trait's effectiveness.

Upon selecting this Special Rule, you must choose what the benefit is and write it down next to the Special Rule itself. The GM may veto the chosen Advantage if he feels it is too potent. Some examples might be "Can bounce the attack off of objects," "Effects are not visible," or "Can affect incorporeal targets".

Area

The Trait emulates something that goes "boom." Okay, that's not always true. It's essentially something that affects more than one target. So, while it might very well be an explosion, that isn't always the case. It could be a rapid-fire attack or simply have a wide field of effect.

This Special Rule generally can only be applied to a Trait that normally affects one character or object (such as an attack). When using it, you may elect to have it affect more than one nearby target. You make only one check, but each reacting character makes separate checks to resist it. Furthermore, add +1 to each DN for every targeted character beyond the first.

EXAMPLE: My PC is using FIREBLAST 3 [Area] and I'm looking to shoot three GMCs with it. The GMCs roll to determine what my DNs will be and get a 6, 9 and 14. Since there are two targeted characters beyond the first, each DN will be increased by 2, thus making the final DNs 8, 11 and 16. I make my check and end up with a total of 9. The 9 is equal to or higher than the DN of 8, but not the DN 11 or DN 16. Therefore, I only successfully attack one of the GMCs.

Big Attack

This Special Rule should be given to Traits that represent a weapon or attack designed mostly to deal damage to vehicles and structures. It doesn't actually score direct hits on flesh and blood characters; instead, the shot lands nearby and the impact sends the character hurtling through the air and into a hard object (such as a wall), thus dealing less damage. Such is the way of the retro-toons.

In order to be given this Special Rule, the Trait must be a physical attack that attacks from afar (bazookas, cannons, etc.). When making a crucial check against a vehicle, structure or large non-living character (namely giant robots) with this Trait, add 2 to the check result. When attacking a "flesh and blood" character, add 2 to the DN.

Companion

A Trait with this Special Rule represents some manner of companion that helps the character out (and sometimes even gets him in hot water). This can be a funny sidekick, a loyal animal pal, a mount or whatever else you can dream up.

The player whose character has the "Companion" Special Rule controls the companion itself. The GM controls the companions belonging to GMCs. Companions can act either immediately before or immediately after the characters they belong to during action scenes, though only one (i.e., the Companion or the character) can initiate a crucial check per round during an action scene.

Companions cannot have Oomph of their own. Any Oomph earned by them must be added to the PC's Oomph total. The player whose character has the "Companion" Special Rule may spend his own Oomph to benefit the companion via the Oomph options (see pages 45 - 46).



For all intents and purposes, a Companion's Star Power depends on the Tier of its Trait rating:

- **Human Tier:** Star Power 1
- **Superhuman Tier:** Star Power 2
- **Cosmic Tier:** Star Power 3

Upon giving this Special Rule to a Trait, you must decide what *functions* the companion serves in the series and write them down. Functions act as broad Traits for the companion.

The following functions are available to all companions:

- COMBAT
- TOUGHNESS
- STEALTH
- MOVE – [insert movement type]
- THINK
- MANIPULATE.

The GM must approve any other function you want to give your companion. Once you've determined the companion's functions, you must

allocate a number of points equal to the Trait's rating +2 to them. As with normal Traits, any function not given any points will count as having a rating of 0.

When it comes to linking, treat the Functions as Traits. The Companion can link its own Functions together or even link its Functions to the Traits of the character (or vice versa) to reflect the two helping each other out. Note, however, that no more than two Traits/Functions can be linked for a single check.

Deactivate

The Trait is able to temporarily Deactivate another character's Trait(s).

This counts as two Special Rules choices. When taking it, you must determine what type of Traits it affects and write it down on the character's bio-file. If the GM feels your selection is too "wide", she may require you to change it.

Only one Trait can be targeted by this Trait per turn and the target must be in sight of the character attempting to Deactivate the Trait, unless the Special Rule is taken more than once (see below).

To Deactivate an appropriate Trait, you must make an opposed check using the Trait with the "Deactivate" Special Rule versus the Trait you wish to Deactivate. If you succeed, the Trait is Deactivated until the end of the targeted character's next turn (or until the end of a scene if it's not an action scene). If, during an action scene, you roll a Boon with this Trait, the targeted Trait is Deactivated until the end of the scene.

This Special Rule may be taken multiple times, with each time adding another type of Trait that is affected. In such a case, only one check needs to be made to Deactivate all affected Traits; the targeted character uses the highest rating of the targeted Traits for the opposed check. If you succeed, all the targeted Traits are Deactivated.

Deplete

The Trait is able to temporarily decrease another character's Trait rating(s). This is perfect for replicating gas that makes the target drowsy, poison that dulls the senses or goopy substances that impede a character's mobility.

When taking this Special Rule, you must determine what type of Traits it affects and write it down on the character's bio-file. If the GM feels your selection is too "wide", she may require you to change it.

Only one Trait can be targeted by this Trait per turn and the target must be in sight of the character attempting to deplete the Trait, unless the Special Rule is taken more than once (see below).

To deplete an appropriate Trait, you must make an opposed check using the Trait with the "Deplete" Special Rule versus the Trait you wish to deplete. If you succeed, the Trait rating is reduced by one until the end of the scene (negative Trait ratings are possible in this case). If you roll a Boon with this Trait, the targeted Trait is reduced by two instead.

This Special Rule may be taken multiple times, with each time adding another type of Trait that is affected. In such a case, only one check needs to be made to deplete all affected Traits; the targeted character uses the highest rating of the targeted Traits for the opposed check. If you succeed, all the targeted Trait ratings are reduced by one.

Devastating

This Special Rule should be given to a Trait that has lingering effects when it causes an enemy to be Defeated. It should be reserved for Traits that are of a much higher magnitude than normal – MASSIVE CANNON, MASTER OF GUILE, LIFE-DRAIN TOUCH, etc.

When a character is Defeated by this Trait, he or she begins his or her next scene with one Setback Token.

Disadvantage

Adverse

A Disadvantage is a miscellaneous flaw that impedes the Trait's effectiveness in some way.

Upon selecting this Special Rule, you must choose what the Disadvantage is. The GM may veto the chosen Disadvantage if he feels it is too minor to even hinder the Trait. Some examples include: "Cannot affect red targets," "Only works at night," "Will not work if the character is wet," "Can only affect vampires," or "Must use wild hand gestures".

Fickle

Adverse

The Trait is unreliable and cannot always be counted on to function. This Special Rule can be utilized to represent dilapidated gear, wildly uncontrollable powers, or simply things that don't always do what they're intended to do (like a shield that doesn't block every single incoming attack).

After declaring that you're using the Trait, but before you make the check (or before the action result is described by the GM if no check is necessary), roll a d12. If you roll 4-12, proceed as normal, but if you roll 1-3, it doesn't work this time.

One-Shot

Adverse

Some Traits can't be used over and over again.

Once you make a check involving this Trait, it is Deactivated for the remainder of the episode.

Oomph-Powered

Adverse

There are Traits that only work with maximum exertion. The Trait with this Special Rule is one of them.

This Trait requires you to spend a point of Oomph each time you use it for a check. This Special Rule may be taken multiple times. Each time you take it, add an additional 1 to the Oomph cost.

This Special Rule should always be annotated as "Oomph-Powered [Oomph cost]" (e.g., "Oomph-Powered 1").

Shared

Sometimes, characters have Traits that several of them can use. Thinking in "meta" terms, this is akin to a toy vehicle that came with two action figures. This Trait can represent an accessory, a vehicle, a companion or maybe even some form of power related to the fact that the characters are twins.

This Trait can be used by any character who chips in an equal number of Trait points to create it. The Trait must then be listed on all sharing characters' bio-files, along with the names of the other characters who share the Trait.

Any, some or all of the sharing players may also give the Trait Special Rules and Upgrade #2.

EXAMPLE: Valerie and I want to create a tank that our characters both have access to. The general idea is that my character (Topspeed) drives it, while her character (Boomer) acts as the gunner. We discuss how many of our respective Trait points we want to invest when we reach Step 3 of the character creation process. We settle on 3 points apiece, which gives a total rating of 6. While selecting Special Rules for my character, I use one of my Special Rules choices to give the shared Trait "Vehicle – Minor". During Valerie's turn to choose Special Rules, she figures it might

be wise to spend one of her choices to improve it to "Vehicle – Moderate", since that Special Rule requires two choices total in order to take it. During the Upgrades step, I give the Trait Upgrade #2, boosting its rating up to 7. On Topspeed's bio-file, it would look like this:

Viper Tank 7 (Vehicle – Moderate; Shared with Boomer)

All sharing characters have access to this Trait. However, all checks involving the Trait have +1 DN for each sharing character not present. This also goes for any subsidiary Traits for vehicles and alternate forms as well as Functions for companions.

Situational Boost

This Trait functions better under a specific condition.

The character adds 2 to any check result when using this Trait under certain circumstances. Upon selecting this Special Rule, you must choose what the circumstance is and write it down next to the Special Rule itself. The GM may veto the chosen circumstance if he feels it is too potent. Some examples include: "In total darkness," "When using it against large targets," "When using it against robots," "When flying," "When underwater," or "When angry".

Situational Setback

Adverse

This Trait's effectiveness is lessened under a specific condition.

When using this Trait under certain conditions, the DN for the check will be increased by 2.

Upon selecting this Special Rule, you must choose what the circumstance is and write it down next to the Special Rule entry itself. The GM may veto the chosen circumstance if he feels it doesn't restrict the character enough. Some examples

include: "When in sunlight," "While stressed out," "When using it against metal," "When near red objects," "When not wearing armor," or "While possessing one or more Setback Tokens."

Transform Others

The Trait represents a character's ability to change other characters or inanimate objects into another form.

When you decide upon this Special Rule, you must choose which level to take it at: Minor, Moderate or Major. These will affect the game stats for the alternate form.

- **Minor:** Counts as one Special Rules choice
- **Moderate:** Counts as two Special Rules choices
- **Major:** Counts as three Special Rules choices

After you finish creating your character, you will need to create game stats for the alternate form (see pages 112 - 113). The Trait rating will affect how the alternate form is constructed.

Transform Self

The Trait represents a character's ability to change himself into another form.

When you decide upon this Special Rule, you must choose which level to take it at: Minor, Moderate or Major. These will affect the game stats for the alternate form.

- **Minor:** Counts as one Special Rules choice
- **Moderate:** Counts as two Special Rules choices
- **Major:** Counts as three Special Rules choices

After you finish creating your character, you will need to create game stats for the alternate form (see pages 112 - 113). The Trait rating will affect how the alternate form is constructed.

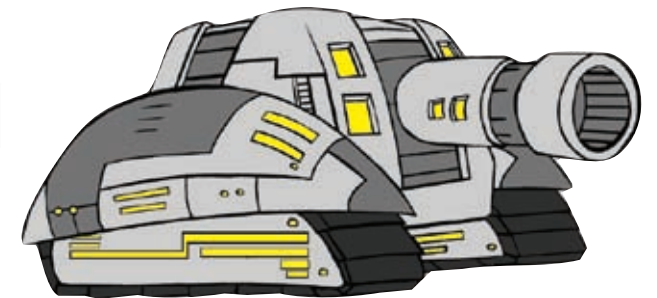
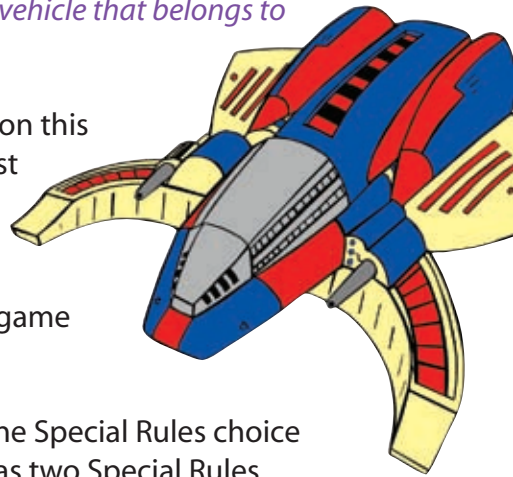
Vehicle

The Trait represents a vehicle that belongs to the character.

When you decide upon this Special Rule, you must choose which level to take it at: Minor, Moderate or Major. These will affect the game stats for the vehicle.

- **Minor:** Counts as one Special Rules choice
- **Moderate:** Counts as two Special Rules choices
- **Major:** Counts as three Special Rules choices

After you finish creating your character, you will need to create game stats for the vehicle (see pages 114 - 115). The Trait rating will affect how the vehicle is constructed.



Versatile

While all Traits can cover a lot of ground in terms of what they can do, there are some Traits that cover too much ground. They are capable of producing a vast assortment of effects that are undefined during character creation.

This Special Rule is most commonly used for Traits that represent the character's ability to cast impromptu spells or that represent a multitude of gadgets, though there are certainly other possibilities. Basically, this one Trait will be able

to do just about anything you could ever want it to do... but not an infinite number of times. This is powerful indeed, and that power comes with a steep price. Several steep prices, actually:

- This Special Rule can only be acquired as an Upgrade during character creation (and it counts as two upgrades too).
- A Trait must have a rating of 5 or higher before you can give it "Versatile".
- Once this Special Rule is acquired, the Trait rating is immediately reduced by 4. This means that you can purchase the rating at a rating higher than what the series allows, so long as the final modified rating is equal to or less than that maximum.
- A Trait with this Special Rule cannot also have the "Action Feature" Special Rule as well. However, you may give "Action Feature" to one of the predefined sub-Traits (see below).
- The character must spend a point of Oomph in order to use an undefined Trait (see below), just as if that undefined Trait had "Oomph-Powered 1".

A Versatile Trait is essentially a collection of Trait slots. Some of the slots are taken up by predefined Traits (called sub-Traits) that can be used as often as you wish, while some slots remain undefined. Each undefined slot can be used once during an episode to create a one-shot Trait; once used, the slot is no longer available until the next episode.

The number of predefined slots a Versatile Trait receives depends on the Trait's Tier (Human Tier receives two, Superhuman Tier receives three and Cosmic Tier receives four). The number of undefined slots a Versatile Trait receives is equal to the character's Star Power.

Sub-Traits (predefined and undefined alike) use the Trait's rating and Special Rules, where

applicable. Additionally, each sub-Trait (again, both predefined and undefined) can have one Special Rule of its own. Special Rules that require more than one "Special Rules choice" cannot be taken. In the case of undefined sub-Traits, the Special Rule is selected when used, but before any dice are rolled.



EXAMPLE: I'm creating a wizard, so I create the MAGIC HAT 6 Trait, with the idea that he produces magic spells by pulling things out of the hat. I spend two upgrades to give it "Versatile" and immediately reduce the rating by 4, making it MAGIC HAT 2 [Versatile]. Since the rating of 2 places it in the Human Tier, the Trait receives two defined slots. I fill those slots with the following sub-Traits: BALL OF FIRE and FORCE SHIELD. I could give each of them a Special Rule, but decide not to. Since my character has a Star Power of 3, my Versatile Trait will also have three undefined slots that I can use to create one-shot sub-Traits during the game. My final Versatile Trait looks like this:

MAGIC HAT 2 (Versatile; BALL OF FIRE [Area]; FORCE SHIELD; 3 undefined slots)

Comedically Versatile: The retro-toons were brimming over with bumbling wizards and inept gadgeteers. If you'd like your character to be one of them, you may opt to make him or her "Comedically Versatile". All sub-Traits will Flub on a roll of 1 or 2, inevitably resulting in a silly, useless or even self-detrimental spell/gadget. The plus side to all this is that the character (or GM for GMCs) earns a point of Oomph when this happens during an action scene (maximum of once per scene). After all, viewers love the slapstick comedy that usually arises from these situations!

Transform-Based Special Rules

These Special Rules may only be given to a Trait that either has the "Transform Self" or "Transform Others" Special Rule.

Extra Alternate Form

Not all characters are limited to one alternate form. Some of them have two of them... or even more.

This allows the character to create an additional alternate form.

Involuntary

Adverse

The character has no control over when he changes into his alternate form.

You must first select a trigger; something that prompts the change ("when angry," "upon a full moon," "when scared," etc.). When the situation happens, the character automatically changes into the alternate form. Once the stimulus is removed (he calms down, the moon is no longer visible, the frightening situation goes away, etc.), he will revert back to his base form.

Depending on the nature of the trigger, the GM may require the character to make a check using a Trait that represents strength of mind to avoid transforming. The base difficulty should be quite high (10 should be average).

Multi-Form

The character can transform into almost any form imaginable.

This is an extremely potent Special Rule and has an appropriately steep price, so to speak. The following rules are in effect:

- A Trait must have a rating of 5 or higher before you can give it "Multi-Form".
- Once this Special Rule is acquired, the Trait rating is immediately reduced by 4.
- The character must spend a point of Oomph in order to use the Trait, just as if it "Oomph-Powered 1".

Rather than having a set-in-stone alternate form, the character can create a new alternate form with each use, using the normal rules for creating alternate forms. This can be slightly time-consuming during play, so the GM may wish to play "loose and easy" with it.

Subordinate Stats

If you've taken the "Transform Others," "Transform Self," or "Vehicle" Special Rules or have a character who has the "Gestalt" Quality, you're not quite finished with the character creation process. You'll now have to create game stats for an alternate form, a vehicle or a gestalt form. This section is where you'll learn how to do that.

You may be wondering why Companions and Playsets aren't found in this section. With the "Companion" Special Rule, you must assemble the companion's "roles," which is a simple procedure that could easily be done as soon as you take the Special Rule; it's not as involved as creating, say, an alternate form or vehicle. Playsets were excluded from this section because it's not something listed on the character sheet and also because the GM will also be creating them for the series. For this reason, we gave it its own step in the series creation process.



Sarah: I have to tell you something. In the appendix of this book, you'll find a super-duper detailed list of various things – animals, vehicles, weapons, monsters, etc. – as well as their stats. You can use them as guidelines for alternate forms and vehicles! They even have stats for big ol' cassette players! That's crazy!

Creating Alternate Forms

If you've given your character either the "Transform Self" or "Transform Others" Special Rule, you'll need to create game stats for the alternate form(s). These rules cover everything except for vehicle alternate forms. If you want the alternate form to be a vehicle, design it just as you would a vehicle (see pages 114 - 115) and follow the special instructions found in the text boxes in that section.

Step 1: Qualities

You may select three Qualities (one Signature Quality and two Standard Qualities). The Signature Quality sums up what the form is ("Black Smoke," "Massive Ogre," "Wolf," etc.), while the other Qualities dictate miscellaneous factors that can impact the form both positively and negatively ("Savage," "No Opposable Thumbs," "Animal Instincts," etc.).

If this is "Transform Self," the character can port over standard Qualities from the base form if appropriate in place of one or more of the newly created standard Qualities. Signature Qualities cannot be ported over from the base form.

Step 2: Traits

By default, all of the base form's mental and personality-based Traits are retained in the alternate form, unless the GM states otherwise (for example, she may feel that MIND BLAST shouldn't be ported over).

Additionally, you receive points to purchase new Traits with. The amount depends on what level the Special Rule was taken at:

- Minor: 8 points
- Moderate: 12 points
- Major: 16 points

Maximum Ratings

The rating of the Trait with the "Transform Self" or "Transform Others" Special Rule acts as a maximum for the alternate form's own Trait ratings. Specifically, the maximum is equal to the "Transform Self" or "Transform Others" Trait rating +2. For example, if your character's "Transform Self" Trait is 4, none of the alternate form's Traits can have a rating higher than 6. Keep in mind that its Traits must also conform to the series' maximum rating.

Disallowed Special Rules

An alternate form's Traits may not be given the following Special Rules: Action Feature, Versatile, Vehicle or Transform Self.

Step 3: Special Rules

During this step, you can select Special Rules for your alternate form's Traits. You receive a number of Special Rules based on whether the "Transform Self" or "Transform Others" is Minor, Moderate or Major.

- **Minor:** 1 Special Rule
- **Moderate:** 2 Special Rules
- **Major:** 3 Special Rules

You can gain additional Special Rules by taking Special Rules listed as "adverse." Each adverse Special Rule you take allows you to choose one regular Special Rule, up to a maximum of three.

It could be that you don't see your alternate forms having as many Special Rules as the amount you're allowed. For every non-adverse Special Rule you elect not to take, you may raise one of the vehicle's Trait ratings by 1 (keeping in mind the series maximum ratings allowed).

Step 4: Upgrades

You may now select and implement upgrades. The number of upgrades you may choose is based on whether the "Transform Self" or "Transform Others" Special Rule was taken as Minor, Moderate or Major.

- **Minor:** 2 upgrades
- **Moderate:** 3 upgrades
- **Major:** 4 upgrades

You may take each upgrade multiple times unless noted otherwise.

- **Upgrade #1:** Increase a Trait rating by +1. This is the only way a Trait rating can be raised above the series' maximum rating. A single Trait rating cannot exceed that maximum by more than two.
- **Upgrade #2:** Gain a new Trait at rating 1.
- **Upgrade #3:** Gain two new non-adverse Special Rules and allocate them between the alternate form's Traits. These cannot be traded in for extra points for Traits.
- **Upgrade #4:** Select an extra Standard Quality.



Exceptions

By necessity, the system for creating alternate forms lays down some hard-lined rules and restrictions. However, the GM can allow exceptions to the rules if it makes sense for the concept of the form.

