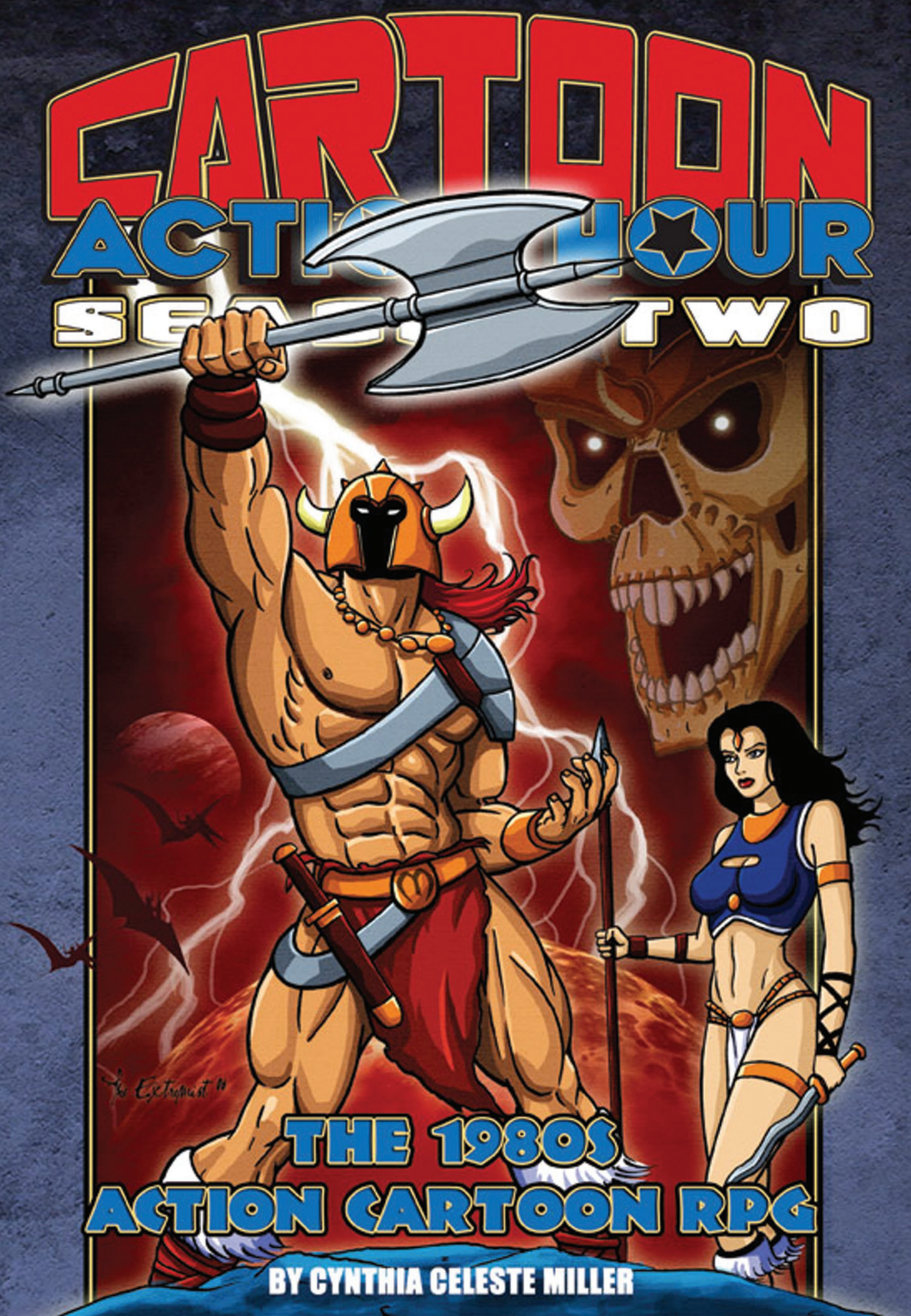
CARTOON ACTION HOUR SEASON TWO



THE 1980S ACTION CARTOON RPG

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Cartoon Action Hour

Season Two

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this product to my graphic design instructors, Alma Hale and Greg Brewer. When I first stepped into their classes back in 2005, I was nearly clueless about how to design logos and lay out books. By the time I finished their courses in 2007, I had all the knowledge I needed to get started on a career as a graphic designer. I'm still learning new things every day, but these two gentlemen gave me a solid foundation and inspired me to pursue graphic design further. It's safe to say that without their hard work and dedication, this book would not have been possible. For that, I owe them my eternal gratitude... even if they *do* insist on using pesky old Macs. Heh.

Spectrum Games

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FOREWORD

Cartoons. It's so easy to dismiss them as pointless pieces of fluff, as light entertainment for the kiddies, with no serious value. But that attitude is to do cartoons a serious disservice, because they also have impact and influence as do all our experiences growing up.

I remember, as a kid, racing home from school to catch toons like Dungeons & Dragons; remember watching them on Saturday morning shows; remember playing out the tales in the playground. They were always focused on heroes, on doing the right thing, on helping others. They made me want to be the hero, want to help others. In some sense, small or large, they helped influence my own moral development in a positive way. They provided a point of social interaction, of commonality with friends, and they stirred my imagination. Just like roleplaying games.

There's an overlap between the two forms of entertainment beyond that, of course. Both typically embrace the fantastical, both possess the ability to draw forth emotion, both provide stories in their own distinct ways.

As a parent, teacher, and rpg writer, it's tempting to whip out a soap-box at the moment, to wax lyrical about the educational and moral benefits of retro-toons and rpgs to children, but to be honest, their benefits are obvious given even a small amount of thought, and y'know what? Ultimately, what they both boil down to is this: fun. Sheer, unbridled, unapologetic fun. And that's vital in our lives regardless of our age.

So, here we are with Cartoon Action Hour: Season 2, a true labour of love that combines toons and rpgs into a scintillating whole. It's time to be the Good Guys again, to laugh and smile with your friends or kids, to play at being heroes. It's time for some fun.