For example, my character's base form (a robot) has MECHANICAL BRAINPOWER with the "Action Feature" Special Rule. Since it's a mental-based Trait, it would carry over to my alternate form (a mechanical wolf), right? But "Action Feature" is disallowed for alternate forms according to the rules. The GM may allow me to go ahead and port the Trait over regardless.



Creating Alternate Forms for Foes



What if your character is a sorcerer who turns his enemies into kittens? Obviously, you don't want to make these kittens extremely formidable. Otherwise, your victims may kick your character's butt. The whole idea is to morph them into something weak and mostly helpless, right?

Right. For this reason, all of the level-specific aspects of alternate form creation are reversed as follows:

Traits

- **Minor:** 16 points
- **Moderate:** 12 points
- **Major:** 8 points

Special Rules

- **Minor:** 3 Special Rule
- **Moderate:** 2 Special Rules
- **Major:** 1 Special Rule

Upgrades

- **Minor:** 4 upgrades
- **Moderate:** 3 upgrades
- **Major:** 2 upgrades

Creating Vehicles

So, you've made your character and given him a Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule. Now, you have to create the game stats for the vehicle.

If the vehicle is being created as an alternate form, follow the directions in the sidebars below. Should a section be without such a sidebar, carry out the step as per the normal rules for creating vehicles.

Step 1: Qualities

You may select three Qualities (one Signature Quality and two Standard Qualities). The Signature Quality sums up what the vehicle is ("Motorcycle", "Tank", "Starfighter", etc.), while the other Qualities dictate miscellaneous factors that can impact the vehicle both positively and negatively ("Open-Topped", "Lifeboats", "Docking Bay", "Cargo Hold", etc.).



If the Vehicle is an Alternate Form



If this is "Transform Self", the character can port over standard Qualities from the base form if appropriate in place of one or more of the newly created standard Qualities. Signature Qualities cannot be ported over from the base form.

Step 2: Traits

A vehicle has three core Traits. These are the Traits that are most important to the vehicle's concept. Once you have them written down, give one of them a rating equal to the rating of the Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule. The other two core Traits will have ratings that are 2 less than that (down to a minimum rating of 1).

EXAMPLE: My character has EAGLE CYCLE 4. For the core Traits, I chose HIGHLY MANEUVERABLE, REPEATER CANNON and FAST. I want to put the focus on FAST, so it will have a rating of 4 (the same rating as EAGLE CYCLE). The other two core Traits will have ratings of 2 (equal to the EAGLE CYCLE's rating minus 2).

Modes of Travel

Whenever you take a Trait that represents the vehicle's speed, you must select one mode of travel for it. The mode of travel should be noted in parenthesis by the Trait's name. The standard modes are as follows: Land, Air, Water, Underwater, Space and Subterranean.

If you want your vehicle to have another mode of travel, you must take a second movement Trait.



If the Vehicle is an Alternate Form



By default, all of the base form's mental and personality-based Traits are retained in the alternate form, unless the GM states otherwise (for example, she may feel that MIND BLAST shouldn't be ported over).

Step 3: Special Rules

During this step, you can select Special Rules for your vehicle's Traits. You receive a number of Special Rules based on whether the vehicle is Minor, Moderate or Major.

- **Minor:** 1 Special Rule
- **Moderate:** 2 Special Rules
- **Major:** 3 Special Rules

You can gain additional Special Rules by taking Special Rules listed as "adverse". Each adverse Special Rule you take allows you to choose one regular Special Rule, up to a maximum of three.

It could be that you don't see your vehicle as having as many Special Rules as the amount you're allowed. For every non-adverse Special Rule you elect not to take, you may raise one of the vehicle's Trait ratings by 1 (keeping in mind the series' maximum ratings allowed).

The list of Special Rules can be found on pages 104 - 111.

Disallowed Special Rules

A vehicle's Traits may not be given the following Special Rules: Action Feature, Versatile, or Vehicle.

Step 4: Upgrades

You may now select and implement upgrades. The number of upgrades you may choose is based on two factors: the character's Star Power and whether the character's Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule was taken as Minor, Moderate or Major.

- **Minor:** Star Power x1 = number of upgrades allowed
- **Moderate:** Star Power x 2 = number of upgrades allowed
- **Major:** Star Power x 3 = number of upgrades allowed

You may take each upgrade multiple times unless noted otherwise.

• **Upgrade #1:** Increase a Trait rating by +1. This is the only way a Trait rating can be raised above the series' maximum rating. A single Trait rating cannot exceed that maximum by more than two.

• **Upgrade #2:** Gain a new Trait at rating 1.

• **Upgrade #3:** Gain two new non-adverse Special Rules and allocate them between the vehicle's Traits. These cannot be traded in for extra points for Traits.

• **Upgrade #4:** Select an extra Standard Quality.



Creating Gestalt Forms

If you and any of your allies have an identical "Gestalt" Standard Quality, you (or your vehicles) can merge together to create a gestalt form. The rules for gestalts can be found by zipping over to page 53. This section simply covers creating the gestalt form itself.



The "Gestalt" Quality



As mentioned previously, if a character forms a part of a gestalt, he must have a Standard Quality called "Gestalt" (followed by the name of the Gestalt he is a part of and what part of the gestalt he creates – left arm, head, torso, etc.). For example, "Gestalt – "Titanus" (torso)".

Investing Trait Points

All players whose characters make up a single gestalt must decide how many Trait points to pitch in during Step 3 of the character creation process. The amount each player invests must be the same (e.g., each player contributes 3 points).

But wait! There's more! For every character that contributes Trait points, add one more point to the amount.

These points are set aside until after the characters have been finished.

So, for example, if the gestalt form is made up of 5 characters and each one contributed 5 points, they would get to set aside a total of 30 points (25 for the amount they pitched in and 5 for the number of characters in the gestalt).

Buying Gestalt Traits

With the Trait points that were set aside, the players get to choose Traits and purchase their ratings. This should be an exercise in cooperation, so players are advised to work together to devise Traits that everyone is happy with.

Gestalt Trait ratings are purchased just like regular Trait ratings. There is one difference though. The

maximum Trait rating allowed is 4 higher than what the series normally allows. For example, if a series is of the Human Tier (which has a maximum Trait rating of 4), the maximum gestalt Trait rating is 8. This means that gestalts can achieve greater levels of power than the characters can individually.

If the gestalt is formed out of vehicles rather than characters, it comes with a free and automatic Trait with mode of travel (Land, Air, Water, Underwater, Space and Subterranean). This mode of travel is assumed to be the same mode used by the majority of the contributing or "component" vehicles: five cars forming a giant super-car or five flyers forming a flying battle platform, for instance. You aren't bound by this, however. As long as all the players agree, any mode may be selected for the gestalt. The rating for this Trait is 3, but you can improve it by spending the points set aside for the gestalt Traits.

Choosing Special Rules

The gestalt Traits may be given a number of Special Rules equal to the number of characters that form the gestalt. Unlike with characters, vehicles and alternate forms, these may not be exchanged for more Trait points. Each adverse Special Rule taken grants an additional non-adverse Special Rule.

Create the Vehicle (for Vehicle-based Gestalts Only!)

If the gestalt is formed by the characters' vehicles merging together, each of the characters must have a vehicle in the first place. This is done as per the standard vehicle rules found on pages 114 - 115, with a couple of caveats:

- The character doesn't need to have the "Gestalt" Standard Quality, but the vehicle does.
- The character's Trait with the "Vehicle" Special Rule must also have the following adverse Special Rule: "Disadvantage – cannot merge unless character has access to vehicle". This does count toward the maximum total of adverse Special Rules and will allow you to take an additional non-adverse Special Rule as normal.



Segment 3: Game Master Characters



The PCs may be the undisputed stars of the show, but without GMCs to interact with and fight, that show would be boring. B-O-R-I-N-G, boring! During this segment, the GM will develop the series' supporting cast.

GMC Game Stats

There are two ways to create game stats for GMCs. It's up to the GM to decide which one she'd like to go with.

Not Using the System

The GM can completely forego the system for generating characters and give them whatever game stats you think the GMCs should have. Remember that GMCs aren't required to stay within the series' maximum Trait ratings. Using the PC creation rules as a guideline is another way to go (e.g., when giving a character "Versatile", you might observe the number of defined and undefined Traits imposed by the rules).

Using the System

GMCs can be created using the same rules for generating PCs. You must keep a few of things in mind:

- GMCs don't have their own Oomph, so Upgrade #6 isn't available.
- GMCs don't contribute to the construction of Playsets, so Upgrade #7 isn't available.
- GMCs can have a different amount of Trait points than PCs.
- GMCs aren't bound by the series' maximum Trait ratings and can have whatever ratings you feel are appropriate.

Heroic Allies

The primary heroes in the retro-toons weren't usually alone in their fight against evil. At the very least, they could claim to have at least a few allies that they could turn to for help. Often, they were supported by other members of a team or organization. Either way, heroic GMCs played an important role in the genre.

Heroic Ally Roles

Heroic allies are very different from one another in terms of their roles in a series. Below, we discuss a handful of these roles.

Lone Allies

When a series was set up so that the primary heroes were not a part of a larger team or organization, the use of lone allies was common. Typically, the lone ally was something of a plot device. If the heroes needed something that they couldn't do or obtain by themselves, the lone ally stepped up to the plate. As GM, you should use them in this fashion as well. If, for example, none of the PCs have any real knowledge of science, but needed to find out what a mysterious fungus is, the lone ally could be sought out to analyze it.

Some lone allies simply complemented the primary heroes' existing abilities. They might all be great fighters, but having a tough-as-nails lone ally join in the fray certainly would help their chances.

Teammates

Many series are set up so that the focus is on a team or organization. In *Cartoon Action Hour*, this means that the PCs will simply be a part of that team or organization. This means that you'll need to stat out the other team members (or at least the more prominent ones). Just be careful that you don't step on the PCs' toes. Don't create team members who are too similar to them or you'll risk

making the players think their characters are not pivotal and important cogs in the wheel. Teammates can plug holes in the story and can be used as convenient plot devices. If you need the villains to take someone captive in order to drive the story forward, who better to fill that role than a teammate, a character the PCs will feel obligated to rescue?

Comic Relief

This seemed almost mandatory in the cartoons of yore – the cute or goofy characters the viewers either loved – or loved to hate. Comic relief characters came in numerous varieties: the bumbling sorcerer, the spunky robot, the overprotective troll, the bubble-headed blonde bombshell, the cowardly but ferocious-looking beast, the cuddly pet, etc.

It's possible that one of the players may want to play a comic relief character as his PC or create one as the PC's Companion. Usually, though, they'll be independent GMCs.

Comic relief characters excel at getting themselves (and the PCs) into no end of trouble. This can be used as a tool for you to create adventure for the PCs. Perhaps the comic relief character wanders off and ends up accidentally releasing an evil genie who rampages throughout the land. The possibilities are endless.

Rogues Gallery

The most common approach to villainy in the retro-toons was for the producers to develop a pool of bad guys that acted as a collective thorn in the heroes' sides. This rogues gallery would be drawn upon episode after episode, forming the bulk of the challenges that the protagonists had to face. More often than not, the villains in a rogues gallery were all part of a villain group or organization.

This formula was born from the fact that most retro-toons supported a line of action figures, which would be released periodically in batches. This meant that the rogues gallery would grow as the series progressed from season to season.

Not every episode featured villains from the rogues gallery. One-shot villains would take center stage once in a while for the sake of diversity. Certain series utilized these villains more often than others. Some series never used one-shot villains, while others used them all the time, in place of a rogue's gallery. Most series fell somewhere in between these two extremes.

If you plan for your series to have a rogues gallery, then you should think carefully before creating the individual villains. Try to cover as many of the basis as you can. Most rogues' galleries contained a big powerhouse villain, a sneaky villain, a highly intelligent villain, and some kind of combat specialist (ninja, street fighter, archer, etc.). And let's not forget about the token female. That's not to say that these archetypes are mandatory, but you should at least consider keeping with the format to some degree in order to nab that retro-toon flavor.

Creating a rogues gallery for your series has another practical advantage – it saves you time. Without one, you'd have to create at least one new villain prior to running each episode. If you have established a rogues gallery, however, just choose which of the villains you want to use this week and jump into the game.

Villain Hierarchy

The villainous organizations of the retro-toons always had a very pronounced pecking order. In *Cartoon Action Hour*, there are four categories that villains fit into:

- Master Villain
- Leader
- Henchman
- Goon

Master Villain

Star Power 4

The Master Villain is the top dog of the group and is usually the one who founded the organization. While his underlings may constantly plot to overthrow him by means of manipulation, backstabbing or guile, there's a reason the Master Villain remains in the numero uno spot. Most often, the reason is because he's the craftiest of all the villains. He's the man with the vision and he's too cunning to be so easily ousted. Some Master Villains, though, maintain their status by sheer intimidation. In such cases, he is either physically imposing or has some manner of power (magic, weapons, etc.) that keeps the others in line.

Out of all the GMCs, the Master Villain is the one you should put the most effort into. He needs to be capable of holding the players' attentions throughout the series without boring them or making them groan with frustration when he hits the scene. This cannot be stressed enough. It's best to get it right before the series begins; otherwise you'll probably have to replace him with a more interesting Master Villain later on.

There are several things that every Master Villain needs in order to be successful:

Big Ego

All megalomaniac leaders have to possess an incredibly large ego. It's what drives them to do what they do

and makes them believe that they are the ones destined to rule the world. Everyone must bow down to them and do their bidding. Or so they think. It's that sort of overconfidence that is both the biggest asset and the biggest flaw that Master Villains have in their arsenals.

It's an asset in the fact that it motivates them to aspire to "greatness". Without ego, they'd be nothing but henchmen for someone who *did* possess it. It is this factor that sets them apart from your run of the mill, rank and file ne'er-do-wells.

As mentioned, ego is also a severe detriment to Master Villains. It often makes them overconfident to a fault. They believe they are infallible and that those who oppose them are too stupid or weak to pose a threat to their brilliant plans. Until, of course, the plan goes up in smoke as a result. At that point, the Master Villain will usually shake his

fist and proclaim, "You may have won this time, fools, but you've not seen the last of me!" before making good his escape.

When developing your Master Villain's personality, stop and think about his ego. You needn't analyze it too deeply (this ain't a terribly deep psychological game here), but consider how it affects his effectiveness. Is he prone to explaining his plans to heroes while they're in his "inescapable" death trap? Does he tend to announce his plots to the world rather than just carrying them out? Does he insist on being the one to push the big red button on the doomsday device even if it'll delay things?



Base of Operations

Any Master Villain worth his salt will assuredly maintain some type of defensible headquarters. It is usually located in a really cool place, such as an island shaped like a skull, a platform that allows it to hover thousands of feet above the ground, or at the very top of a dark mountain with storm clouds perpetually lingering about. These locales help set the mood and let the players know that they're dealing with one bad mo-fo.

This lair should be created as a Playset in Segment 4.

Distinctive Identity

You may be starting to think that all Master Villains are identical to one another since it's been established that they all have an ego and possess a headquarters. But the fact is, each Master Villain in the retro-toons was very different than the next. One aspect that helped in this regard was that the Master Villains had distinctive identities.

A distinctive identity encompasses several different nuances – a name, costume, speech patterns, idiosyncrasies, quirks, etc. All these factors go into ensuring that your Master Villain is a unique and unforgettable antagonist.

All your villains should have a distinctive identity, but the Master Villain requires a bit of special care. Another thing to remember is that your Master Villain needs to look like a *Master Villain*. It simply won't do for him to look like his underlings. He's a ruler and he should look the part. When someone glances at the show's rogues gallery, there should be no doubt as to which one the Master Villain is. It should be plainly obvious.

The same can be said for the Master Villain's name. It should be something that grabs you by the cheeks and says, "Hey, this is the big-shot of the group!" It should be something that sounds grand and larger than life, possibly with some kind of title attached to it ("Commander," "Lord," "King," etc.).

Leader

Star Power 3

Leaders are the baddies that are directly beneath the Master Villain. They often act as lieutenants, leading lesser villains into battle or overseeing important missions that the Master Villain wouldn't entrust to anyone else. Many series have one particular Leader that is treated as the Master Villain's "right hand man," who outranks the other Leaders, if only by a tiny margin.

Leaders also tend to be more ambitious than Henchmen and Goons. This sometimes worked against the Master Villain, because this ambition often manifested itself as treachery against him. Many Leaders lie in wait until such a time that the Master Villain slips up, so that they can overthrow him and rule in his stead.

Some Leaders, on the other hand, are as loyal as can be. They stand by the Master Villain through thick and through thin, faithfully doing whatever he asks of them. This type of Leader doesn't seek to be the ruler of the group and is perfectly content with his position.

Most series have only one or two Leaders, especially in the beginning. After the first season, as new characters are added, you can toss more of them into the mix. Be careful, though. You don't want your villain organization to have more Leaders than Henchmen. As a rule of thumb, you should have one Leader for roughly every five Henchmen. Some retro-toons featured more, though, and some didn't have even one.

Henchman

Star Power 2

The bulk of "named" villains (i.e., non-Goon villains) in a series are Henchmen. They are competent bad guys in their own right, some of them even rivaling Leaders in terms of ability, but they simply don't have the clout enjoyed by the higher-ups. The only instances, when they are given any real power, is either when they are assigned to lead a squad of Goons into battle or when they are within their specialty.

Speaking of specialties, many Henchmen have one. It's common for them to have some skill, ability, equipment, or power that makes them incredibly proficient at one particular thing... but not much else. These Henchmen form a niche in the organization that is an invaluable asset to any resourceful Master Villain.

Not all Henchmen are specialists though. Many of them are well-rounded cretins, meaning that, they get more "screen time" because they are useful to the Master Villain in nearly any situation.

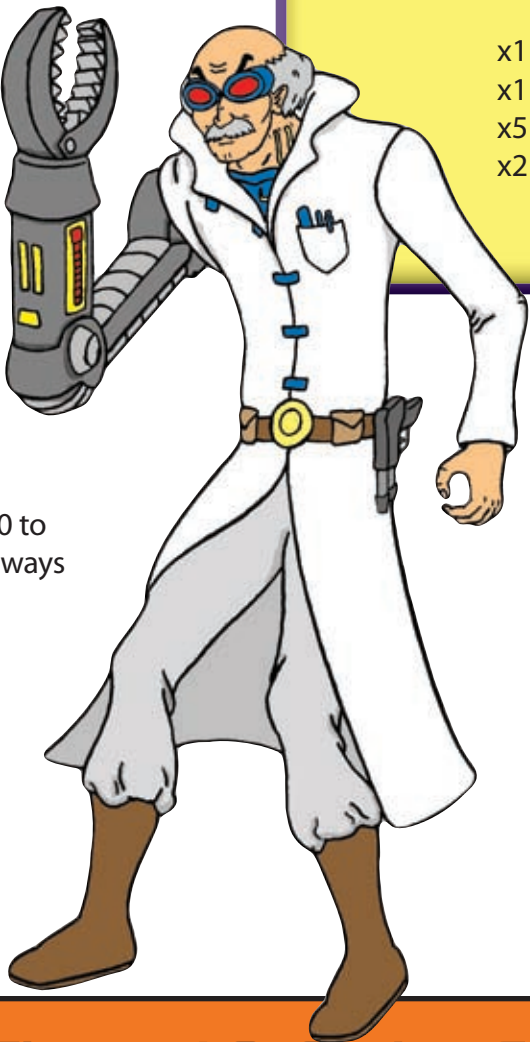
There's no set number of Henchmen allowed in an organization, though it is recommended that you have no less than 6 and no more than 10 to begin a new series with. You can always add more as the series progresses.

Goons

Star Power 1

Peons, Cannon fodder, Grunts, Lackeys, and Mooks. Regardless of what you call them, these are the guys at the bottom of the totem pole. They are the faceless hordes that are sent out to attack the heroes en masse or to guard a structure of some kind. Of course, they almost always get their tails kicked, but so goes the life of a Goon.

A series should have at least one type of Goon. You can find out more about creating Goons below.



Instant Villain Group Template

What follows is a standard set-up for a beginning series. If you don't want to do all the groundwork yourself, use this template instead.

- x1 Master Villain
- x1 Leader
- x5 Henchmen
- x2 types of Goons

 **Kargorr:** Bah! Don't listen to the author! Think for yourself! Better yet, let me think for you! Here's the formula I recommend. It's simple enough that even plebians like you can grasp it. The rogues gallery should consist of me (because every series should have me in it), no Leaders because they tend to be too ambitious and want to overthrow me and 200 Henchmen! That should suffice.

Creating Goons

Creating Goons is a much simpler task than creating other characters. In essence, the GM simply assigns the Goon a Goon Rating and selects any appropriate Special Rules.

Choosing a Goon Rating

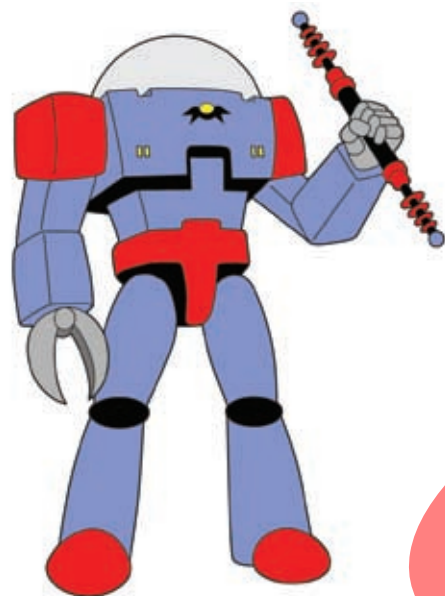
As a guideline, a Goon Rating of 0 represents common grunts (most Goons should be given this rating), a Goon Rating of 1 represents elite minions and a Goon Rating of 2 represents henchmen that are of the highest echelons of Goon-dom.

Choosing Special Rules

Most Goons should have between zero and three Special Rules. Below, you'll find a selection of Special Rules to choose from, though the GM can create new ones as well.

- **Hard to Defeat:** This Goon Squad is Defeated upon taking its second Setback Token rather than its first.

- **Specialist:** Choose something the character is good at and write it down in parenthesis; for example, "Specialist (Stealth)". When making a check that would involve that area of expertise, the Goon Squad rolls one die for checks instead of



rolling two dice and taking the lowest result. Some examples: Stealth, Repair, Communications, Science, Medic, etc.

- **Vicious Assault:** If the side with this Goon Squad outnumbered the opposing side, each Goon Squad with this Special Rule adds +2 to its crucial check total (but only if the Goon Squad is the active character). For purposes of determining whether or not the opposing side is outnumbered, count each Goon Squad as one character.

- **Special Attack:** This can be used to represent powerful weapons, flying-based swoop attacks, special powers or whatever else you can dream up. Before making a crucial check wherein the Goon Squad is the acting character, you may roll a die. If the result is 1-6, the Goon Squad receives no special bonus. If the result is 7-11, add 1 to the Goon Rating for this check. If the result is 12, add 2 to the Goon Rating for this check.

- **Easily Led:** When this Goon Squad is with one or more non-Goon allies, add 1 to its Goon Rating.

- **Dependent:** Unless this Goon Squad is with at least one non-Goon ally, it is useless; any crucial check made against the Goon Squad is done so by rolling an additional die, using the lowest result. Since Goons normally roll two dice and take the lowest, this would cause them to roll three dice and take the lowest instead.

- **Weakness:** Choose something the Goon Squad is vulnerable to and write it down in parenthesis; for example, "Weakness (Holy Symbols)". When this substance, situation or item is present during a scene in which the Goon Squad is involved, all crucial checks made against the Goon Squad are made with an additional die, using the lowest result. Since Goons normally roll two dice and take the lowest, this would cause them to roll three dice and take the lowest instead.

- **Fragile:** This Goon Squad cannot be captured. It always must flee or be destroyed when Defeated.

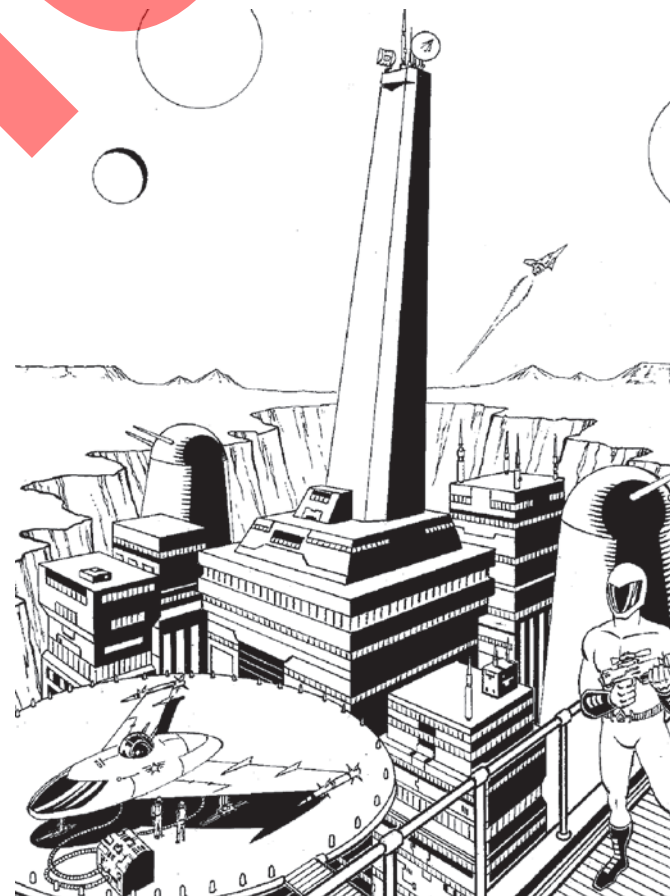
Segment 4: Playsets

This segment explains how the players create heroic playsets and how the GM creates villainous playsets.

Creating Heroic Playsets

The players receive 10 points with which to create heroic playsets. This amount can be increased if the players select Upgrade #7 during character creation. Each time that upgrade is selected, 5 more points are added to the total.

The players must first decide upon how many heroic playsets they'd like to have. They can dump all their points into one mega-playset or spread their points throughout several different playsets.



Once they have made their choice, they must cooperatively set about creating them – one at a time – until they have finished all of their playsets.

Each point can be spent to do one of the following things:

- Gain a new Trait at rating 1
- Add 1 to an existing Trait rating (a rating can't be more than 2 higher than the series' Tier maximum)
- Gain a Special Rule for a Trait

Players may also take up to 3 adverse Special Rules; each one taken grants another point to spend.

Creating Villainous Playsets

Villainous playsets are created exactly the same as heroic playsets, except for how the GM determines the number of points she receives to build them with. The amount is equal to the amount the players have. So, if the players end up with 20 points, so does the GM.

What kinds of Traits do Playsets Have?

When devising your playset's Traits, look to action figure playsets as inspiration. Here are some common Traits that you can use or use as inspiration: TRAP DOOR, SECRET PASSAGES, CRUSHING WALLS, THRONE ROOM, LASER CANNON, HUGE COMPUTER, FORCE FIELD, DRAWBRIDGE, LAVA-FILLED MOAT, ELEVATOR, TRAINING ROOM, ESCAPE SHUTTLE, PARALYZER RAY, PRISON CELLS, SPEAR TRAP, TRACTOR BEAM, MAGICAL DEFENSES, NIGH-IMPERVIOUS WALLS, SPY CAMERAS EVERYWHERE, etc.

Segment 1: The Series Guide

Even though the series name and tagline are collectively listed as the first step of the process, I feel it's best to wait until the concept is more realized.

The Series

My players and I have a passion for science-fantasy retro-toons, so I figured this would be a good type of series to create – something where lasers, swords and sorcery all co-exist in a fun mish-mash of genres.

I want the technology to be standard sci-fi fare – spaceships, lasers, computers and so forth. But I also want a feudal feel to the setting; a bunch of scattered kingdoms pulling together against some kind of common goal. To help this along, I want swords and sorcery to play a big role in the show as well.

The PCs will be the champions of the various kingdoms, which will allow for a great deal of diversity.

With all that in mind, I set out to create the premise of the series and write the following:

The Gallantus Sector – a quiet, out-of-the way collection of planets far away from the heart of civilization. Or at least it was until Obsidious – a merciless, four-armed tyrant from a distant galaxy – appeared in a colossal space fortress. His goal? To conquer this galaxy, just as he had done to countless others... starting with the Gallantus Sector.

But he won't accomplish his goal if the kingdoms of Gallantus have any say in the matter. They have assembled their best champions to act in opposition to Obsidious and his evil minions!

Name and Tagline

Since I now have a good grasp of the series concept, I settle on "Battle for the Universe" for a name with the following tagline: "Champions unite!"

Dials

I'm starting with Seriousness. I don't mind a few laughs, but I really want to press home the fact that Obsidious's coming is a dire event; one that should be taken seriously. For this reason, I give Seriousness a score of 3.

Next up is Realism. Sure, this is going to be a serious setting, but I want some over-the-top pulp-like heroics in play. I go with a Realism rating of 2.

Violence is the next dial, so let's deal with it. Sure, it should have some violence, though in a cartoony way. The characters can land direct hits and slugfests are perfectly fine. To these ends, I select a score of 2 for Violence.

Lastly, we have Continuity. Armed with the idea of the series having a distinct beginning and end, I choose to make it completely serialized, thus giving it a Continuity score of 3.

Player Character Guidelines

As I mentioned previously, the PCs will be champions from different kingdoms. With that stated, let's jump right in.

I'm a fan of all PCs being on equal footing, so I'll place them at Star Power 3.

I definitely want to allow for more-than-human levels of ability. It's science-fantasy, after all! On the other hand, I don't want uber-powerful characters that could just blast Obsidious' space fortress into particles with the blink of an eye. This leads me to select the Superhuman Tier.

After looking things over, I decide to stick to the standard 26 points for Traits.

Now, it's time to select "other rules" or create my own. After perusing the list and putting on my thinking cap about things that would enhance the game, I choose not to have any further rules.

Segment 2: Player Characters

My group consists of myself as the GM and seven players, but only Mason was able to show up today, so we decide to go ahead and create his character now and let the others create their characters tomorrow.

Mason thinks it would be fun to take a common fantasy trope and give it a twist. This train of thought leads him to the idea of a humanoid unicorn with a head harness that covers his horn with a drilling apparatus. The name? Uni-bore, of course.

Star Power and Base Oomph

According to the guidelines, all PCs have Star Power of 3, which also means that his base Oomph will also be 3.

Qualities

For Uni-bore's Signature Quality, Mason wants to emphasize that he's the champion of his people, so he goes with "Champion of the Uni-men." For his two Standard Qualities, he chooses, "Eloquent" and "Slightly Aloof".

Traits

Given that the drilling motif is a big part of the character, Mason dumps a good amount of his 26 points into it. Thus, he takes DRILLING APPARATUS 6. He also wants a good, streamlined-looking magical sword, so MYTHUS BLADE 4 is added to the bio-file. Figuring that any humanoid unicorn needs to be fast, agile and strong, he takes FAST RUNNER 5, GRACEFUL 5 and STRONG 4. Needing some skill with his blade, he spends his remaining 2 points on SWORDSMAN 2.

Special Rules

Uni-bore's Star Power is 3, so he receives 3 Special Rules. Mason digs the idea of making the drill his character's primary gimmick, so he gives DRILLING APPARATUS the "Action Feature" Special Rule. And while he's at it, he figures it should be extra good at drilling through stone, hence the addition of "Situational Boost – when drilling through stone". Seeing as how the MYTHUS BLADE is supposed to be magical, he feels like doing something a bit different with it. He therefore gives it "Situational Boost – when spending Oomph to affect the check". This allows him to basically "power up" the sword when he really needs to. To emphasize the fact that it's an item, Mason gives the MYTHUS BLADE the free Special Rule, "Accessory".

He doesn't see any adverse Special Rules that strike his fancy, so he moves on.

Upgrades

Mason really wants to increase a couple of Uni-bore's Trait ratings, so he takes Upgrade #1 twice. He now has SWORDSMAN 3 and MYTHUS BLADE 5. Mason wraps things up by taking Upgrade #7, so he can get in on creating a very potent Playset later.

Segment 3: Game Master Characters

I think about the hierarchy of my villains first and foremost and figure you can't go wrong by sticking to the template provided in the game. Before I even stat individual villains out, I whip up the basic concepts of the rogues gallery., deciding not to use the PC creation rules when statting them up.

Master Villain (Obsidious): Since we've already established him as the main bad guy, Obsidious slides into this category. He's a four-armed warlord with an equal amount of brawn and brains. He's definitely not going to be a master villain that lets others do all his work. I see him as a man of action.

Leader (Master Jack): I've always had a thing for villains with jack-o-lanterns for a head, so I run with it. Master Jack's head is engulfed in demonic flame, though, as is his sword. My vision for him is an ambitious man, but one who is totally loyal to Obsidious. Why is he so loyal? I'm not sure yet, but I'll work that out a bit later.

Henchman (Skarrgoyle): This guy should be a hulking, brown-skinned gargoyle. He's bestial but not stupid, though he does tend to throw orders out the window in favor of what he thinks is the best course of action (much to Obsidious' chagrin). It's not that he isn't loyal; he's just too stubborn for his own good.

Henchman (Diabolikka): I dig the clichéd female sorceress villain that so many retro-toons had. But I think it would be cool to put a slight variation on the concept, by making her a classic witch, green skin and all. Instead of a broomstick, though, I want her to have a glider made from wooden sticks. Diabolokka wants to usurp Obsidious and take control herself. She'll do anything she can to undermine him.

Henchman (Dreadbeard): Who doesn't love pirates? I wanted to dive headfirst into every pirate stereotype imaginable. To those ends, I decided on a cybernetic forearm with various "hand" attachments (namely a typical hook). He's to be big and stout with a thick beard and pirate hat. I would be remiss if I didn't have him speak fluent "pirate talk." I figure he can be over Obsidious' space fleet.

Henchman (Ninjetta): We have to create a silent ninja type and I thought it might be fun to make it a female. She does everything one would expect a ninja to do: sneak around and kick butt. I do, however, want to avoid the "ninja honor" thing that pervades most fiction. Ninjetta has no honor at all.

Henchman (Sproutacus): This one is completely out of left field, as I didn't want all my villains to wallow in clichés. I want a plant-like bad guy and a pun-like name to go with it. After tinkering with some plays on words, I come up with "Sproutacus" and hence cement the Roman theme. I want him to be dressed in armor that looks sort of like what the Roman soldiers wore. Sproutacus is hotheaded and always looking to fight... even when it's not a wise choice.

Goons (Sentries): I wanted some standard rank and file minions for the heroes to plow through and these dudes will fit the bill nicely. After some internal debating, I settle upon making them metallic robots so that the PCs can actually destroy them with impunity.

Goons (Star Demons): As I ponder what to do for the second type of Goon, an idea strikes me. What if Master Jack controlled them? And since he has a demonic theme, why not make them winged demons from the depths of space (since the retro-toons weren't allowed to depict Hades/Hell)?

With the enemy GMC concepts out of the way, I move to the concepts for the Ally GMCs. I want the spotlight to be firmly on the PCs, so I feel I should go light on them.

The Sage: A holographic being acting as the guy who gives missions and dispenses wisdom seems like a lot of fun, so I roll with it. The Sage is actually an exhaustive database of information imbued with a personality and sentience. He looks like a wise old wizard.

Gooble: Having a silly comic relief character is a must! Taking an idea from a classic retro-toon, I decide to make him a short, floating doofus. Gooble is going to be a self-styled inventor who pulls out unlikely gadgets from his hat or robe. Of course, these gizmos seldom work or are totally wrong for the situation at hand. For a lark, he always talks in third person ("Gooble has just the device you need... it's around here somewhere!").

Segment 4: Playsets

I talk to the other six players on the phone regarding whether or not any of them would be interested in taking Upgrade #7 once apiece when it comes time to make their PCs. Three of them agree to take it one time apiece. They also agreed to let Mason handle the creation of their playset(s).

Heroic Playsets

Players begin with 10 free points for playsets, but Mason and three other players select Upgrade #7, which gives him a total of 30 points to work with.

Figuring that they'd need a base of operations, he decides to create "the Citadel," a high-tech structure positioned atop a large, rocky hill on the planet of Elbon.

The first thing he considers is that it should have some defenses against external attack. He plops eight points down and takes STEEL ALLOY WALLS 8. Furthermore, he takes MEGA-CANNON 8. He realizes that spending over half of his points on two Traits is risky, but necessary in order to keep bad guys out. Looking to interior defenses, Mason buys SLEEPING GAS TRAPS 5 and TRAP DOOR 4. This leaves him with 5 points remaining. He invests them in WALL SCREEN 2, LABORATORY 3 and in the "Big Attack" Special Rule for the MEGA-CANNON.

Villainous Playsets

With 30 points, I can get two decent smaller-sized playsets or one big playset. I choose the latter.

When I devised the series concept, I mentioned a space fortress that Obsidious arrived in. That works for me. I can create it as a playset. I view it as being big and kind of gothic in appearance... almost like an evil cathedral, but much more high-tech.

Okay, now for my 30-point shopping spree! To emphasize how huge this sucker is, I take MASSIVE SIZE 10. Yes, the series Trait rating maximum is 8, but playsets can have Traits that go up to 2 over that number. I also purchase LASER CANNON EMPLACEMENTS 7. Obsidious isn't going to want to be without a line of retreat in case things go sour for him, so I opt for ESCAPE SHUTTLES 2 and SECRET PASSAGES 2. He also has little flying balls armed with lasers, thus my choice to take HOVERING SECURITY DRONES 2. ADVANCED SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS 5 sounds good to me, allowing Obsidious to see places all over the sector. I'm now left with 2 points, which I decide to buy Special Rules with: I pick up "Big Attack" and "Area" for the LASER CANNON EMPLACEMENTS.

Series Name & Tagline

Battle for the Universe
"Champions unite!"

The Series

The Gallantus Sector -- a quiet, out-of-the way collection of planets far away from the heart of civilization. Or at least it was until Obsidious -- a merciless, four-armed tyrant from a distant galaxy -- appeared in a colossal space fortress. His goal? To conquer this galaxy, just as he had done to countless others... starting with the Gallantus Sector.

But he won't accomplish his goal if the kingdoms of Gallantus have any say in the matter. They have assembled their best champions to act in opposition to Obsidious and his evil minions!

PC Guidelines

Star Power: 3 **Tier & Trait Points:** Superhuman; 26
Other Rules:
None



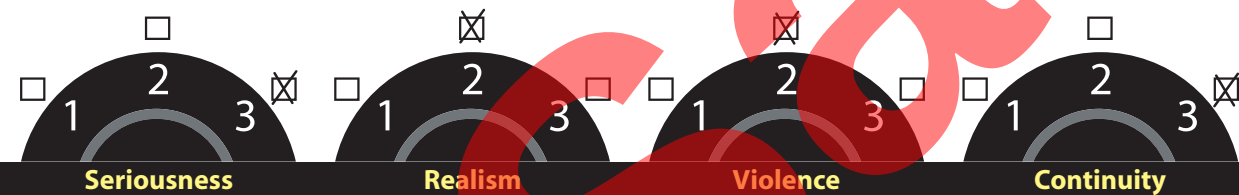
Series Guide

Heroic Playsets

The Citadel
STEEL ALLOY WALLS 8,
MEGA-CANNON 8, (Big At-
tack) SLEEPING GAS TRAPS
5, TRAP DOOR 4, WALL
SCREEN 2, LABORATORY 3

Villainous Playsets

The Space Fortress
MASSIVE SIZE 10, LASER
CANNON EMPLACEMENTS 7
(Area, Big Attack), ESCAPE
SHUTTLES 2, SECRET PAS-
SAGES 2, HOVERING SECU-
RITY DRONES 2, ADVANCED
SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS 5



Cartoon Action Hour: Season 3 Character Bio-File



Character Name Uni-Bore
Player Name Mason Randall

Proofs of Purchase

0

Clip and save for special
premium offers!

Star Power: 3
Oomph
Base: 3
Current: 3
Upgrades: 1,1,7

Qualities!

- ☐ Signature Quality: *Champion of the Uni-men*
- ☐ Standard Quality: *Eloquent*
- ☐ Standard Quality: *Slightly aloof*
- ☐ Standard Quality:
- ☐ Standard Quality:

Traits!

*Drilling Apparatus 6 (Action Feature;
Situational Boost -- when drilling
through stone)*
*Mythus Blade 5 (Accessory; Situational
Boost -- when spending Oomph to
affect the check)*
Fast Runner 5
Graceful 5
Strong 4
Swordsman 3

Miscellaneous Notes

None



Character Illu

Spectrum

Permission granted to reproduce for personal use.