---- Colin Chapman, 2008

CASTAÑEDA
+
CRISOSTOMO '03
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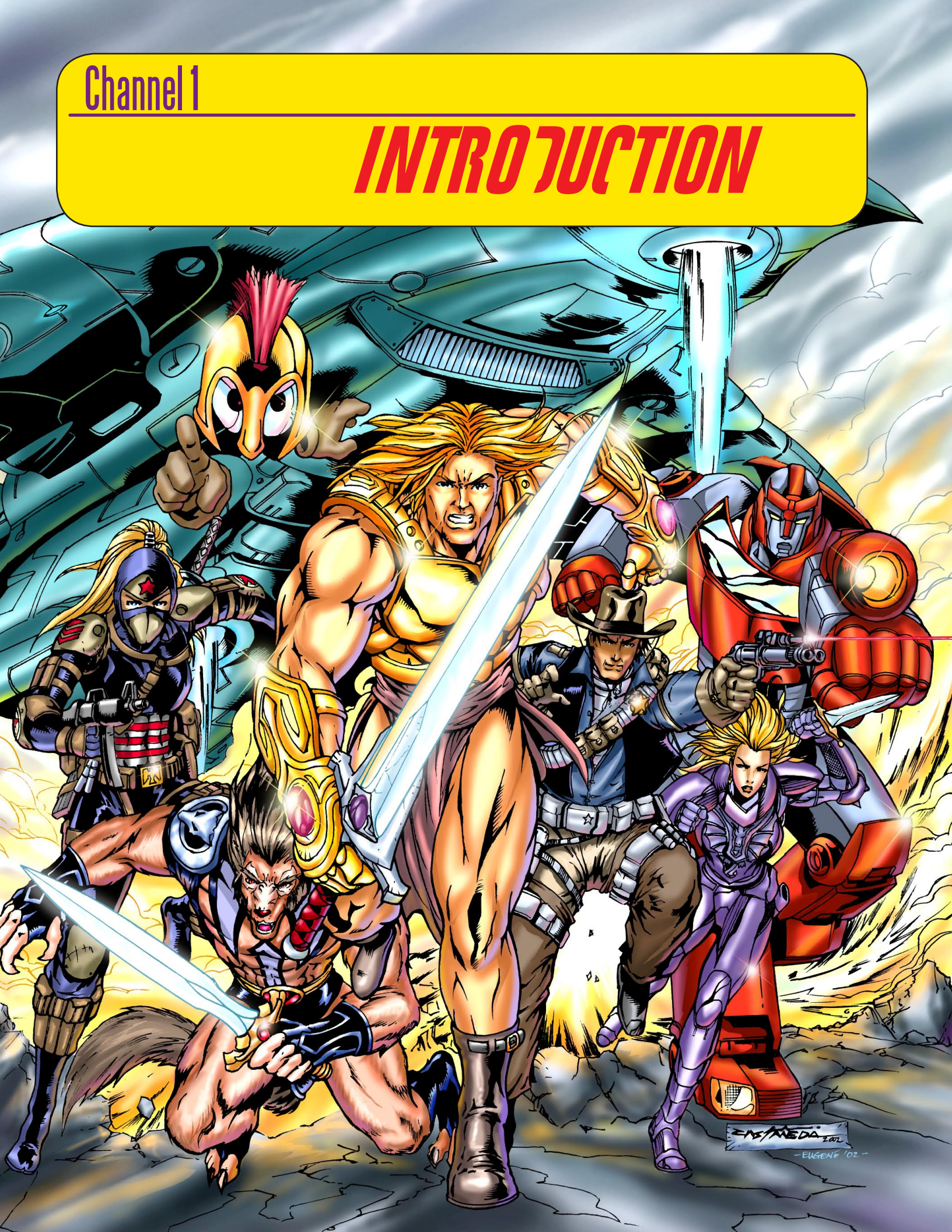
Channel 1

INTRODUCTION



RETRO-TOONS - A DEFINITION

Retro: adj.; Involving, relating to, or reminiscent of things past.

Cartoon: n.; a motion picture or television program consisting of a photographed series of drawings, objects, or computer graphics that simulates motion by recording, very slight, continuous changes in the images, frame by frame.

The above definitions are crucial in understanding what the term "retro-toon" means. However, since we made up the word ourselves, we have narrowed it down a little, thus making it more specific in meaning. So, here is our own definition:

Retro-Toon: n.; the style of action-adventure cartoons produced during the 1980s.

With that definition in mind, let's delve into what makes retro-toons unique, so you have a greater understanding of what they have to offer you, the roleplayer. Even if you are already a fan of the cartoons of yesteryear, this section might help you brush off the cobwebs and analyze things more clearly. After all, as kids during the '80s, we were usually too hopped up on sweetened breakfast cereal to figure out what made the cartoons tick.

Innocent, Gung-Ho Enthusiasm

You'll find no angst, apprehension, or depression in the colorful world of retro-toons. 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.

Toy-Centric Nature

Oh, sure the retro-toons were entertaining, but let's not fool ourselves; most of them were designed primarily 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 strived to make these programs highly entertaining. In most cases, they succeeded.

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 alarmingly 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 nobody died. Robots were popular adversaries, as the censors and parent groups didn't gripe much when they were blown to smithereens.

Combat sequences were also usually kept pretty short, due as much to the time constraints as anything else. It

RETRO-TOON HEROES!

A retro-toon hero is a *hero*, pure and simple! Not an angsty, brooding loner who kills villains without so much as a second thought, but an honest-to-gosh *hero*. That much should be clear from the beginning.