Ages 4 and up

OBSIDIOUS

Star Power: 4

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Power-Hungry Warlord
- ☐ Handles much of the dirty work himself
- ☐ Verbally abusive to his underlings, except Master Jack

Traits

BRAWN 6
COMMANDING PRESENCE 8
FOUR ARMS 6 (Action Feature)
GRAND SCHEMER 5
WE'RE TAKING OVER 5
ALIEN WIZARDRY 4 (Versatile: DRAINING BLAST [Deplete physical strength]; READ MINDS; 4 undefined Traits)
GOES TO ANY LENGTH TO SUCCEED 4
MAN OF ACTION 4
MELEE WEAPONS 2 (Accessory)



MASTER JACK

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Demonic Lieutenant
- ☐ Absolutely loyal to Obsidious
- ☐ Comes from a fiery dimension
- ☐ Mysterious

Traits

FIERY HEAD BLAST 6 (Area; One-Shot)
FLAMING SWORD OF KRONAS 6 (Accessory; Advantage – when this Trait is involved in a crucial check that causes a Setback Token, roll a die and if the result is 11 or 12, it causes two Setback Tokens instead)
HEAT RESISTANCE 5 (Advantage – once per scene, you may remove a Setback Token if exposed to a large amount of fire)
SKILLED FIGHTER 5
FRIGHTENING VISAGE 4
SEETHING HATRED 3 (Situational Boost – versus humans)
ARMOR 3
MELEE WEAPONS 2 (Accessory)



DREADBEARD

Star Power: 2

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Space Pirate
- ☐ Pirate clichés galore!
- ☐ Grumbles about everything

Traits

CYBER EYE 5 (Advantage – spend 1 Oomph to improve SHOOTING by 2 for one check)
METAL ARM ATTACHMENTS 5 (Versatile: HOOK HAND [Action Feature], CLAW HAND [Situational Boost – when clamping onto something], HARPOON HAND [Advantage – can use it as a grappling hook]; 2 undefined Traits)
BIG AND BURLY 4
SPACESHIP PILOTING 4
NAVAL TACTICS 3
SHOOTING 3
FLINTLOCK LASER PISTOL 2 (Accessory)



SPROUTACUS

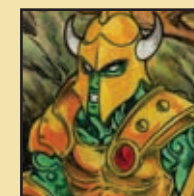
Star Power: 2

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Plantionn Warrior of Spartus
- ☐ Foul tempered
- ☐ Always wants to solve problems by fighting
- ☐ Vulnerable to insecticides

Traits

ELECTRO-TRIDENT 5 (Advantage – Traits representing metal armor can't be used when reacting to a crucial check in which this Trait is used in any capacity)
DISCIPLINED FIGHTER 5
PLANT-LIKE BODY 4 (Action Feature; Advantage – spend 1 Oomph to elongate his limbs for one turn)
SHIELD AND ARMOR 4 (Fickle)
WARRIOR STRENGTH 3
MIND OF A SOLDIER 2



SKARRGOYLE

Star Power: 2

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Bestial Warrior
- ☐ Sometimes ignores orders
- ☐ Animalistic urges
- ☐ Snarly voice

Traits

BRUTE STRENGTH 7 (Situational Boost – when in flight)
WINGS 4 (Action Feature)
SAVAGE NATURE 4
LEATHERY SKIN 3
JAGGED WOODEN CLUB 2
NOT AS STUPID AS HE LOOKS 2
STUBBORN 2

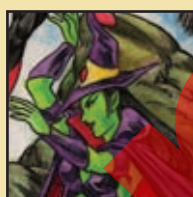


DIABOLIKKA

Star Power: 2

- ☐ ☐ Evil Witch
- ☐ Seeks to overthrow Obsidious
- ☐ Thoroughly enjoys doing evil things

WITCHERY 6 (Versatile: HEX BLAST [Action Feature]; CURSE; ILLUSIONS; 2 undefined Traits)
PRETERNATURAL AGILITY 6
WOODEN GLIDER 4 (Accessory)
MANIPULATOR 4
ALWAYS SKULKING AROUND 3
WICKED WAYS 2



GOOBLE

Star Power: 2

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Self-Styled Inventor
- ☐ Goofy-acting
- ☐ Speaks in third person
- ☐ Legless humanoid

Traits

FLOATING 4
TRIES TO BE HELPFUL 3 (Situational Boost – when using the Teamwork rules to help an ally)
HARD TO GET AHOLD OF 3
ROBE FULL OF GADGETS 2 (ComedicallyVersatile: he has no predefined Traits; 2 undefined Traits)
INVENTOR 2



NINJETTA

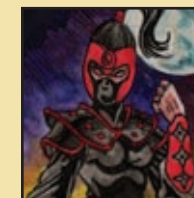
Star Power: 2

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Ninja Master
- ☐ Never speaks
- ☐ Has no sense of honor

Traits

MARTIAL ARTS FIGHTING STYLE 7 (Action Feature)
VANISH FROM SIGHT 4 (Disadvantage – must have ample shadows nearby)
CLIMBING 4
SNEAKING 4
UNCANNY FINESSE 4
NINJA SWORD 3 (Accessory)
KEEN SENSES 3



THE SAGE

Star Power: 2

Qualities

- ☐ ☐ Holographic Wise Man
- ☐ Looks like a stereotypical wizard
- ☐ Sometimes speaks in riddles, leaving others perplexed
- ☐ Can't manipulate physical objects

Traits

NON-PHYSICAL FORM 10
PEERLESS KNOWLEDGE 8 (Action Feature)
PERCEPTIVE 8
KINDLY 4



Sarah: I've got something to tell you! I'm sure you've noticed that the background color is different for two of these characters. The reason for this is so that readers can instantly tell the heroes from the villains with just a glance.

SENTRIES

Star Power: 1
Goon Rating: 0
Special Rules: None

STAR DEMONS

Star Power: 1
Goon Rating: 1
Special Rules:

- Specialist (Flight)

Character Alterations

At first glance, it may appear that the characters in the retro-toons were unchanging, forever trapped in a state of sameness. But we urge you to look a bit closer. Go ahead. No, still not close enough. Ah, that's better. Upon close examination, you'll see that the characters did change, but such changes were usually brought about because of their associated line of action figures.

You see, the toy companies generally released a new batch of action figures for a successful toy line every year. These batches mostly offered all-new characters, but they also tended to have some revised versions of existing characters as well. When the next season of the cartoon would hit the screen, the existing characters would inevitably be depicted as per their new action figure, just like magic.

The character changes typically fell into one of the following categories: cosmetic adjustments, enhancements and revamps. Between seasons, each PC may be given one type of alteration. The details of each one is described below.

Cosmetic Adjustments

That's just a fancy term for "different clothes." Cosmetic adjustments don't affect gameplay in any way, so players are allowed to do this between seasons as they see fit. In other words, if you want your character to have a different outfit on next season, knock yourself out.

Enhancements

With an enhancement, the character's focus stays the same, but he just gets a little better, has a bit of new gear or has acquired a new skill (as detailed in the action figure's "filecard" on the back of the toy package). In game terms, you get to improve your character's Traits and (or) gain new ones.

After a season is over, you may spend your Proofs of Purchase on Upgrades. You may select an Upgrade for each 5 Proofs of Purchase you spend. Thus, if you spend 10 Proofs of Purchase, you may select 2 Upgrades.

- **Upgrade #1:** Increase a Trait rating by +1. This is the only way a Trait rating can be raised above the series' maximum rating. A single Trait rating cannot exceed that maximum by more than two.
- **Upgrade #2:** Gain a new Trait at rating 1.
- **Upgrade #3:** Gain two new non-adverse Special Rules and allocate them between the character's Traits.
- **Upgrade #4:** Select an extra Standard Quality.
- **Upgrade #5:** Give the "Versatile" Special Rule to one of your Traits. This costs 10 Proofs of Purchase instead of the normal 5 for an Upgrade.
- **Upgrade #6:** Increase the character's base Oomph by 1.
- **Upgrade #7:** Contribute 5 points to creating new playsets (see page 123) or improving existing playsets.



Kargorr: What a ridiculous place to place something about character advancement! This should be in the previous Channel – the one that has the rules of play! Those slack-jawed writers have no idea how to properly organize a rulebook!



Bravesteel: Had it been placed in the previous Channel, the rules for advancing characters would have appeared before the rules for creating them. What sense would that have made? This way, the rules for creating and advancing characters are together in one spot.

Revamps

Characters were sometimes completely re-purposed to one degree or another in the world of action figures and retro-toons. A character established as a paramilitary ranger would suddenly become an arctic soldier, a longtime hero would inexplicably be given an ecological gimmick (and new gear and skills to match) or a barbarian would be retooled as a knight. It didn't happen often (and not every series was guilty of it), but it did happen.

Revamping the character requires an expenditure of 5 Proofs of Purchase. It allows you to do any of the following options. Each option may be taken multiple times.

- Completely replace a Trait with an all-new Trait. The new Trait has the same rating as the old Trait. If the old Trait had Special Rules, you may exchange them for new ones (adverse Special Rules may only be exchanged for other adverse Special Rules). You may allocate these new Special Rules to other Traits if you'd like. You can't exchange a Special Rule for "Versatile," nor can you swap a Special Rule with one that counts as two or more choices (Such as "Vehicle – Moderate").
- Eliminate a Trait altogether and redistribute its rating "points" to other Traits, keeping in mind the series' maximum Trait ratings. If the eliminated Trait had any Special Rules, you may keep them the same or exchange them for new ones (adverse Special Rules may only be exchanged for other adverse Special Rules). Whether you keep them the same or exchange them, the Special

Rules must be allocated to other Traits. You can't exchange a Special Rule for "Versatile," nor can you swap a Special Rule with one that counts as two or more choices (Such as "Vehicle – Moderate").

- Replace the character's Signature Quality with a new one.
- Replace one or more of the character's Standard Qualities with new ones.

GMC Alterations

The supporting cast shouldn't just stagnate while the main heroes flourish and grow. Find the average amount of Proofs of Purchases the PCs received. That's how much each recurring GMC receives. The Master Villain will receive 5 extra Proofs of Purchases.

In order to receive these Proofs of Purchase, a GMC had to have been involved in at least 3 episodes of the season that just wrapped. And by "involved," we don't mean quick cameo appearances... we're talking being involved in action scenes or otherwise contributing decently to the story.

These Proofs of Purchase can be spent the same way as for PCs.

Saturday Funtime



The Brutaloids



Ghost Patrol



S.L.A.M.



Rift Warriors



Ani-Bots



Tin Horns



Asgard 3000



**Skyfighters
of Voltania**

PLUS!

Throughout the morning, you'll be given fun tips for healthy snacks and activities on "Time for Time-O!"

New Line-Up Starts Saturday, Sept. 14 on SBS!

8:00! Ani-Bots
8:30! Asgard 3000
9:00! The Brutaloids
9:30! Ghost Patrol

10:00! Rift Warriors
10:30! Skyfighters of Voltania
11:00! S.L.A.M.
11:30! Tin Horns

Ani-Bots

"They're robots! They're animals! They're animal robots!"

The Series

It is the year 2050 and robots have enslaved humankind, who toil endlessly in factories and live lives of total subjugation. Their metal masters rule them, literally, with an iron fist! Pockets of free humans still exist, but they are becoming fewer and fewer with each passing day, as the robotic fiends hunt them down one by one.

One of the remaining pockets is presided over by five of the world's top scientists – Boman Allan Jeffries, Ben Rogers, Chris Russell, Seth Harris and Brian Bishop. With their combined genius, they have managed to create robots of their own; mighty constructs capable of protecting the remnants of free human civilization... and liberating those not so fortunate.

Enter the Ani-bots, humanoid robots that can transform into mechanical animals! Imbued with their own personalities and thought processes, they are poised to fight the evil robots with every gear and rivet in their bodies.

However, the metallic dictator known as Lord Havoc has fought fire with fire by creating his own answer to the Ani-bots – the V-Kons, robots that morph into vehicles!

Now, two groups of warrior constructs will do battle... and the fate of humanity hangs precariously in the balance!

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are Ani-bots, robots that transform themselves into metal animals.

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Superhuman Tier; 26 Trait Points

Other Rules:

- **Required Trait:** Players must spend some of their Trait points on a Trait with the "Transform Self" Special Rule.
- **Theme Adherence:** The alternate form must be that of a robotic animal.

Villains

Lord Havoc (Star Power 4)

☐ ☐ Robotic Oppressor ☐ Huge ☐ Hatred of Humans ☐ Arrogant
METAL BODY 6 (Action Feature), FLAMER ARM 6 (Area; Big Attack; Advantage – can create flame barriers), ROBOT STRENGTH 6, STRATEGY 4, BOW BEFORE ME 4, LEAPING 3

Roadrager (Star Power 3)

☐ ☐ V-Kon Taskmaster ☐ Huge ☐ Sadistic ☐ Explosive temper
RETRACTABLE FOREARM BLADE 5 (Action Feature), TRANSFORM INTO A SPORTS CAR 6 (Transform Self – Moderate), PERCEPTION 6, METAL BODY 5, STRONG 5

"DeLorean Alternate Form"

☐ ☐ Sports Car ☐ Sadistic ☐ Explosive temper
FAST CAR 7 (Mode of Travel – Land), PERCEPTION 6, METAL HULL 5, BLADE CANNON 4, MANEUVERABILITY 4, SMOKE DISPENSER 2

We tried to keep the series seeds in alphabetical order, but one series (Asgard 3000) was simply too long to fit on one page. Thus, in order to make it fit on one spread, we had to place Brutaloids first.

Folder

PORTFOLIO

136

Name: Created by Fran Marrero Gomez

The Brutaloids

"They come... to destroy!"

The Series

Project ALIEN (Alien Encounter Initiative) first came across the Mentaloids when their beacon brought them to Mount Hood in Portland, Oregon. The Mentaloids awoke from stasis and spoke of the Brutaloids, four gigantic, 100-foot tall aliens with mastery over the four elements (water, air, earth, fire), who landed on their planet of Zarkonnia and waged a centuries long war. With no end in sight, the Brutaloids hurled Zarkonnia into their sun. The Mentaloids bring with them knowledge of advanced technologies, Wardroids and battle armors! President Antonio Marchena-Roldan immediately established Team B-Hunters, assembling the best and brightest of mankind, in order to try and save the world.

But the Brutaloids came anyway, breaking through the atmosphere and touching down in Arizona. The forces of the US Army did not stand a chance! The Brutaloids have claimed Earth as their own! But now, the B-Hunters – aboard their incredible vehicles, backed by the Wardroids and clad in awesome elemental battle armors – hope that with the help of the Mentaloid technology, that human resilience and resolve will be enough to stop the Brutaloids!

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are members of Team B-Hunters as well as other humans pulled into the fight for Earth.

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Superhuman Tier; 26 Trait Points

Other Rules:

- **Free Floating Trait:** Each PC is given a free Trait with a rating of 4 and the "Vehicle – Moderate" Special Rule. This rating can be improved with points during character creation. GMCs created with the character creation rules may receive this vehicle as well.
- **Character Type Options:** Characters can also be Mentaloids. Although only two Mentaloids were initially found, other refugees are out there! Mentaloid characters do not receive the Free Floating Trait listed above. Instead, they receive the Free Trait, SEMI-INCORPOREAL BODY 5. It cannot be modified in any way.
- **Character Type Options:** Characters can also be Wardroids. Wardroid characters do not receive the Free Floating Trait listed above. Instead, they receive the Free Modifiable Trait, ELEMENTAL WARDROID ARMOR 4 (Situational Boost – versus [element of your choice]). It can be modified just like any other Trait, except that it may not be given a Situational Boost against another element, as each suit of armor is designed to be particularly effective against one specific element.

Villains

Pyrum (Star Power 4)

☐ ☐ Brutaloid Leader ☐ Represents the element of fire ☐ Gargantuan skull-faced red devil
LAVA EMISSION 10 (Action Feature; Advantage – can be combined with other Brutaloids' powers to achieve cool effects), MONSTROUS SIZE AND STRENGTH 12, SCALEY SKIN 9, FIRE BREATH 8, MENTAL RESISTANCE 7, DEVIIOUS LEADERSHIP 5

Xtorm (Star Power 4)

☐ ☐ Brutaloid Lieutenant ☐ Represents the element of air ☐ Gargantuan blue ape
CREATE CATASTROPHIC WINDS 9 (Action Feature; Area; Advantage – can be combined with other Brutaloids' powers to achieve cool effects; Disadvantage – must rotate his arms at high speeds), MONSTROUS SIZE AND STRENGTH 10, LEATHERY SKIN 9, BLIZZARD BREATH 8 (Area; Advantage – can be combined with other Brutaloids' powers to achieve cool effects), FLIGHT 6

Seismor (Star Power 4)

☐ ☐ Brutaloid Brute ☐ Represents the element of earth ☐ Gargantuan stone creature
EARTHQUAKE CREATION 8 (Action Feature; Area; Advantage – can be combined with other Brutaloids' powers to achieve cool effects; Disadvantage – must stomp or slam fists on ground), MONSTROUS SIZE AND STRENGTH 13, ROCKY SKIN 10, BOULDER EMISSION FROM TORSO 7, CLIMBING 7

Wavecrash (Star Power 4)

☐ ☐ Brutaloid Henchman ☐ Represents the element of water ☐ Gargantuan water monster ☐ Has no physical form
WATER BODY 14 (Action Feature), CONTROL WATER 10 (Advantage – can be combined with other Brutaloids' powers to achieve cool effects), MOVE IN WATER 10

Folder

PORTFOLIO

137

Asgard 3000

"Ragnarok in the 30th Century!"

The Series

The second ice age had started and the average temperature on planet Earth was barely above freezing. It has been over a thousand years since the first moon landing; man had still not found a way to the stars... and then the signal came. A message. Instructions. The language was determined to be based on ancient Norse, thus they called the star system Asgard. Contained within this interstellar message was information that could save the people of Earth. A way to create hard light constructs, bridges, to span galaxies. Thus the Bifröst project was named and the Valkyrie class airships attempted to make contact.

But what no one could have known was that the message was not sent as a way for us to travel to Asgard; it was a way for the Asgardians to come to Earth. The first fleet of Valkyries were lost. The second wave returned, claiming that an Asgardian fleet was making its way towards Earth. And sure enough, within months, the Giant class ships arrived, led by the warlord Loki. Upon their arrival, the Bifröst technology was destroyed! Scientists work feverishly to rebuild the rainbow bridge, in the hopes that the other Asgardians will help.

Led by John D. Kennedy, the Valkyrie pilots protect the people of Earth from the oppressive rule of Loki and his Giants, as Project Odin and the Thor Initiative are worked on in secret, in the hopes that Earth might be saved!

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are members of the Earth resistance; Valkyrie pilots who have banded together to face the overwhelming power of Loki and his Giants.

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Superhuman Tier; 26 points

Other Rules:

• **Free Modifiable Trait:** Each PC has the following Trait: VALKYRIE 3 (Vehicle – Moderate). This can be modified during character creation. When the player creates the stats for the ship, the Mode of Travel must be "Air". The ship can then be customized as with any vehicle.

• **Gestalts:** The Gestalt rules will be in effect for villainous GMCs from the beginning. A major turning point in the humans' war with Loki will be when they, too, learn to master gestalt technology. The GM is encouraged to create numerous episodes centering around that goal.

Villains

Loki (Star Power 4)

☐ ☐ Scheming Trickster ☐ Warlord of the Giants ☐ Grew up on the planet of the Asgardians ☐ Acts in a petty and selfish way
BIFRÖST-TECH SWORD 7 (Action Feature, Accessory, Devastating), LEGENDARY COMMANDER 10 (Situational Boost – When he has at least one squad of Giants at his side, Situational Boost – When in outer space), WOLF-STYLE ARMOR 9 (Accessory), MAJESTIC AURA 9, CONTROL STARSHIP 8, JOTUN PHYSIOLOGY 8, CLOSE COMBAT TECHNIQUES 6, DECEPTIVE 6, GREAT CUNNING 5, TACTICIAN 5

"Fenrir" (his personal starship) 10 (Vehicle – Moderate)

☐ ☐ Military Flagship ☐ Specifically constructed for Loki ☐ Scary exterior
FLY THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SPACE 10 (Mode of Travel: Space), ASGARDIAN DATA CONTROL SYSTEM 8 (Situational Boost – For any military type information), ARMORED 8, SPACE WEAPONRY 5 (Big Attack), CLOAKING FUNCTION 3 (Advantage – Ship basically turns invisible to anyone without Bifröst technology; Oomph Powered)

The Giants

Surtr (Star Power 3)

☐ ☐ Fire-Controlling Giant ☐ Ruler of Muspelheim ☐ Loyal to Loki ☐ Big and brutish
FIREBLADE SWORD 12 (Action Feature, Accessory, Devastating, Situational Boost – When linked with GIANT STRENGTH), FIRE POWERS 10 (Area, Big Attack, Devastating), RESIST ELEMENTS 9 (Situational Boost – When exposed to extreme heat or fire), GIANT STRENGTH 9, FLY STARSHIP 8, GIANT'S PRESENCE 8, JOTUN PHYSIOLOGY 7, SPACE

Name: _____

Subject: _____

COMMANDER 6 (Situational Boost – When in outer space; Situational Setback – When not taking direct orders or instructions from Loki)

GESTALT: JOTUNSON SUPER-TANK (13 points) (Disadvantage – Requires the availability of the Giant's JOTUN BATTLECRUISER, i.e. if the Giant is not in his Vehicle, or the Trait with the Vehicle special rule is Deactivated, this option cannot be used)

JOTUN BATTLECRUISER 7 (Vehicle – Moderate)

☐ ☐ Asgardian Warship ☐ Built for the Giants ☐ Hard to disguise ☐ Gestalt – Jotunson Super-Tank (legs)
FLY THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SPACE 7 (Mode of Travel: Space), ASGARDIAN WEAPON SYSTEM 5 (Area, Big Attack, Situational Boost – against smaller vehicles; Situational Setback – When inside a planet's atmosphere), ARMORED 5, IMPROVED MANEUVERABILITY 5

Ymir (Star Power 3)

☐ ☐ The Strongest Giant ☐ Older than the other Giants ☐ Rumored to have died and come back ☐ Mysterious
☐ Has a short fuse

BIFRÖST CLUB 10 (Action Feature, Accessory, Devastating, Situational Boost – When linked with GIANT STRENGTH), GIANT STRENGTH 11 (Big Attack, Devastating), RESIST ELEMENTS 9, FLY STARSHIP 7, GIANT'S PRESENCE 7, JOTUN PHYSIOLOGY 7, SPACE COMMANDER 6 (Situational Boost – When in outer space; Situational Setback – When not taking direct orders or instructions from Loki)

GESTALT: JOTUNSON SUPER-TANK (13 points) (Disadvantage – Requires the availability of the Giant's JOTUN BATTLECRUISER, i.e. if the Giant is not in his Vehicle, or the Trait with the Vehicle special rule is Deactivated, this option cannot be used)

JOTUN BATTLECRUISER 7 (Vehicle – Moderate)

☐ ☐ Asgardian Warship ☐ Built for the Giants ☐ Fearsome exterior ☐ Gestalt – Jotunson Super-Tank (torso)
FLY THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SPACE 7 (Mode of Travel: Space), ASGARDIAN WEAPON SYSTEM 5 (Area, Big Attack, Situational Boost – against smaller vehicles; Situational Setback – When inside a planet's atmosphere), ARMORED 5, IMPROVED MANEUVERABILITY 5

Jotnar (Star Power 3)

☐ ☐ Grumpy Giant ☐ Guardian of the Stronghold ☐ Obsessed with caves and mountains
BIFRÖST SPACE LANCE 10 (Action Feature, Accessory, Area, Situational Boost – When linked with IMPECCABLE WARRIOR), GIANT STRENGTH 9 (Situational Boost – Whenever used to lift or bend, Devastating), RESIST ELEMENTS 9, FLY STARSHIP 7, JOTUN PHYSIOLOGY 7, SPACE COMMANDER 6 (Situational Boost – When in outer space; Situational Setback – When not taking direct orders or instructions from Loki), GIANT'S PRESENCE 6, IMPECCABLE WARRIOR 6

GESTALT: JOTUNSON SUPER-TANK (13 points) (Disadvantage – Requires the availability of the Giant's JOTUN BATTLECRUISER, i.e. if the Giant is not in his Vehicle, or the Trait with the Vehicle special rule is Deactivated, this option cannot be used)

JOTUN BATTLECRUISER 7 (Vehicle – Moderate)

☐ ☐ Asgardian Warship ☐ Built for the Giants ☐ Fearsome exterior ☐ Gestalt – Jotunson Super-Tank (head and arms)
FLY THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SPACE 7 (Mode of Travel: Space), ASGARDIAN WEAPON SYSTEM 5 (Area, Big Attack, Situational Boost – against smaller vehicles; Situational Setback – When inside a planet's atmosphere), ARMORED 5, IMPROVED MANEUVERABILITY 5

"JOTUNSON SUPER-TANK" (Gestalt Form)

**Asgardian Warship *Built for the Giants *Fearsome exterior
FISTS OF JOTUNHEIM 8 (Action Feature, Area, Big Attack), DARK JOTUN ARMOR 8 (Situational Boost – When used as a reaction to ranged weapons), GIANT SIZED 7, MIGHTY WALKER 6 (Mode of Travel: Land), AUTO-PILOT 5 (Situational Setback – Does not work so well in Action Scenes), FLY THROUGH SPACE 5 (Mode of Travel: Space), SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM 3

Folder

PORTFOLIO

138

137

PORTFOLIO

Ghost Patrol

"Ready for Ghost-Thumping Action!"

The Series

Dr. Raymond A. Croteau is a genius. A twisted genius, but a genius nonetheless. He wasn't always an evil person, however. A few years ago, the scientific community and the world at large turned him into a laughing stock after his Time Displacer Cannon failed spectacularly during its big unveiling. Millions upon millions of people all over the world watched as his life work went up in smoke. It was enough to make him snap! He became obsessed with showing the world that he was not someone to be mocked. He would make them all pay for ridiculing him!

To these ends, Croteau began working on a new invention – the Paranormal Entity Controller. With this device, he would summon and control various ghosts, ghouls and other paranormal critters. His ultimate goal: the use his ghostly henchmen to rule the world! Unlike his previous invention, this one was successful. With such minions as Ninjacat and the Spanglemaker at his side, he was sure to achieve his evil goal!

Or was he?

Led by scientist Jamie Harris (a.k.a. Blindgeek), a team of paranormal investigators known as the Ghost Patrol has stepped up to the plate with their high-tech equipment to put a stop to Croteau's machinations.

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are members of the Ghost Patrol

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Human Tier; 18 Trait Points

Other Rules:

• **Required Trait:** Players must spend at least 4 of their Trait points on equipment designed to somehow fight or capture paranormal creatures.

Villains

Dr. Raymond A. Croteau (Star Power 4)

☐ Twisted Mad Scientist ☐ Revenge-minded ☐ Easily angered ☐ Throws tantrums

PARANORMAL ENTITY CONTROLLER 7 (Action Feature), BATTLESUIT 5 (Advantage – can shoot out globs of ectoplasm; Disadvantage – can only be used in one scene per episode), BRILLIANT SCIENTIST 4, COWARDLY DODGE 3, EVIL THOUGHTS 3, SNEAK 2

Ninjacat (Star Power 3)

☐ Werecat Ninja ☐ Scared of silver ☐ Ends each sentence with a "meow"

CATLIKE AGILITY 5 (Action Feature), HOUSECAT FORM 4 (Transform Self – Moderate), FAST RUNNER 4, ASTUTE 3, FIGHTING 3, STEALTH 3

"Housecat Form"

☐ Scruffy Black Cat ☐ Scared of silver ☐ Small ☐ No opposable thumbs

CATLIKE AGILITY 6, FAST RUNNER 4, STEALTH 4, ASTUTE 3, CLAWS 2

The Spanglemaker (Star Power 2)

☐ Spooky Ghost ☐ Clumsy ☐ Not very smart

ECTOPLASM SPANGLE BLAST 4 (Action Feature, Area, Advantage – target is covered in gooey glitter), GHOST BODY 6 (Advantage – immune to physical damage), GHOSTLY FLIGHT 3, SCARY-LOOKING 2

Name: Named by Mark Vander Zandan

Rift Warriors

"Find the shards, save the world!"

The Series

In the sword and sorcery world of Dragus, strange things have been afoot. Dimensional rifts are randomly opening up across the land, unleashing monstrosities beyond comprehension. Most of these abominations have limited intelligence and are only interested in destroying everything in their wake. One of them, though, is a dark and evil sorcerer with grand plans to take over Dragus for himself. His name is Mortifiend and his power is unlike anything the world has seen before.

The wise Sages of Mountainbrook have foretold that the only way to stop these gates from opening is to find the five Aegis Shards and combine them together. Unfortunately, nobody knows exactly where these relics are! The bravest heroes of Dragus have been gathered together and sent on a quest to find the shards and unite them.

Mortifiend, who has learned to control many of the rift creatures and force them to do his bidding, won't stand for such heroics. After all, if the rifts are halted, the influx of potential servants will halt as well... and that's something he cannot allow to happen.

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are mighty adventurers on a quest to track down the Aegis Shards and hopefully defeat Mortifiend in the process. They can be warriors, wizards, rogues or any other fantasy-type character.

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Human Tier; 18 points

Other Rules:

• **Excessive Trait Ratings:** Each PC may have one Trait that can be taken with a rating of up to 8.

This Trait should represent something special the character brings to the table (a magic weapon, spellcasting abilities, a unique power, etc.).

Villains

Mortifiend (Star Power 4)

☐ Extradimensional Sorcerer ☐ Wants to rule Dragus ☐ Overdramatic

FOUL SORCERY 8 (Versatile: LIGHTNING BOLT [Action Feature], TELEPORT, FORCE FIELD; 4 undefined Traits), EVIL GENIUS 5, FORMIDABLE COMBATANT 5, CONTROL DIMENSIONAL MONSTERS 4 (Area), SWORD OF DESOLATION 4 (Advantage – covered in flames), DEMON WINGS 4, NOTHING ESCAPES HIS NOTICE 4

Skyfighters of Voltania

"The Sky's the Limit!"

The Series

Voltania is a mineral-rich planet in a remote section of the galaxy. The downside is that the surface itself is extremely dangerous, thanks to horrific monsters, active volcanoes, volatile man-eating plants and other hazards. As a result, the planet's inhabitants live on floating islands and structures high above the ground; travel is via inter-island walkways and airborne cloudships.

It was very nearly a utopia... until the arrival of Baron Kanus and his fleet of pirate airships! He has set his sights on taking over the planet and exploiting its natural resources, especially a glowing mineral of immense worth known simply as Luster. Luster's true value lies in its scientific merit, for it is said to have amazing properties in that respect.

Fortunately, Voltania is not without protection. The Skyfighters, a capable group of high-flying warriors, have taken to the air in an effort to drive the pirates away once and for all. Thanks to their courage, skill and impressive aircraft, there is at last hope of repelling Baron Kanus and his marauders.

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are members of the Skyfighters, a group of ace pilots determined to rid the planet of Baron Kanus once and for all.

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Human Tier; 18 Trait Points

Other Rules:

• Free Floating Trait: Each PC is given a free Trait with a rating of 3 and the "Vehicle – Moderate" special rule. This rating can be improved with points during character creation and is the only Trait that may be purchased at a rating of up to 8. The vehicle must have the "Air" Mode of Travel. GMCs created with the character creation rules will receive this free airship as well.

• Catchphrases

Villains

Baron Kanus (Star Power 4)

Villainous Pirate Leader Cruel streak Obsessed with Luster BIONIC ARMS 4 (Action Feature, Situational Boost – when crushing things), "THE GATECRASHER" 8 (Vehicle – Moderate), BARKING COMMANDS 4, TIME FOR PLAN 'B' 4, INTIMIDATING 3, LASER PISTOL 2 (Accessory), PIRATE ARMOR 3

"Gatecrasher"

Air Galleon Open Deck Sails RUGGED HULL 8 (Situational Boost – versus lasers), DEFT AIRSPEED 6 (Mode of Travel – Air), DECK CANNONS 6 (Big Attack), FLY THROUGH THE STARS 6 (Mode of Travel: Space), SENSORS 2

Name: Named by SE Weaver

S.L.A.M.

"Piledrivers, powerbombs, and protecting the world!"

The Series

Professional wrestling is incredibly popular across the globe, with the most popular federation being the Extreme Wrestling Federation. But little did anyone know that the EWF was a cover for something far more sinister. As a spider lays thousands of eggs, thus did SPIDER spin a world-wide web and birth many offshoot organizations, all designed to spread their villainous agenda. The Extreme War Force is but one of these organizations. Once Strikeforce Freedom uncovered this villainous plot, they sprang into action, establishing their own federation: The International Wrestling Force, led by Wade Rocket!

Professional wrestlers trained as secret agents, their fights against Dr. Tarantula and the Extreme War Force take place in the ring and across the globe! As far as anyone knows, the two federations are in competition with one another, their match-ups the stuff of Nielsen ratings legend!

Each episode, the current IWF champion picks the wrestlers from the Freedom Fed stable for the mission given to them by The Promoter, facing off against each other in the ring to put on a show for their fans across the world, as well as facing their enemies in EWF, many of whom are former allies, having gone bad!

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are professional wrestler secret agents, babyfaces and heels, but all working together as members of the International Wrestling Force (IWF). The PCs may not always get along, but they always band together to thwart the nefarious schemes and backstage machinations of Dr. Tarantula and the Extreme War Force (EWF).

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Human Tier; 18 points

Other Rules:

- Free Modifiable Trait: All PCs start with a Trait at rating 4 that represents their finishing move (i.e., a wrestling move that is particularly devastating). This Trait has the following Special Rules: "Devastating" and "Disadvantage – can't be used unless the opponent has 2 or more Setback Tokens". The Trait name should be put in quotations.
- Required Trait: At least 4 of the PC's Trait points should be spent on various "secret agent" Traits. Additional points, probably at least 3, should be spent on WRESTLING.
- Championship Belts: The GM must create at least one championship belt Trait with the "Accessory" and "Oomph-Powered" Special Rules to represent the various wrestling titles available. While a character holds that belt, they receive that Trait. As for what the Trait can be used for, use your creativity. Perhaps it can be used as clout to get better matches, to attack an opponent with or even as intimidation.
- Shared Traits: Tag-team members may have Shared Traits.
- Catchphrases

Villains

Dr. Tarantula (Star Power 4)

EWF Leader Undefeated Former high-ranking Strikeforce Freedom member File Name: Randall Dederick "THE TARANTULA'S BITE" 6 (Action Feature; Devastating), GALACTIC CHAMPIONSHIP BELT 8 (Accessory; Oomph-Powered), CRIMINAL MASTERMIND 4, FIGHTS DIRTY 4, IRON WILL 4, RING GENERAL 4, ALWAYS HAS AN EXIT PLAN 3

Lenin the Bear (Star Power 3)

Russian Right-Hand Man Slow-moving Vicious File Name: Sergei Vladimov "THE RUSSIAN BEAR HUG" 5 (Action Feature, Devastating), STRONG AS AN URSINE 6, TOUGH 4, BRUTAL 3, INTIMIDATION 3

Fatale (Star Power 3)

Vixen of the Ring Unafraid to wrestle men Egotistical File Name: Lyla Vess NINJA TRAINING 6 (Action Feature), "FEMME KICK" 4 (Devastating; Situational Boost – when doing the move from the top turnbuckle), DODGING ATTACKS 4, SULTRY MANIPULATOR 4

Batty the Clown (Star Power 2)

Likeable Luchador The IWF thinks they can turn him to their side Kids love him File Name: Chris Beller LUCHA LIBRE 4 (Action Feature), "CORKSCREW BAT PLANCHA" 4 (Devastating), MOVES LIKE A MONKEY 4, WILLPOWER 2

Tin Horns

"Get ready for Justice!"

The Series

While scouring for "Tombstone" Josh Medin, the most dangerous outlaw the Old West had ever seen, a small group of lawmen follow their quarry into a purple vortex of energy and wind up on another world, in another time. They learn that nineteenth century Earth isn't the only place in need of justice. It's something that no planet can be without and they're fixin' to deliver a heaping dose of it to Dreadfall... all the while tracking down Medin.

Dreadfall is a gloomy high-tech world where the poor dwell in squalor while the rich live in comfort within highfalutin cities ruled over by greedy land barons known as High Lords. These despots wage war between each other in an effort to grab up the most profitable land and use it to turn a tidy profit. In the end, the poor are the ones who suffer most from these struggles, as they are stepped on, taken advantage of and mistreated at every turn. While numerous High Lords exist, the two most prominent are Lobo and Doc Gamester. Their clashes have become legendary in this land war that has erupted.

The valiant lawmen can't simply turn a blind eye to the injustice here on Dreadfall, especially that which is dealt out by the pompous High Lords! They've got a job to do and it doesn't much matter what planet they're on... at least until they can capture "Tombstone" Josh Medin and find a way back home.

Player Character Guidelines

Who the PCs Are: The PCs are lawmen from the Old West, trapped in the dreary future world called Dreadfall.

Star Power: 3

Tier and Trait Points: Human Tier; 18 Trait Points

Other Rules:

• **Free Trait:** Each PC is given the following Trait: "HORSE 5 (Companion; Star Power 1; MOVE – LAND 5, TOUGHNESS 2)"

Villains

"Tombstone" Josh Medlin (Star Power 4)

☐ Time-Displaced Outlaw ☐ Meaner than a rattlesnake ☐ Unsettling laugh
DEADSHOT 4 (Action Feature), HORSE 5 (Companion; Star Power 1, MOVE – LAND 5, TOUGHNESS 2), LOW CUNNING 4, SCHEMER 4, EXPERT RIDER 3, FEARLESS 3, TOUGH AS RAWHIDE 3, TWIN-PISTOLS 2 (Accessory), SNEAKING AROUND 2

Lobo (Star Power 4)

☐ Rough and Tumble High Lord ☐ Does his own dirty work ☐ Hates robots
BRAWLING 4 (Action Feature; Situational Boost – versus robots), IMMENSE WEALTH 8 (Advantage – has criminal connections), INTELLIGENT 4, STURDY 3, TOMAHAWK 2 (Accessory), WILLPOWER 2

Doc Gamester (Star Power 4)

☐ Doctor-Turned-High Lord ☐ "Hands-off" kind of guy ☐ Mean to his lackeys ☐ Greediest of the Greedy
WEALTHIEST MAN ALIVE 9, GUILE 4, MASTER MANIPULATOR 4, OPPORTUNIST 4, DOCTOR 2, HIDE 2

Name: _____
Subject: _____

On the pages that follow, you will find a selection of sample hero and villain write-ups. Each one was based on the likeness of one of our amazing Kick-starter backers (or in one case, the brother of a backer).

These characters are NOT intended to be a part of one specific series. Instead, each one is assumed to be a part of a different unnamed series. You can use them for your own series or just look at them to see how various themes and concepts can be accomplished in the game.

★ Using the System... or Not? ★

The heroes presented here follow the system for creating player characters. That is, they are made “by the book,” so to speak.

The villains, on the other hand, aren’t bound by ththat system. In fact, GMs are encouraged to throw the system out the window and give GMCs whatever stats seem appropriate. The villains here weren’t created using the system, with the exception of Odd-Eyed Tully Saturn, who was created using the “correct” number of Trait Points.

VANCE VANGUARD

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Watchful Hero and Champion
- ☐ Proud defender of the Emerald Citadel
- ☐ Kind to animals
- ☐ Stern expression



Traits

BLAZING BLADE OF ROKAZ 6 (Accessory, Action Feature, Devastating)
EMERALD HAWK 5 (Companion; Functions: COMBAT 2, TOUGHNESS 2, STEALTH 0, MOVE [Fly] 3, THINK 0, MANIPULATE 0)
MIGHTY MUSCLES 5
TRAINED WITH MANY WEAPONS 5
EXPLORER OF THE BORDERLAND 3
RUN FAST 2
“SQUIRE DENNIS” FORM 2 (Transform Self – Minor; Disadvantage – Works only as long as Vance has the BLAZING BLADE; alternate form has the game stats listed below*)

Alternate Form:

- ☐ Unassuming Everyman
- ☐ Does not actually enjoy being a noble
- ☐ Formal obligations

Traits:

LIKABLE ARISTOCRAT 4, DODGE 3, WELL-CONNECTED 3, RUN FAST 1

(Made with 26 Trait points, Superhuman Tier.)

Based on the likeness of Mike Conway

TY-GRETTO

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Stripy Protector
- ☐ Rough around the edges
- ☐ Healthy appetite



Traits

PIERCING RED EYES 7 (Action Feature)
FELINOID GUN 6 (Accessory, Advantage – Opponent is always stunned when Defeated by this Trait)
SAVAGE FIGHTER 5 (Situational Boost – When deliberately using his claws)
ORANGE FUR 4 (Situational Boost – When used as a reaction in a fight)
SCOUTING ARMOR 4 (Situational Setback – Not as effective against lasers or ray-guns)
HAS STUDIED MANY OLD SCROLLS 3

(Made with 26 Trait points, Superhuman Tier.)

Based on the likeness of Michael Blanchard

SIR VALAX

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Iron-Clad Swordmaster
- ☐ Son of a smith
- ☐ Little interest in formalities and etiquette



Traits

MONSTER-SENSING LONGSWORD 7 (Accessory, Action Feature)
PILGRIM THE AMAZING STEED 8 (Companion; Functions: COMBAT 4, TOUGHNESS 4, STEALTH 0, MOVE [Run] 2, THINK 0, MANIPULATE 0)
HARNESS IN THE STYLE OF HIS FAMILY 5 (Accessory)
CLEVER ONE-LINERS 3 (Situational Boost – When used to annoy bad guys)
VERY BUFF 2
WIDELY TRAVELED 2
SOCIALIZE 1
TELL TALL TALES 1

(Made with 26 Trait points, Superhuman Tier.)

Based on the likeness of Adam Leisemann

ODD-EYED TULLY SATURN

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Cruel Galactic Mobster
- ☐ Scion of a rich crime family
- ☐ Obsessed with his own cybernetic improvement
- ☐ Vindictive
- ☐ Pentchant for expensive clothes
- ☐ Weirdly superstitious



Traits

ELECTRICALLY CHARGED KNIFE 6 (Action Feature, Disadvantage – Can only use this with his right hand)
BIONIC CLAW (left hand) 7 (Devastating, Fickle)
SHADY UNDERWORLD LORE 4
CRAZY LAUGH 3
FINE THREADS 3
SCHEMING 2
USE MONEY AND PROMISES 3

(Made with 26 starting Trait points like a player-character. Yet, as a Villain, he need not conform to those rules or point limits.)

Based on the likeness of Daniel Robichaud

SNYDORR

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Sly Survivalist
- ☐ Fascinated by small pre-apocalypse gadgets
- ☐ Sometimes poses as a bandit
- ☐ Trusts in his own inventions
- ☐ No one’s snider than Snyder!



Traits

ANCIENT SABER 4 (Accessory, Action Feature)
EXCEPTIONALLY CRAFTY 4 (Situational Boost – When making a new invention)
FAVORITE KNIFE 3 (Accessory, Advantage – Glows in the dark, Advantage – The Trait rating counts as +1 higher when used as a quirky multi-tool)
HARDY TRAVELER 3 (Situational Boost – To find a quick shelter somewhere)
JACK OF ALL TRADES 2
SELF-RELIANT 2

(Made with 18 Trait points, Human Tier.)