Before you start to think that all retro-toon heroes were more or less the same, let me set the record straight: This is not the case. Each hero had his or her own distinct qualities, personality quirks, behavioral patterns, and flaws. It's just that all of them were unquestionably the "good guys".

What follows is a list of guidelines that applied to nearly every retro-toon hero:

• The hero always helped the helpless or those in need.
• The hero never set out to kill his or her enemies. Defeat them, yes; kill them, no.
• The hero believed that good always conquered evil.
• The hero never failed to help his or her friends.

wasn't uncommon for one-on-one fights to be resolved in the span of 30 seconds or a minute. They were hardly the drawn-out affairs found in most RPG combat scenes.

Black and White Morality

The heroes were good, the villains were bad, and that was that! There was very little (if any) crossover between good and evil in the retro-toons. If there were shades of gray being shown by one of the characters, it was resolved by the end of the episode. When it all boiled down, every character was either a good guy or a bad guy.

The Good Guys Always Finished First

There was never any doubt that the heroes would come out on top. They 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.

The Moral of the Story

One of the ways in which the cartoon producers appeased the always-complaining parent groups is 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.

Some cartoons avoided basing their stories around what they felt were contrived themes, opting instead to attach a 30-second "public service announcement" skit to the end of each episode.

ABOUT CARTOON ACTION HOUR

Cartoon Action Hour is a roleplaying game that seeks to emulate the wham-bang exuberance of the half-hour action-adventure cartoons of the 1980s… or as we liketo call them, "retro-toons". If you aren't familiar with these programs, go back and read *Retro-Toons: a Definition* (and shame on you if you skipped right over it!).

Unlike many RPGs, *Cartoon Action Hour* isn't tied to one specific setting. It's quite the opposite, actually. This game is intended for use with virtually any cartoon-like setting imaginable. Later in the book, you'll find a selection of pre-made series ideas that you can use whole cloth or as inspiration for your own creations.

This may lead you to wonder if *Cartoon Action Hour* is a "universal" or "generic" game. The answer to this is a resounding "no". While the game is adaptable to numerous different styles of series, the rules were designed specifically to accommodate the style of action found in the retro-toons. If you try to use the rules for anything else, you're going to have your work cut out for you. *Cartoon Action Hour* was built from the ground up using "cartoon logic" and every aspect of gameplay supports that. In other words, it's not just a universal RPG gussied up with retro-toon art; every rule was created with retro-toons in mind.

OTHER ERAS

Since Cartoon Action Hour debuted in 2002, fans of the game have asked if the game can be used to represent other eras. After all, the '60s, '70s, and '90s are "retro" too, right?

Well, yes, but each of these decades produced action-adventure cartoons that were drastically different in style than those from the '80s… and CAH was designed with that decade firmly in mind. With a little work, however, you should be able to play out the cartoons from virtually any other time period.

ABOUT SEASON TWO

This is the second edition of the *Cartoon Action Hour* game and a lot of things have changed since the first edition. Most of these changes were made for one of two reasons:

- To more accurately capture the flavor of the retro-toons upon which the game is based.
- To balance the game system.

While we feel that the first edition of the game did a good enough job of emulating the source material, we began to see things that could've been handled differently. There were still elements that didn't feel as appropriate to the genre as we felt they could be. In short, "good" wasn't good enough. We wanted total emulation and that goal played a big part in the shaping of *Cartoon Action Hour: Season 2*.

So, who's this Kargorr guy, anyway?

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to Cartoon Land, Kargorr returns! That's right, folks, he's back and better than ever, using the term "better" very loosely.

For those of you who are new to *Cartoon Action Hour*, let me explain. Kargorr was the main villain in a terrible (and thankfully short-lived) cartoon series called "Galactic Heroes" in 1985. After the show got the proverbial axe, Kargorr just kind of wandered aimlessly around Cartoon Land, looking for paying gigs to make ends meet.