Based on the likeness of Tim Snider

MEANO MUZZLE

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ International Hired Gun
- ☐ Takes pride in his work
- ☐ Strange sense of vanity
- ☐ Classic commando type



Traits

WALKING ARSENAL 6 (Accessory, Situational Boost – When using a ranged weapon in a crucial check)
WICKED PARALYZING DARTS 6 (Deplete – [physical or health-related Trait], Fickle)
ALWAYS HAS EXTRA AMMO AND KNIVES 5
TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING 4 (Advantage [When this Trait causes a Setback Token, roll a die: if you roll an 11 or 12, it causes two Setback Tokens instead], Area, Situational Boost – Only with knives or machetes)
LARGE MODIFIED PISTOL 4 (Accessory)
BRUTAL COMBATANT 4

Based on the likeness of Michael Wight

LORD INFERNUS

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- ☐ Space Terrorist
- ☐ Can be careless at times
- ☐ Cowardly
- ☐ Friends on many planets



Traits

POWER ARMOR 5 (Versatile; PROTECTION [Action Feature], SHOULDER-MOUNTED LASER TURRETS, ROCKET BOOTS; 3 undefined slots)
ACCESS TO A PERSONAL SHUTTLECRAFT 5 (Vehicle – Moderate)
MASTER SABOTEUR 4
CYBER EYE 3 (Advantage – Can see through walls)
PILOTING 3
SKILLED RUNNER 2
TAKE COVER 2

Personal Shuttlecraft

- ☐ Compact Space Racer ☐ Personalized for Diabolikk
- ☐ Ample room for weapons, etc.
- FRONT-MOUNTED BEAM CANNON 5 [Area, Big Attack], FUSION PROPULSION 5 [Mode of Travel: Space], RESILIENT 3, ATMOSPHERIC FLIGHT 3 [Mode of Travel: Air], CYBER-PART RECHARGER 2)

Based on the likeness of David Wood

ARCHIMEDES THE
MADMAN

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- Hateful Technomancer
- Brimming with eldritch energy
- Known for elaborate schemes

Traits

WARLOCK OF THE
WASTELAND 5 (Versatile; *SUMMON ILLUSORY
MONSTER, PUT THE HEX ON A MACHINE,
ANIMATE JUNKYARD TECH*; 3 undefined slots)
CLAMPS FOR A LEFT HAND 5 (Situational Boost –
Against an opponent without armor, Situational Boost
– After having given the opponent at least one Setback
Token)
TECHNOLOGICALLY ENHANCED EYESIGHT 5
(Advantage – Can see magical energy repositories)
MAKE DARK PLANS 4 (Situational Setback – When
involved in an action scene)
INSULATED SUIT 4
DETAILED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MONSTERS 2

Based on the likeness of Jason Blalock



ADMIRAL MERRICK

Star Power: 4

Qualities

- Criminal Leader
- Ruler of a planet
- Aloof personality
- Lets others do the dirty work

Traits

HIS OWN BATTLESHIP 10
(Vehicle – Major)
UNSCRUPULOUS SCHEMES 9
METALLIC GAUNTLET (right hand) 6 (Situational Boost
– When used outside of direct combat)
DECORATED SPACE COMMANDER 6
SHOOT ENERGY GUN 4
ACT DIPLOMATICALLY 3
USE GADGETS AND TECH 2

“Battleship Makaro”

- Maneuverable Fortress □ Offers great protection
- Laden with equipment and supplies
- Includes leader’s living quarters;
- TREMENDOUS SIZE 10 (Situational Boost – When used
for a reaction against infiltration or search), STELLAR
BLAST CANNON 9 (Area, Big Attack; Disadvantage – Can
only fire every other round), ARMORED 8 (Situational
Boost – When defending against a Trait with the Big Attack
special rule), SPACE TRAVEL 6 (Mode of Travel: Space),
SPACE BROADSIDES 4 (Area, Big Attack; Disadvantage
– Cannot be used in the same turn as STELLAR BLAST
CANNON)

Based on the likeness of Michael Thompson



MASTER FANGZZ

Star Power: 3

Qualities

- Grand Magician of Bone Valley
- Experienced in long quests
- Consumed by his love for dark magic
- Heir to the Wizard King’s throne

Traits

STAFF OF THE THREE
PEARLS 7 (Accessory)
PURPLE MIST 6 (Area, One-Shot)
IMPRESSIVE APPEARANCE 6
CAST MIGHTY SPELLS 5 (Versatile; *CLOUD MINDS
[Deplete – affects mental and intellect Traits], INDUCE
SLEEP, SEE OPPONENT FROM FAR AWAY*; 3
undefined slots)
CUNNING STRATEGIST 2
IN GREAT PHYSICAL SHAPE 2

Based on the likeness of Paul Gregoire







CHANNEL 4 THE PLAYERS

Being a Good Player

Before we get to the CAH-specific material, let's go over some advice that would apply to any roleplaying game. You know – common courtesy type of stuff.

Participate

We may sound like Captain Obvious here, but participating goes beyond just sitting at the table and half-listening while you text your aunt and wait for your turn to do something. Participating means actively being a part of the story as it unfolds. This generally requires your undivided attention... unless, of course, you break your tortilla chip off into the cheese dip and have to rescue it with a larger, sturdier chip. Some things are just unavoidable.

So, yeah, it's okay to briefly divert your attention to deal with a situation that arises (the spilled soda isn't going to clean itself up, nor is the die that went careening off the table and across the floor going to find itself). For the most part, though, you should be an active participant, not just a lump who happens to be at the table.

A good player is one who uses his character to make the game an even better experience for the entire group than it already is. If you don't participate, you can't achieve that goal.

Share the Limelight

It's understandable that you're excited about playing and want your character to be in the thick of the action. You *should* be. Otherwise, why bother playing the game at all. Grabbing the spotlight and letting your character strut his stuff is not only acceptable, it's outright expected. Don't be timid about it.



Kargorr: Game Masters shouldn't be so namby-pamby! If a player pulls a portable trans-space communicator – or whatever you call them here – during the game, the GM should threaten to destroy him and follow through with it should the insignificant worm persist! I've no patience for disrespect!

However, you need to know when to graciously hand that spotlight over to the other characters and let them have their airtime as well. If you hog all the glory, your fellow players may grow resentful of your behavior or at the very least become disenchanted with the game as a result. You may even get beamed upside the head with a die or two.

Leaping heroically into the limelight is a big part of what roleplaying is all about, but keep in mind that it's a shared activity and nobody likes sitting by the sidelines and watching while one player has all the fun.



Kargorr: The heroes don't need any limelight! They're droll, boring and lacking color! The spotlight belongs to the real stars of the show...



Sarah: ... you're going to say, "the villains", aren't you?



Kargorr: Ummm... maybe.



Sarah: There's no "maybe" to it, buster. You were gonna say "the villains" and you know it. You're so predictable.



Kargorr: I am *not* predictable! For your information, I was going to say, ummm... uhhhh... "the villains' pets." Yes, that's it, their pets.

Be Patient

Cartoon Action Hour is designed to play fast, but there will almost certainly be times in which you'll find yourself waiting around while something else is going on. Perhaps the GM has to look up a rule. Or maybe the player characters have split up and the GM has to cut back and forth between the groups. Whatever the case may be, there will be some waiting involved.

Our advice ties into the "Participate" section we discussed a short while ago. Don't whip out your tablet or turn to the video game console to shoot the heck out of polygonal bad guys. Listen to what's going on and be patient. After all, in most cases, the stuff that's happening will likely be tied into your character's situation sooner or later, so it's probably wise to keep up with it.

Respect the GM's Authority

While it's true that roleplaying games are collaborative in nature, a ship needs but one captain... and the captain of this ship is unquestioningly the Game Master. Her word is the final word on anything that goes on in the game. If there's a rules dispute, the GM makes the call. If the players start bickering, the GM sets things straight. If a player is cheating, the GM puts her foot down. Whatever the GM says, goes. Period.

That said, the GM shouldn't be a despot, unwilling to listen to reason. If you feel that something isn't right, politely bring it up to her so that it can be discussed in a civilized manner. Just be an adult, state your case, hash things out and accept the GM's final decision. You may not like the decision, but discretion is the better part of valor. Perhaps it can be discussed further after the game session is over.

Avoid Being a Troublemaker

Some players get a kick out of trying to derail the game. Don't be one of those players. We're not suggesting that you should follow along a linear path laid out by the GM. Far from it. It's okay to forge your own path by doing things the GM didn't count on. In fact, it's *better than* okay, because it shows that you're actively participating. But when you purposely take a course of action that will totally throw the game out of whack, just for the sake of irritating the GM and your fellow players, you should check yourself.

It's all about intention. Going your own way can really enhance everyone's fun, making for an exciting episode... but doing so solely for the purpose of watching the whole thing burst into flames is just being a jerk. Being a jerk is bad. Avoid it like the plague.



Cartoon Action Hour is all about emulating the retro-toon genre. The rules are designed to facilitate that, but true emulation can only be achieved if all the players get into the spirit of things. You don't have to be a retro-toon expert to do it either. Just peruse this section (as well as the "About Retro-Toons" write-up, beginning on page 12) and you'll have enough information to run with. Watching an episode or three of a retro-toon couldn't hurt though.

So, how can you embrace the genre? We're glad you asked.

Ham It Up

Characters in the retro-toons tended to be a bit over the top in their actions. Don't be afraid to go for the gusto and play it to the hilt. Speak in an exaggerated voice! Mimic sound effects! Use overdramatic body language!

You may feel silly at first because, well, it *is* silly... but, as ol' Hamlet proclaimed, the play's the thing. Be entertaining at all costs and be fearless in doing so. This kind of overacting tends to be infectious, so if your fellow players are reluctant at first, they will likely follow your lead.

Put the Story First

The entire group's top priority should be to have fun while collaboratively crafting a retro-toon story. In fact, it should probably be the group's *only* priority. What else is there? Characters don't die in *Cartoon Action Hour*, so surviving can't be a priority. It's not a competitive game, so winning can't be a priority either. What about kicking butt so you can improve your character? Nope. Beating the tar out of enemies won't help you bolster your character's game stats, so that's right out the window, too. What's left then? That's right – creating a satisfying story with your friends.

Sometimes, putting the story first can place your character in peril. But again, death isn't something your character needs to worry about, so who cares if he's in peril? If it adds something of value to the story, then you should seriously go for it. For example, if the GM mentions that a rectangular section of the floor in the villain's lair is slightly discolored, you'll no doubt be aware that it's a trap door. Should you avoid that peculiar rectangle? Perish the thought! Have your character step right onto it! Doing so not only makes for a fun predicament for your character, it will also probably net you a point of Oomph as well!



Use Traits and Qualities Creatively

Retro-toon heroes were nothing if not resourceful. They always made the most of what they had at their disposal to come out on top in any situation. Your character has his Traits and Qualities at his disposal or, more accurately, at *your* disposal. These things aren't rigid. If you can devise a spiffy but unorthodox way to use a Trait or Quality, most GMs will let you give it a whirl.

For example, let's say that a twin-linked laser turret is shooting at your character. He doesn't have any Traits that would provide an obvious means of dodging the laser fire. However, he does have WEAPONS ENGINEER 4, so you might declare that your character has seen the schematics to this weapon and knows that there is a "safe zone" between the two gun barrels. If he moves just right, he can remain in that safe zone, thus causing the shots to miss him altogether. The GM

feels that this is creative and appropriate to the genre, so he allows you to use the Trait to avoid getting nailed.

Utilize Indirect Attacks

Slugging bad guys in the kisser was a common occurrence in the retro-toons, as was slamming their heads together. So it's not that the cartoons of yore shunned direct attacks altogether, but they certainly favored a less overt brand of violence whenever possible. This was especially true of weapon use. A direct attack with a sword or gun would result in bloodshed, which was something forbidden by the networks and censors of the day. Therefore, such weapons would only be allowed to land a direct hit if the target was inorganic (such as a robot) or if the attack was unable to penetrate the target's skin ("My laser gun is useless against that stone gargoyle!").

In most cases, weapons were used indirectly. The gun would shoot the nearby cave ceiling, causing big rocks to fall onto the enemy or the axe would bite into a tree that would then topple over, trapping the enemy beneath it. And so forth.

When making physical attacks, especially if using weapons that would cause bloodshed, try to concoct ways to do so in a roundabout fashion. This will go a long way toward making your character feel like a retro-toon hero.

Oomph and You

It's easy to dismiss Oomph as being non-essential, but the truth of the matter is that it affects your character in two different ways, both of which are vital.

First, Oomph can be spent to help you out during the game, as detailed on pages 44 – 46. Second, unspent Oomph is converted to Leftover Oomph at the end of each episode; Unspent Oomph is what you use to improve or change your character between seasons.

Considering Oomph's importance, we felt it wise to give you some advice regarding both receiving it and spending it.

Receiving Oomph

Remember all those tips we offered for embracing the genre? If you follow them, you'll assuredly receive your fair share of Oomph. Every GM will appreciate your attempt to capture the feel of the genre by playing to its tropes... and an appreciative GM will likely reward you for your effort.

Thinking outside the box to develop clever plans, genre-appropriate tactics and other solutions to problems can go a long way toward nudging the GM into rewarding you with some Oomph as well. It also enhances the general enjoyment of the game for everyone at the table.

The most reliable way to receive Oomph, however, is by using your character's Qualities as disadvantages whenever possible. Sure, it may put your character in a bad situation, but you're guaranteed to get Oomph in return. Just make sure that the situation warrants it; trying to shoehorn non-applicable Qualities into a scene comes off as desperate at best and agitating at worst.

Spending Oomph

There is no right or wrong way to spend Oomph. Do you want immediate gratification or long-term gratification? That's what it all boils down to. You might be tempted to burn through your Oomph about as fast as you get it and that's okay, as long as you don't mind having less Oomph to be converted to Leftover Oomph.

So, do you blow it in-game or do you tuck most of it away for advancement purposes? That's the real question.

Until you play for a while and get a feel for things, you should consider setting aside your character's base Oomph for purposes of Leftover Oomph and only using the Oomph you earn to help out during the game. This approach ensures that you'll have at least a little bit of Leftover Oomph and encourages you to work hard to earn more Oomph.

Eventually, you'll find your own groove and develop a spending method that works better for you.



CHANNEL 5 THE GAME MASTER

Being a Good Game Master

Before we get to the CAH-specific material, let's go over what it takes to give the players an experience they'll never forget.

Narration

As the GM, your aim is to give the players a solid idea of what their characters' surroundings are like. There is a delicate balance to preserve in doing this. On one hand, you don't want to skimp on the details – this will simply strip away the images in the players' imaginations, making the game world a colorless, generic place. On the other hand, you don't want to drown the players with your descriptions – if the players really want to know exactly how many buttons are on a GMC's jacket, then, they can ask you.

Give them enough detail to make the setting interesting, but not so much that the game bogs down. In general, give detailed descriptions of things that will either add to the atmosphere or have some importance to the story. You can mention the rest briefly.

Below are three examples.

EXAMPLE #1: "You enter Lord Margoth's castle. It has gray walls and there's a big door on the opposite wall. Suddenly a sense of foreboding and dread washes over you."

While the above example adequately tells you what your character sees, it lacks excitement, drama, or pizzazz. It works, but it's definitely a no-frills approach. Let's try again, shall we?

EXAMPLE #2: "You push open the large wooden door, using the slate gray stone handle, and enter Lord Margoth's castle. The first thing you see is a long staircase covered with a regal red carpet made of crushed velvet. On the wall is a morbid coat-of-arms with six skulls, a set of crossed swords, and a green and brown snake. The ceiling of the room is roughly twenty feet from the floor and has a chandelier made of bone. Across the room is an ornate metal door with a gargoyle-themed handle. On the floor, you see...."

Wow! The GM in the above example was going overboard with describing every single detail. This isn't necessary. When the GM drones on, it can have the not-so-positive effect of boring the players. Let's have one more whack at it.

EXAMPLE #3: "As you open the heavy wooden door, a musty odor hits your nose. You step inside Lord Margoth's castle and immediately take notice of the long staircase leading to the upper sections of the structure. Morbid trappings, like a chandelier made of bone, fill the room, and you see an ornate metal door on the opposite wall."

See? The above example provided a good atmosphere while giving the players a decent amount of information about their surroundings. The players quickly get a sense of their surroundings, yet they weren't bombarded with an abundance of useless information. This is what describing a scene is all about... implanting images in the players' minds without having to spend an hour to do so.

Improvisation

The art of improvisation is crucial in Game Mastering. No matter how well planned your episode is, the players will invariably come up with something you never thought of. And there's nothing wrong with that – it keeps you on your toes. Besides, if the players never did anything unpredictable, much of the challenge would dissipate for you. It can be quite fun to keep the game going while improvising wildly.

One important thing to remember is that you should avoid letting the game get too far off-track when improvising. Concoct some way to bring the action back in line with the plot. That said, you shouldn't railroad the players into moving along a perfectly linear plot-path. Doing so will give the players the feeling of having no control. Give them plenty of choices, while still maintaining the point of the episode.

It's a fine line to walk, but it's not nearly as difficult as it may at first seem.

Fudging

Yes, gang, this means cheating. Not the malicious variety of cheating, though. Let me explain.

Many GMs will ignore the actual die rolls during the game if it makes for a better story. If a player flubs a crucial roll at the climax of the episode and the story would be more interesting had the character succeeded, then by all means devise a way for her to succeed. It's not really cheating if it makes for a better tale.

Don't let the players know you're fudging, though. Let them believe they succeeded on their own. It doesn't harm anyone, so just keep it your own little secret.

To fudge successfully, it's a good idea for you to utilize a "GM screen." Anything will work for this – a folder, a cereal box, or an upturned open book. As long as it blocks the players' view of your die rolls, you're good to go.

Many GMs dislike the idea of fudging. No problem. If it doesn't seem right to you, go right ahead and stick exclusively to the rules.



Kargorr: The Game Master should fudge every chance she gets! That's right! If those too-big-for-their-britches heroes start to get ahead, fudge for the villains! If the villains start to get ahead, keep on fudging for the villains; you're on the right track!



Bravesteel: Don't listen to Kargorr. Fudging should be used as a tool for keeping the game exciting, not to give one side or the other a big advantage. And that, my friends, is a fact!

Pacing

Pacing is the art of keeping the game moving at an appropriate speed. If you're running an edge-of-your-seat chase sequence, keep the action fast and furious. Don't bog the game down with a heap of details. Talk fast and don't give the players a whole lot of time to think.

On the other hand, if you're running a melodramatic scene where two best friends must part ways forever, don't zip through it at a break-neck speed. Allow the players to savor the moment and perhaps feel the emotion from the scene.

Think about the scene you're doing and pace it accordingly. It's as simple as that.



The retro-toon genre may be extremely wide open in terms of possibilities, but it has plenty of distinguishing characteristics that separate it from other genres. Many of these characteristics are discussed in depth below.

Cartoon Logic

Logic in the retro-toons was drastically different than the logic in our own, more mundane, world. You'll need to throw real world logic out the window when running *Cartoon Action Hour*, as it has no place in the game.

A hero leaping from the top of one airship to another goes against everything we know about physics, but in the retro-toons, it happened on a regular basis. Ditto: for pulling the rug out from under the bad guy's feet, sending her flying through the air and onto her butt, or one hero dispatching a horde of Goons.

Sarah: For some really neat-o tips on how to make your games feel like the cartoons of the 1980s, flip all the way back to the preface of this book. It's written by Flint Dille, a guy who really knows what he's talking about. After all, he's been involved with such cartoons as *Inhumanoids*, *Transformers*, *GI Joe*, *Visionaries*, *Mr. T* and more! That's crazy!

Kargorr: Feh! That Dille guy's not so special. He didn't write the only cartoon that matters: *Galactic Heroes*!

Sarah: That's probably only because he didn't want to write a show that had a goober like YOU in it!

Kargorr: Curse you, you little runt! I'll get you yet!

The point is, cartoon logic is far more dramatic than real world logic and thus should be used whenever possible. If a player devises a creative but implausible maneuver or plan, by all means let her give it a try.

There are limits to this, obviously. A paramilitary commando shouldn't be allowed to pick up the earth and move it out of the way of an incoming asteroid, no matter how cool it may seem. A superhero, on the other hand, may be able to pull that off. It's simply an issue of you, the GM, making a judgment call about how far is too far and then sticking to it.

For plenty of examples of cartoon logic, read "The Tropes" section on pages 14 – 17.

Cheese and How to Use It

Hey, we all love the retro-toons, but there's no way to deny that they were laden with cheese. Certain series were lighter on it than others, but it was present in nearly every one of them. At first, this may sound like an insult to the genre, though that's not the case at all. The cheesiness is a big part of the appeal! It's one of the factors that set these brilliant shows apart from those that came later.

Since we have established the fact that the retro-toons were full of cheese, let's also establish the fact that cheese can be used to add flavor to your games of *Cartoon Action Hour* (pun most likely intended!). As the Game Master, you can have great fun by adding cheesy elements. Here are some ways to do exactly that.

Mention the Animation

Since you're essentially playing out episodes from a fictitious cartoon series, you can describe the animation. This reinforces the fact that this isn't just another RPG; this is an RPG about the retro-toons. Plus, it can help immerse the players in the genre. A few examples of this are as follows:

- If there's a trap door in the PCs' immediate area, mention that it is of a slightly different coloration than the surrounding terrain. This reflects the fact that the artists who drew the backgrounds were different than those who drew the "moving parts" of the scene. The moving parts were usually a little bit brighter. While this tips the players off that there's a trap door nearby, it all works out because it adds spice to the scene. Besides, some players are so "into" the genre that they'll instantly have their characters step right onto the trap door in question, just like the characters always seem to do in the retro-toons. This has actually happened on numerous occasions.

- The above actually goes for secret doors or even areas of a wall where a creature is going to burst through.

- For some reason, the animation for walking characters often looked stiff. So don't fail to describe it that way... or better yet, imitate it!

- If the characters are using firearms, you can bet that they are emitting laser blasts, even if the guns are supposed to be machine guns or shotguns. Since this is the case, why not bring that up?

- The retro-toons were notorious for using stock footage. The most prominent example is a certain blonde-haired hero who transformed from a wimpy prince to a brave muscle man by using a magical sword. His cat changed too, if you still aren't sure whom we're referencing. You can use it too, by mentioning that a particular scene or background is stock footage. Using it repeatedly throughout the series can be quite fun.

Have a Blast with Sound Effects

Before running *Cartoon Action Hour*, you should consider watching some retro-toons while paying close attention to the sound effects. You'll find that some of these sound effects were used over and over again, even in different series. You can either record them or just imitate them during the game. Either method will suffice. If you use a particular laser gun sound for every laser used in the series, then you're establishing an offbeat kind of continuity.

Use Corny Dialogue

Don't be afraid to insert clichéd dialogue and bad puns. In the same vein, don't be afraid to spout it off in a manner that would make high quality voice actors cringe. Not all of the voice actors were good at their jobs, so it can be a hoot to mimic that aspect of things.

Utilize Scene Transitions

When switching from one scene to another, the retro-toons typically had a quick transitional image, accompanied either by a voiceover stating the series name or a distinctive song that let the audience know that the scene was being changed.

You can put this to use in your games as well. How you do it depends on how much effort you want to invest in it. You could go the simple route by holding up a paper with an appropriate image on it while humming a three-second chunk of the series' theme song. Or you could go all out and create an animation and music to show your players on a tablet.

After-Show Messages

Many of the retro-toons were formatted so that each episode concluded with a 30-second skit. The contents of these skits varied from series to series, though they typically fell into one of two types:

Safety Tips: Safety tip segments typically featured kids doing something dangerous until one or two heroes inevitably came along and set them straight. Knowing is, as they say, half the battle.

Moral of the Story: Moral of the Story segments tied directly into one or more of the events that transpired during the episode. It usually consisted of one of the heroes pointing out what the often heavy-handed moral was ("Truth is always the best option").



PCs actually gain a Proof of Purchase for participating in the After-Show Message.

Running the After-Show Message

Once the episode has wrapped, you should let the players know that it's time for the After-Show Message. Next, you'll need to determine how many heroes will be involved in it. One method is to roll a die. If the result is an even number, only one hero can participate. If it's an odd number two heroes may participate.

How you select which heroes will appear in the After-Show Message is entirely up to you, though nobody should ever be required to participate. You could randomize it, though in an ongoing series, this could lead to some characters being accidentally left out due to Lady Luck spitting in their eye. Another option is to keep track of how many times a player participates and disallow them from doing so again until the other players have had a chance too.

After this is settled, you'll be required to set the scene and let the player(s) do the rest. If you're going for a Safety Tip, describe what the kids are doing and then tell the volunteering player(s) that their heroes see this going on. If you're aiming for a Moral of the Story bit, tell the participating player what the moral is and allow her to run with it by means of narration.

Be aware, however, that few players are likely to play it straight. Brace yourself for some major wackiness, including some off color humor. While that may not be authentic to the After-Show Messages from the retro-toons, it'll probably end the game with a big laugh from all the players, which is always a good thing. Besides, it's always fun to watch the players exercise their wit and satirical abilities.

Ensemble Cast

Not every retro-toon focused on a small cast of primary heroes; quite the contrary. Some of them had large casts with rotating focuses. For example, one episode may concentrate on two or three heroes, while the next one might concentrate on another batch entirely.

Obviously, if each player has but one character, this style of cartoon is going to be impossible to recreate. The solution is actually simpler than one might think. You could instruct the players to create more than one PC apiece so that you can alternate them accordingly from episode to episode.

The major advantage in this approach is variety. With so many heroes to work with, you'll never run out of story ideas for them. It keeps things fresh and also prevents players from becoming bored with the series.

The disadvantage is that the individual PCs won't gain as many Proofs of Purchase, thus slowing down the advancement rate. Really, this disadvantage is a disadvantage only to the players. In a way, though, it's not really a disadvantage to the overall series, because it regulates advancement, keeping power bloat from occurring.

30-Minute Episodes

It is entirely possible to run 30-minute episodes. Hey, why not? The retro-toon writers had roughly the same amount of time to tell a story, so there's no reason why you can't pull it off. Sure, the stories are going to be less intricate than they might ordinarily be, but there's a certain charm to these fast-paced, straightforward episodes.

If you don't feel comfortable with 30-minute episodes, try bumping them up to 45 minutes or even an hour. These lengths are still brief enough for you to get the right feel.

Saturday Morning Line-Ups

Running abbreviated episodes opens up a uniquely fun opportunity – the chance to play out a whole morning's worth of series. By that, we mean that you can develop a handful of series and during your session run an episode of each one, back to back. This can create extra work for you as well as the players, but it's remarkably rewarding.

The Star of the Show

It was commonplace for the retro-toons to have one hero that acted as the star of the show while the other heroes played second fiddle to her. Sometimes, the star character was really no more powerful than the others, but the stories revolved around her. Other times, however, the star was clearly superior to her comrades. The amount by which she was more powerful varied from series to series, ranging from slightly more capable to so much more potent that there was hardly a reason for the other heroes to exist.

When a show did have a star hero, the series itself was typically named after him in full ("The Adventures of Justarr") or in part ("Steel Man and the Protectors of the Galaxy").

The "star" concept works better for a cartoon than it does for a role-playing game. After all, few players want to play second banana to a fellow player's hero. This can quite easily spoil the fun for the players. However, some playing groups may have no problem playing sidekicks, finding it more of a challenge.

In any event, it puts your Game Mastering skills to the test, because it's your job to provide all the heroes with balanced challenges...and something that may be a challenge for the second-string heroes may be a cakewalk for the main protagonist. One way to do this is to have two types of villains: ones that can go toe-to-toe with the lesser heroes and ones that can duke it

out with the star. And do your best to discourage the main hero from polishing off the other heroes' villains for them. Such behavior is bad form and directly goes against the spirit of the cartoons.

If you want the star hero to be slightly tougher than the others, allow the character to be created at Star Power 4.



Being a good Game Master at the game table is vital. However, it won't matter nearly as much if you don't have a good episode to work with. In this section, we'll give you everything you need to know in order to craft a high quality, thrill-a-minute episode of *Cartoon Action Hour*.

Episode Structure

While no two episodes are the same, most of them do have a similar structure. This structure has been used in fiction throughout the ages; so to say that it's time-tested is a woeful understatement.

Ideally, there should be three acts in an episode. Below, we'll break these acts down and look at what each one covers.



Kargorr: The moronic author is going to blabber on about constructing an episode in three acts. But she's an idiot so don't listen to her. Instead, listen to me, the greatest mind in the universe. All you need is two acts. In Act One, you must establish my ingenious scheme and let the heroes have some false hope about putting a stop to it. In Act Two, you have me kill the heroes. End of episode. See? Was that so hard?

Act One: The Set-Up

The first act establishes the situation. Invariably, the situation (known as the inciting incident) is a problematic one. Otherwise, the heroes will be standing around with nothing to do during the episode, which is hardly fitting for a game based on the action-packed retro-toons!

In most episodes, this act will be the shortest. It doesn't take much time to set the episode up and give the players an idea of what mission their characters will tackle. In fact, the heroes may not even be involved in the first act... at least not immediately. It may be a "cut scene" that centers on one or more NPCs. Perhaps the master villain is planning to create a doomsday device, but needs three components in order to complete it. Act One could consist of two cut scenes in which the bad guys are shown stealing the initial two components. And perhaps a third cut scene could be implemented that involves the heroes being thrown into the situation, possibly by a superior ordering them to guard the third component or something similar.

There's something to be said for throwing the problem at the heroes right off the bat though. Doing so gives the players a reason to care about the problem more, since their characters are exposed to it first-hand. When taking this approach, be cautious. You don't want to get the heroes stuck in too deep this early. That's what Act Two is for.

Once the situation at hand is set in stone and the characters have been introduced to it, you're ready to move on to Act Two.

Below, you'll find some advice for creating the first act of an episode.

Scripting

If the heroes aren't involved in Act One, or at least in a segment of it, you might consider writing a brief script for yourself to follow. This is particularly helpful if the scene in question is complex or requires a lot of specific information to be given to the players.

A script can be as simple or as elaborate as you want, so long as it conveys whatever it is you wish to convey. When you need a scene to be precise, scripting is the way to go.

The easiest type of script to write is one that resembles the script from a stage play. Simply write the characters' names and what they say. Actions are also denoted in the text where necessary, though this needn't be too prose-heavy. Direct and to-the-point is the most appropriate route.

Another no-fuss way to script a scene is to simply write an outline of what needs to happen, much like you would do for a speech. This allows you a sense of freedom, while still ensuring that none of the important elements are accidentally left out. This is probably the best method for those who possess good ad-libbing skills.

The last method up for discussion is the most comprehensive, but likely the most rewarding as well. You can write out the scene in a short story format and simply read it aloud. Keep the text short, though, as there's a fine line between playing a game and listening to the GM read a full-fledged story. You don't need to write a novel in order to create an effective cut-scene with this method.

The Art of Inclusion

It is during Act One that the players will get a glimpse at what lies ahead for their characters. In most cases, the heroes will get a glimpse too. When laying out an episode, it's your job to bring the problem to the heroes... or bring the heroes to the problem. Either way, you have to find a way to get the ball rolling, which is really what Act One is all about.

There are always cut-and-dried options, such as having the boss assign the heroes a mission to go on or something equally obvious. Such options are fine and were, in fact, used liberally in the retro-toons. However, it's far more rewarding to exercise your creativity to devise more imaginative ways for drawing the heroes into the plot. If nothing else, these scenes of a more original nature can be sprinkled into the mix to keep the less original scenes from being too dominant.

Introducing New Elements

One of the most important roles of Act One is to introduce new people, places, and things that are (or will be) important to the story. If a new GMC, for instance, shows up halfway through the episode, the impact of the character's appearance will be diminished significantly in most cases. The players will probably be more baffled than anything.

Wise GMs utilize Act One to lay an immediate impression of the new element. If it's an uber-gadget, demonstrate how awesome it is. If it's a location, show the players why it's interesting. If it's a GMC, give the players an idea of what he's like. The best time to do this stuff is during the first act.

Act Two: The Confrontation

The second act is where you'll find the meat of the episode. It's the segment in which the heroes struggle to solve the problem(s) established in the first act. That is, the heroes confront the problem in an attempt to make things right. Act Two will conclude with the climax (see below).

Creating the basis for this act is all about pacing. You must try to plan for the most likely contingencies and cover as many bases as you can. Players are a crafty lot and will as often as not do something that you couldn't have possibly predicted. As long as you consider some of the more common contingencies, you should be okay. Should the players go off the beaten path, you should ad-lib wildly or attempt to sneakily guide them back onto the right path. The latter option is tricky, as you could find yourself railroading the players, which will lead to their frustration at their lack of choices. Guide them; don't force them. There's a big difference.

Once you do some planning, jot down a few notes about possible encounters or scenes that might spring from the contingencies. Some sequences might happen regardless of the choices made by the players. For example, if you planned to have the villains capture a GMC, there's no reason that the event won't still occur if the PCs have decided to take a drastically different course of action than you had anticipated. Or perhaps the villains have been shadowing the heroes with the intent to lay waste to them as soon as a good opportunity arises. The attack will most likely be carried out no matter where the heroes decide to go. Such events are mandatory.

Below, you'll find some advice for creating the second act of an episode.

Escalation

The problem was established in the first act, but it is during the second act that it escalates into a

bigger problem. In the retro-toons, few things happened on a small scale. Everything was big and grandiose! For this reason, you should see to it that your episode follows suit. Don't have your villain threaten the existence of a building when you can have him threaten an entire kingdom, an entire planet, or, heck, even the cosmos itself! Think big. It's okay to make things look small scale in Act One, but in Act Two, the stakes should be raised.

Active Villains

Villains aren't just going to stand around and wait for the heroes to thwart them. They're going to further their plans. It's crucial for them to remain active during the second act. Otherwise, your episode will be too static and predictable. If the heroes are making their way to the villain's lair, let the villain find out what they're up to... and have him do something about it. Perhaps he could send forth a gaggle of his underlings to deal with them or maybe he could retreat to an alternate lair. He might even attack them himself. As long as the antagonists are doing something, your game will go okay.

It might help to get inside the mind of the main villain. Try to figure out what he would be doing while the protagonists are trying to defeat him. Turn things around and try to *become* the antagonist and feel what he would feel; do what he would do. Looking at the story from the villain's perspective is always a good idea.

The Heroes Defeated?

Many, but certainly not all, episodes of the retro-toons ended the second act with the heroes in a bad way. The most common use of this mechanism is that the heroes' plans to stop the villain have been crushed and all hope seems to be lost. Things look bad for our intrepid good guys. It's also a very good place to insert a commercial break, as it gives the players a chance to discuss alternative courses of action. Plus, it builds suspense.

Don't over-use this plot device, however. Constant utilization will lead to predictability ("Oh, jeez, it's just about time for us to be greatly imperiled... again."). When used in moderation, it can add drama to the episode, but when used too often, it can suck the drama away from it instead.

Don't Give Up

When writing Act One, it's likely that your cool ideas are going to get you jazzed up about the rest of the episode. This is a great thing, but a lot of Game Masters hit a stumbling block when writing Act Two because it is a much more involved process. Act Two is the meat and potatoes of any episode, so it stands to reason that plotting it is going to take more work. Sometimes, those cool ideas from Act One have to be massaged and even altered in order to flow into Act Two.

All this can lead to frustration, as you begin second guessing yourself and saying, "This isn't working". Many Game Masters give up writing the episode at this point. When you feel like quitting, step away for a little while and take a deep breath. Do whatever it is you do to relax and then come back to the episode with a less beleaguered mind. This helps a lot!

Avoid being married to an idea you developed in Act One. By all means, knead the heck out of it and do your best to make it work for Act Two, but if you just can't get it right, don't be afraid to scrap the darn thing and go back to Act One. Scrapping an idea and halting the writing of an episode are two very different things. Quitting shouldn't even be an option. Press on and design an episode that will knock your players' socks off!

Give the Villains Some Airtime

Watch an episode of a retro-toon. It doesn't matter which series or even which episode you watch. Watch it with an eye toward how much airtime the villains receive. You may very well be shocked at how much spotlight they are given.



We get to see them hatch their nefarious schemes, further those schemes and even develop their own subplots from time to time. To put it simply, the villains make a series worth watching. In *Cartoon Action Hour*, you can use them to make the series worth playing too.

Switch scenes from time to time to show the "viewers" what the villains are doing. This generally means talking to yourself during these scenes, since you're the one playing the bad guys. You may feel a bit dopey doing it at first, but with some practice, you'll be a one-person sideshow. It becomes much more natural over time.



If you have an open-minded group, perhaps you can let the players also play the villainous roles during these little asides.

Either way, don't fret that doing villain-based cut scenes will let the players know what the adversaries are up to. *Cartoon Action Hour* isn't about competition – it's about crafting a memorable story and partaking in giving the villains air time furthers that goal significantly.

Act Three: The Resolution

Act Three is the act in which the problem at hand is resolved and the story concludes. In a nutshell, Act Three is the climax of the episode.

And with the climax comes the big climactic scene that results in the pay-off for the players. This scene invariably leads to the final outcome, which is usually the triumph of good over evil. The climactic scene is, more often than not, a combat sequence. Still, in the retro-toons, many climactic scenes were of a less violent nature. This is a positive thing, as it detracts from the episode's predictability.

The closing scene of Act Three is often called the denouement and it's generally defined as a period of calmness, where a state of equilibrium returns. The nature of the denouement can vary wildly, but there was one type that was gratuitously employed by the retro-toon writers. It involved the protagonists verbally wrapping things up, when suddenly, the token comic relief character said or did something funny. Everyone enjoyed a hearty laugh and the credits rolled. While that ending was the norm, less typical endings were presented as well. So, it's okay to use the tried and true ending, but you shouldn't feel less inclined to pull off one that's completely unique. This is your series, after all.

Below, you'll find some advice for creating the third act of an episode.

Location, Location, Location

While you should take into account interesting locations for battle sequences in *any* act, the one you choose for the climactic battle sequence (if indeed there is one) should be particularly memorable. Battling on a flat surface with nothing around can lead to a boring fight. But if you plunk the heroes and villains into an area bristling with assorted props and an intriguing layout, then you've already gotten a head start on developing a fun battle scene! Here are some ideas for battle locations: construction sites, moving trains, downtown areas, winding back-alleys, the corridors of a space station, on the deck of an aircraft carrier, ancient ruins, thick jungles, the top of a skyscraper, maze-like parking garages, floating cities, factories, castle battlements, zoos, amusement parks, shopping malls, warehouses, museums, gargantuan suspension bridges, craggy cliff sides, pyramids, junkyards, sewers, frozen rivers, rope bridges, deck of a rocking ships, clock towers, marshes, active volcanoes, abandoned mines, collapsing tunnels, busy highways, sinking ships, art galleries, scaffolding, supermarkets, elevator shafts, parades, low-gravity worlds, underwater valleys, sunken ships, famous landmarks, and so forth.

The Big Escape

You don't want to create new villains every time you prepare to run an episode do you? Of course not! This is why you need to concoct a way for the villains to avoid capture, death, or at least the master villain. Best of all, such escapes really keep to the spirit of the genre, as the retro-toons were notorious for this kind of thing. Villains can be defeated, but be careful with letting them be imprisoned by the heroes. You'll find your rogues gallery dwindling with each passing episode... and that's not productive for the series as a whole.

It's acceptable to allow the villains to be captured during Acts One or Two, since they can always escape or be rescued later on during the episode. But Act Three marks the last segment of an episode, so it's harder to spring captured villains at that point.



Kargorr: Escape?! ESCAPE?! What kind of master villain tries to escape? Any villain worth his salt will stand and fight to the end, giving those no-good heroes a sound thrashing!



Sarah: So, you're not good at escaping?



Kargorr: OF COURSE I AM, YOU FOOL! I mean... err... well...



Sarah: I thought you said that you never try to escape.



Kargorr: Gah! It was trickery on your behalf! Trickery!



"Bare Bones" Episode Creation



Perhaps time is short or you simply don't want to go through all the meticulous planning required by the standard method presented in this section. Whatever the case is, the "bare bones" method will allow you to put together an episode in no time at all.

The Situation: What is the conflict of the episode? Is it a villainous plot or something else altogether? Write down a 1- to 3-sentence synopsis of the plot ("Wrathgar creates a mind control device and plans to brainwash the heroes," "A chasm opens up in the ground, threatening to swallow up a town... what caused the chasm?," etc.).

Plot Points: Come up with a few things that you'd like to see happen during the episode ("a vehicle chase scene through a desert canyon," "the villains take over a settlement," "a GMC comes up missing," etc.).

GMCs: Develop a quick list of GMCs that will play into the episode. If they're new characters, give them stats. Otherwise, their names will suffice.

This method gives you enough to work with, but doesn't overload you with detail, thus allowing you some wiggle room to alter it as the game progresses.

Index

#

12-sided die 22

A

Abilities 102
Accessory 104
Act 1 165-166
Act 2 167-169
Act 3 169-170
Action Feature 104
Action Scene 39-43
Activating 50-51
Advantage 105
After-Show Message 14, 163
Ally 32, 117-118
Alternate Form 50-53, 109, 112-115
Ani-Bots 136
Appendix 172-183
Area 105
Asgard 3000 138-139
Azlara 63

B

Base Difficulty 35
Base Oomph 34, 100
Battle for the Universe 124-131
Benefit Dice 36
Big Attack 105
Bio-File 32, 100-101, 182, 183
Boon 38
Bravesteel 18
Brutaloids, the 137
Buzzard Man 73

C

Catchphrases 98
Channel Guide 28
Character Alterations 132-133
Character Creation 100-122
Checks 34-38
Chillout 74
Comedically Versatile 111
Commercial Breaks 57-58
Companion 105-106
Continuity (Dial) 95

Cosmetic Adjustments 132
Creating Alternate Forms 112
Creating Episodes 165-171
Creating Gestalt Forms 116
Creating Goons 122
Creating Vehicles 114-115
Crucial Check 40-43
Current Oomph 34, 100-101

D

D12 22
Deactivate 106
Deactivation 50-51
Defeat 41-43
Dependent 122
Deplete 107
Devastating 107
Dials 94-95
Difficulty Number 34-35
Disadvantage 107
DN 34-35
Drowning 56

E

Earning Oomph 44
Easily Led 122
Enhancements 132
Episode 20, 31
Equipment 102
Example of Play 20-22, 62-87
Experience 132-133
Extra Alternate Form 111
Eye-Catcher 74

F

Falling 56
Fickle 107
Fire 56-57
Flub 38
Foreword 8-9
Forms 50
Fragile 122
Full-Steam 63

G

Galactic Heroes 18, 161
Game Master 19, 159-171
Game Master Character 19, 32, 117-122
Game Stats 47
Genres 91
Gestalt 53-55, 116
Gestalt Forms 55, 116
Ghost Patrol 140
Give It Your All! 45
GM 19, 159-171
GMC 19, 32, 117-122
GMC Alterations 133
Goon Rating 47
Goon Special Rules 122
Goon Squad 47-48
Goons 33, 47-48

H

Hard to Defeat 122
Hazards 56-57
Henchman 121
Heroic Allies 117-118

I - K

Index 172-173
Insta-Defeat 43
Involuntary 111
Kargorr 18

L

Leader 120
Linking 36-38, 48, 53
Losing Oomph 47
Lousy Shooting! 46

M

Master Villain 119-120
Merging 53-54
Modes of Travel 114, 116
Motor-Mouth 63
Movie 59-60
Multi-Form 111

N - O

Normal Check 35
Not So Fast! 45
One-Shot 107
Oomph 34, 43-47, 100-101
Oomph-Powered 108
Opposed Checks 34-35
Opposed Crucial Checks 40
Optional Rules 57-60
Other Rules 98

P

PC 19, 32, 100-116
Player 19, 153-157
Player-Character 19, 32, 100-116
Player-Character Guidelines 97-98
Playset 49-50, 123
Powers 102
Primary Trait 36
Proofs of Purchase 34, 44, 100-101, 132-133
Protection 102

Q - R

Qualities 33, 36, 44, 48, 50-51, 55, 100-101, 112, 114, 156
Quicksand 57
Reacting 40, 41
Realism (Dial) 94
Recommended Viewing 23-28
Retro-Toon 12
Revamps 133
Rift Warriors 141
Rogues Gallery 118-122
Rolls 34-38
RPG 19-22

S

S.L.A.M. 141
Sample Dinosaurs 179
Sample Monsters 178-179
Sample Mundane Animals 179-181
Sample Objects 181
Sample Traits 103

Sample Vehicles 176-177
Sarah 18
Scene 31
Scene Editing 46
Season 32
Secondary Trait 36-38
Series 12, 20, 31-32, 89-131
Series Creation 89-131
Series Goal 92
Series Guide 90-98, 184
Seriousness (Dial) 94
Session 20
Setback Tokens 40-43, 48, 52
Shared 108
Signature Quality 33, 36, 100-101, 112, 114
Situational Boost 108
Situational Setback 108-109
Skills 102
Skyfighters of Voltania 142
Special Attack 122
Special Rules 23, 104-111
Specialist 122
Spending Oomph 44-46
Standard Crucial Checks 40
Standard Quality 33, 36, 100-101, 112, 114
Star Power 33-34, 38, 39, 41, 43, 47, 100-101
Stats 47
Subordinate Stats 112-116
Suck It Up! 45

T

Tagline 90
Teamwork 38
Tech Level 91-92
Tertiary Trait 104
Tiers 33
Tin Horns 144
Trait Points 97, 101, 116
Trait Rating Benchmarks 102
Trait Ratings 32-33, 37, 100-101
Traits 32-33, 100-101, 103
Transform Others 109
Transform Self 109
Transformation 50-53, 112-113

Transform-Based Special Rules 111
Try It Again! 45
Turn 39
Twist 91

U - V

Upgrades 100, 113, 114, 115, 132
Vehicle Qualities 48, 114
Vehicle Traits 48, 114
Vehicle 109
Vehicles 48-49, 114-115
Versatile 109-111
Vicious Assault 122
Villain Hierarchy 118-122
Violence (Dial) 95

W - Z

Warriors of the Cosmos 68
Weakness 122
Weapons 102
Zero-Rating Trait 37

So, here we are. 2013. Ten years after Season 1 and five years after Season 2. The old cliché sure is right – time really does fly when you’re having fun. And fun is what this game is all about. From its inception, Cartoon Action Hour has been a joy to work on. All the hard work put into it barely seemed like work at all, because the subject matter is so near and dear to me. The joy of emulating those old cartoons that I so thoroughly enjoyed in my youth (and, to be honest, still enjoy today) overshadows all the sleepless nights, tough design dilemmas and instances in which we had to scrap entire chunks of the system and start again from scratch.

This iteration of the game was no different in that regard. We had our struggles, sure, but those triumphs and unexpected flashes of inspiration are what will most define my memories of creating this system with the rest of the Spectrum crew. To reiterate, it was a joy.

Our goal with Season 3 was simple: to make the game even more faithful to the source material and to boost its “fun factor” to the moon. To do this, it needed to be faster-playing and give players more freedom for their creativity to

soar (which is why we included the ability to link two Traits together for a check).

Let’s look at a few of the changes or additions that we implemented in order to reach our design goals:

Star Power: The addition of Star Power may seem like nothing more than a stylistic addition, but it was actually added to consolidate several things (Threshold, for example). It also gave us a chance to more or less rate characters without “points” getting in the way and cluttering things up. Star Power has numerous applications within the game system, including dictating how many Setback Tokens a character can safely accumulate before being Defeated.

Qualities: In Season 2, characters had Tidbits and Subplots, but there was a great deal of overlapping that made me a bit uncomfortable. With this edition, we consolidated them into Qualities and subsequently came up with all-new game mechanics for them.

Linking: Traditionally, players were restricted to utilizing one appropriate Trait for a check. This is no longer the case. This has always made certain things rather awkward. After all, if a character is making a leaping attack, why shouldn’t ACROBATICS and AWESOME FIGHTER apply? Now, up to two Traits can apply to a single check. And thanks to the new “Accessory” Special Rule, ELECTRO-STAFF

could also be added to the mix as a third Trait. This completely changes the complexion of the game and rewards player creativity as well.

Action Scenes: Somehow, “combat” never seemed all that appropriate for the ‘80s cartoons. When one thinks of combat, they generally think of strategic encounters where both sides wear each other down little by little in a meat grinder fashion. This doesn’t apply to the retro-toons, where – as often as not – a scene ends by way of a character stuffing an apparently inescapable garbage can over the foe’s head or something similarly “non-fighty”. We emphasized this is Season 2, but still called it combat. In this edition, we dispensed with that term altogether, replacing it with the action scene rules. Action scenes encompass any manner of high-octane sequence imaginable, from a chase to a tense climbing scene and, yes, even fisticuffs or a laser-filled shootout. It’s all covered under the “action scene” umbrella and it all uses the same rules.

Series Creation: Even in the beginning of CAH’s life, series creation was a big part of the game. However, I wanted to take it a step further by actually rolling character creation into the overall series creation process. I liked the idea that constructing the series’ “cast” is simply one step of the larger series creation system. I also desired a more thorough take on series creation than we had in the past, so we added a lot of fun stuff such as dials, Playsets and so forth. It’s a very interactive part of the game now.

Before I wrap this up, I want to thank all the fans that have stood by us (and Cartoon Action Hour) over the last ten years as well as the wonderful folks who backed this book on Kickstarter. When I initially charged headfirst into this crazy endeavor a decade ago, I never could have dreamed that I’d be here, writing an afterword for the third edition of a game that I was terrified would flop to begin with. But, as I said at the beginning of this epilogue... here we are. And I’m so absolutely grateful for that, as is the rest of the Spectrum crew. The fact that people enjoy what we do makes all the long hours and hard work completely worth it.

Sample Stuff

Vehicles

Please note that the following Vehicle write-ups already include a selection of Special Rules and Upgrades. The same thing is true of the various sample GMCs, animals, and monsters. They were made independently and may not fully conform to the framework of rules and points available when a player builds a Vehicle from scratch for their player-character. Most of these Vehicles may also in fact appear only in specific series (“worlds”), as you don’t see a lot of sports cars, yachts, or private jets in a medieval fantasy setting, etc.

Vehicles can and should still be taken as temporary or permanent Traits that are assigned to a specific character. Most of the game stats here assume that the character has Star Power 3 (which has direct repercussions on the number of Upgrades used). The level of the Vehicle type Trait – Minor, Moderate, or Major – is listed in parentheses right after the default name. These levels are merely suggestions, not iron-clad rules.

Ground Vehicles

Compact Car (Minor)

■ ■ Useful Road Vehicle ■ Inconspicuous ■ Some additional electronics
GO FAST 5 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – On normal concrete highways and similar roads), STURDY FRAME 4, MANEUVERABLE 3, SPACIOUS TRUNK 2 / Total: 5 Trait points (if bought as a Trait)

Sedan (Moderate)

■ ■ Luxurious Automobile ■ Equals bragging rights ■ Stands out immediately ■ Made from the finest materials
SHINY EXTERIOR 6 (Situational Boost – When used to impress car enthusiasts), GO FAST 3 (Mode of Travel: Land), AMPLE ROOM INSIDE 3 (Advantage – Usually includes something extra like a mini-bar or a really good stereo system), STURDINESS 3, HANDLES NICELY 1 / Total: 5 Trait points

Sports Car (Moderate)

■ ■ Sleek Speedster ■ Highly sought after (valuable) ■ Attracts attention
RAW SPEED 6 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – On normal concrete highways and similar roads), STURDY FRAME 5, MANEUVERABLE 4, SLEEKNESS 3, VISUAL APPEAL 3 / Total: 6 Trait points

Muscle Car (Moderate)

■ ■ Automotive Powerhouse ■ Gas guzzler ■ Striking appearance ■ Frequently modified
GO FAST 6 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – On normal concrete highways and similar roads, Situational Boost – When going long distance), BUILD TO LAST 5, HEIGHTENED MANEUVERABILITY 5, SOME EXTRA SPACE 3 / Total: 6 Trait points

SUV (Moderate)

■ ■ Off-Road Explorer’s Dream ■ Big and solid ■ Easily spotted
STURDY 5 (Situational Boost – When forced to endure the effects of bad weather, animals, or mud), GO FAST 4 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – When used outside of a city, especially on a simple dirt road), FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE 3, ROOM FOR GADGETS 3, INCLUDES EXTRA SPACE 2 / Total: 5 Trait points

Pickup Truck (Minor)

■ ■ Light Transport Vehicle ■ Inconspicuous ■ Open bed for cargo
GO FAST 4 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – On normal concrete highways and similar roads), STURDY FRAME 3, MANEUVERABLE 2, MULTIPURPOSE AREA 2 / Total: 4 Trait points

Van (Moderate)

■ ■ Strong Specialized Transport ■ Massive size ■ Characteristic block shape
WELL-PROTECTED 5 (Situational Boost – Against hazards from the outside), SPACIOUS 4, RELIABLE CONTROLS 3 (Situational Boost – When used inside a town or city), GO FAST 3 (Mode of Travel: Land), HIDDEN COMPARTMENT 2 / Total: 5 Trait points

Tank (Moderate)

■ ■ Armored Military Vehicle ■ Loud ■ Very unsubtle ■ Requires several crew members
COVERED IN HEAVY ARMOR 6, LONG BATTLE CANNON 5 (Big Attack, Devastating; Disadvantage – Can only fire every other round), TRAVEL ON TREADS 4 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – When used on natural ground, off-road), MANEUVERABLE 2, MILITARY RADIO EQUIPMENT 2 / Total: 6 Trait points

Bus (Minor)

■ ■ Big Passenger Vehicle ■ Long shape ■ Built for long continued service
STURDY FRAME 4, SPACIOUS INTERIOR 3, GO FAST 2 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – On normal concrete highways and similar roads), MANEUVERABLE 2 / Total: 4 Trait points

Ambulance (Moderate)

■ ■ Medical Rescue Van ■ Conspicuous ■ Many specialized components
GO FAST 5 (Mode of Travel: Land), STURDINESS 5, HANDLES WELL 3, LIFE SUPPORT 3, ELABORATE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT 2, SIREN 1 / Total: 5 Trait points

Train (Moderate)

■ ■ Rail-Bound Conveyance ■ Made for lots of passengers (or cargo) ■ Very long!
GO FAST 5 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Boost – When on long open stretches of the rails; Disadvantage – Subject to an official schedule and lots of regulations), ROOMY 5, SOLID BUILD 3, DINING CAR 3, EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT 2, INTERCOM 1 / Total: 5 Trait points

Motorcycle (Minor)

■ ■ Mean Road Hog ■ Made for the great wide open! ■ Limited space (for rider, luggage)
OUTSTANDING SPEED 6 (Mode of Travel: Land), HANDLES WELL 5, STURDY 4, SMALL REPAIR KIT 2, SADDLE BAGS 1 / Total: 6 Trait points

Bicycle (Minor)

■ ■ Pedal-Powered Joy ■ Light-framed ■ Rider is completely unshielded
SWIFT 3 (Mode of Travel: Land; Disadvantage – Relies completely on the rider pedaling), USEFUL LOOSE PARTS 2 (Advantage – Could include a removable lamp, bell, frame pump, etc.), RESILIENT 2, GEAR CHANGE 1, SHINY 1 / Total: 3 Trait points

18-Wheeler (Moderate)

■ ■ Road Giant ■ Unsubtle ■ Uses many specialized tires ■ Really enduring
BIG CARGO AREA 8, WELL-PROTECTED 4 (Situational Boost – Against hazards from the outside), GO FAST 4 (Mode of Travel: Land; Situational Setback – When inside a town or on any narrow road), RELIABLE CONTROLS 3, HIDDEN COMPARTMENT 2, REPAIR KIT 1 / Total: 6 Trait points

Air Vehicles

Dirigible (Moderate)

■ ■ Slow-Going Airship ■ Elegant ■ Technologically quaint ■ Limited passenger space
FLYING SPEED 4 (Mode of Travel: Air; Situational Boost – When in good weather; Situational Setback – When there is an unfavorable wind, Situational Setback – When this vehicle has taken any Setback Tokens), SPACIOUS 3, STURDY FRAME 3, INTERCOM 2, LOUNGE AREA 2 (Advantage – May double as a weapons platform or flying lab), SOME EXTRA EQUIPMENT 1 / Total: 4 Trait points

Jet (Moderate)

■ ■ High-Velocity Plane ■ Commercial aircraft ■ Cannot stop in mid-air ■ Coveted/Popular
FLY FAST 6 (Mode of Travel: Air; Situational Boost – When at high altitude in a non-action scene), EXCELLENT CONTROL SYSTEMS 5, STURDY STRUCTURE 4, ESCAPE CHUTE 2, KITCHEN AREA 2, OXYGEN SUPPLY 1 / Total: 6 Trait points

Jet Fighter (Major)

■ ■ Heavily Armed Flyer ■ Destructive ■ Loud Propulsion ■ Fearsome
FLY FAST 8 (Mode of Travel: Air; Situational Boost – When in an action scene, Situational Boost – When directly opposing any regular non-fighter aircraft), VARIABLE MISSILE SYSTEM 6 (Area, Big Attack), ARMORED FRAME 6, CUTTING EDGE CONTROLS 5, MILITARY STYLE RADIO UNIT 3 / Total: 8 Trait points

Helicopter (Moderate)

■ ■ Multipurpose Propeller Force ■ Made for fast responses ■ Pretty noisy
FLYING SPEED 5 (Mode of Travel: Air; Advantage – Able to hover in place), SOLID FRAME 4, MANEUVERABLE 3, CARGO AREA 3, LAND IN DIFFICULT SPOTS 3 / Total: 5 Trait points

Hovercar (Minor)

■ ■ Levitating Personal Wagon ■ Sleek build ■ Stealthy
HOVER FAST 4 (Mode of Travel: Air; Situational Setback – Cannot easily go to great heights), STURDY FRAME 3 (Situational Boost – When used against any airborne hazard), MANEUVERABLE 3, LUGGAGE SPACE 2 / Total: 4 Trait points

Personal Power Glider (Moderate)

■ ■ Small Winged Carrier ■ Foldable for storage ■ User-friendly
AUTOMATIC GEARBOX 5, GLIDE AT A GOOD PACE 3 (Mode of Travel: Air; Advantage – Can hover in place), SMALL LASER BLASTER 3 (Area, Situational Boost – When used against another vehicle of similar size, Situational Boost – When flying), SURPRISINGLY STURDY 3, STRONG SEARCHLIGHTS 2 / Total: 5 Trait points

Water Vehicles

Rowboat (Minor)

■ ■ Simple Wooden Boat ■ Uncovered ■ Sort of old-timey
ROWING SPEED 3 (Mode of Travel: Water), SOLID 2, STORAGE SPACE 2, EASY TO HANDLE 1, QUIET ON THE WATER 1 / Total: 3 Trait points

Pirate Ship (Major)

■ ■ Buccaneers’ Main Home ■ Spreading terror ■ Vicious luck of the seas
BIG FRAME 7, SAILING SPEED 6 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Boost – When traveling with little or no cargo, i.e. loot), HEAVY CANNONS 5 (Big Attack, Devastating; Fickle), VARIOUS PIRATE SUPPLIES 5, KEGS OF RUM 3, LOTS OF EXTRA ROPES 1 / Total: 7 Trait points

Sailboat (Moderate)

■ ■ Light Unarmed Vessel ■ Humbly wind-powered ■ Sporty ■ Nice looks
SAILING SPEED 4 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Boost – In a favorable wind; Situational Setback – When involved in an action scene), CARGO SPACE 3, MANEUVERABLE 3, STURDY FRAME 3, COMES WITH SPARE PARTS 2 / Total: 4 Trait points

Hovercraft (Moderate)

■ ■ Hovering Transport ■ Depends on the air cushion ■ Highly characteristic shape ■ Bulky
HOVER ALONG 5 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Boost – When used for only a short trip, Situational Boost – When in good clear weather), AGILE FOR ITS SIZE 3, BOX OF EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT 3, PHYSICALLY RESISTANT 3, STORAGE SPACE 2 / Total: 5 Trait points

Motorboat (Minor)

■ ■ Powerful Water Conveyance ■ Open-topped ■ Noisy ■ Narrow
AGGRESSIVE SPEED 5 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Boost – In a race, may get that short “burst of speed”; Situational Setback – After receiving any Setback Tokens), CARGO SPACE 3 (Advantage – Cargo can be hidden or covered even when the driver is not), STURDY FRAME 3, ADDITIONAL BATTERY 1, MANEUVERABLE 1 / Total: 5 Trait points

Cruise Ship (Major)

■ ■ Giant Sailing Vacation Spot ■ Built for tourism and pleasure ■ Finely decorated ■ Luxurious furnishing ■ On-board restaurant ■ Entertainment stage
EPIC SIZE 10 (Situational Boost – When used as a reaction against damage),

HEAVY 10, LOTS OF PASSENGER CABINS 9, SAILING SPEED 5 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Setback – When in bad weather, like a major storm), LIMITED MANEUVERABILITY 1 / Total: 10 Trait points

Battleship (Major)

■ ■ Naval Fighting Vessel ■ Super-solid ■ Always under military supervision
ARMORED 9 (Situational Boost – When linked with MASSIVE SIZE, Situational Boost – When defending against a Trait with the Big Attack special rule), MASSIVE SIZE 8, MAIN CANNON 7 (Big Attack), SEA-GOING SPEED 6 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Setback – When involved in an action scene), INDEPENDENT TURRET CANNONS 2, CREW’S QUARTER 1 / Total: 9 Trait points

Aircraft Carrier (Major)

■ ■ Floating Battle Station ■ Awe-inspiring force ■ Pride of the navy
MAIN CANNON 9 (Action Feature, Area, Big Attack), ARMORED 11 (Situational Boost – When linked with MASSIVE SIZE, Situational Boost – When defending against a Trait with the Big Attack special rule), MASSIVE SIZE 10, SEA-GOING SPEED 4 (Mode of Travel: Water; Situational Setback – When involved in an action scene), SUPPORTING WEAPON SYSTEMS 3, CREW’S QUARTER 1 / Total: 11 Trait points

Submarine (Moderate)

■ ■ Underwater Fighting Vessel ■ Sleek and narrow ■ Complicated machinery
ARMORED 6, ARMED WITH TORPEDOES 5 (Big Attack; Disadvantage – Can only fire every other round), GO FAST 5 (Mode of Travel: Underwater), RADAR SYSTEM 3, AIR SUPPLY 2, MANEUVERABLE 1 / Total: 6 Trait points

Space Vehicles

Starfighter (Moderate)

■ ■ Destructive Spacecraft ■ Good in formation flight ■ Cannot stop in mid-flight ■ Specifically a one-person craft
PHOTON RAY BLASTERS 8 (Area), ASTRO-DRIVE 8 (Mode of Travel: Space), STURDY FRAME 6, ATMOSPHERIC FLIGHT 5 (Mode of Travel: Air) / Total: 8 Trait points

Rocket Ship (Moderate)

■ ■ Multipurpose Space Vehicle ■ Heavy-duty boosters ■ Sensitive sensors
SPACE PROPULSION 9 (Mode of Travel: Space), STURDY 7, SECURE CONTROLS 6, FIRE SMALL ROCKET 4 (Big Attack, Fickle), CARGO SPACE 2 / Total: 8 Trait points

Cargo Ship (Moderate)

■ ■ Freightler Spacecraft ■ Civilian build ■ Massive fuel tanks
STORAGE SPACE 8 (Action Feature), ARMOR PLATING 7, FLY IN SPACE 7 (Mode of Travel: Space; Situational Setback – After receiving any Setback Tokens), CARGO RAMP 2, EQUIPMENT FOR MAINTENANCE 2, SMALL LASERS 2 / Total: 8 Trait points

Capital Ship (Major)

■ ■ Maneuverable Fortress ■ Offers great protection ■ Laden with equipment and supplies
ASTOUNDING SIZE 12, STELLAR BLAST CANNON 10 (Area, Big Attack, Devastating; Disadvantage – Can only fire every other round), ARMORED 10 (Situational Boost – When linked with ASTOUNDING SIZE, Situational Boost – When defending against a Trait with the Big Attack special rule), SPACE TRAVEL 5 (Mode of Travel: Space), MULTIPLE SPINNING BLASTER TURRETS 3 (Big Attack) / Total: 12 Trait points