Fortunately for him (but not so fortunately for us), we met up with him during one of our research expeditions into Cartoon Land back in 2001. He begged us for a job and, feeling sorry for him, we caved in. So, he came back with us to the real world and has been mooching off us ever since.

So, we must warn you now – he'll most assuredly be popping up throughout the pages of this rulebook, bragging, boasting, or otherwise being idiotic. He thinks he's a feared world conqueror, but in truth, he's nothing but a failed villain with delusions of grandeur. Just humor him, okay? It makes things so much easier.

ROLEPLAYING BASICS

Roleplaying games (also called RPGs) are similar to a number of things on the surface. Movies, plays, novels, and childhood games of make-believe are among the many things associated with them. Indeed, RPGs share common elements with such diverse things as wargames and old radio serials, but a roleplaying game isn't really like any of these things – it's a unique blend of dice game, entertainment, and a social night with friends that defies easy explanation. The best way to learn more about roleplaying games is to find others who already play them and learn from them, but we'll cover the basics here.

Roleplaying games revolve around the concept of an interactive story. A group of friends (at least two, but usually around three to seven) all decide to get together for a few hours of fun. However, unlike most other games where the object is to beat each other to the finish line or collect the most play money, there are no winners or losers in a roleplaying game. People playing an RPG are working cooperatively to entertain themselves and each other in an improvised story told through imagination, description, acting, strategy, and a little luck.

One of these 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 *non-player characters* or *NPCs*). 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 characters 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*. 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 ten 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.

Lindsey is running the series known as *Warriors of the Cosmos* (see page 92 for more details). 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.

Troy is playing the role of Herk, a massive but jovial warrior. Jon is playing the role of Sogonn, a cunning and brave Samurai.

In this session, Nekrottus's newest minion, Destruktron, has stolen the powerful Amulet of Xaydon from King Rastor's palace. The PCs are on their way to Mount Vogarr to confront him.

Lindsey: Okay, so you've both decided to go through the Serpent Jungle on your way to Mount Vogarr, correct?

Jon: Yep. It may be the long way around, but something tells me that Destruktron has laid traps for us all along the most direct route.

Troy: But we're going to keep on our toes nonetheless. You never know what dangers we're going to come up against in the jungle.

Lindsey: Okay, you trek through the twisted trees and dense underbrush for quite some time before coming to a clearing. In the center of this clearing is what appears to be a mound of some kind.

Jon: What's it made of?

Lindsey: It's just a mound of ground. Kind of like a small hill.

Troy: Herk walks over to inspect it more closely.

Jon: Sogonn says, "Tread lightly, my oversized friend, for this could be a trap or worse."

Troy: Herk looks back and waves him off. "Aww heck, Sogonn, you worry too much".

Lindsey: As you approach the other side of the mound, you see that it seems to be a cave. There's a good-sized opening, but it's dark inside. Troy, make a Perception roll.

Troy: Uh oh. [Troy rolls a die, showing Lindsey the result]

Lindsey: As you inspect the mound, a monkey-like humanoid springs from the mouth of the cave and lands right in front of you with a laser pistol aimed at you. He's about five feet tall and looks rather thin. He wears red trousers, a black vest, and a pair of peculiar goggles. In a squeaky voice, he demands, "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

Jon: Hearing the commotion, Sogonn comes around the mound.

Lindsey: [Lindsey rolls a die] The humanoid is startled by your sudden appearance and fires off a shot. Luckily, it misses you.

Jon: "Halt your firing, monkey man. We are not here to harm you. We are on our way to Mount Vogarr to stop a vile cretin from utilizing a powerful relic for evil purposes."

Troy: "What *he* said."

Lindsey: The humanoid relaxes his trigger finger and lowers his weapon. "Do you mean the half man, half robot that came through here yesterday?"

Jon: "Yes, that would be him."

Lindsey: His eyes narrow slightly. "I spotted him while I was picking Garfberries. He almost saw me, but I leapt into the trees to avoid detection. He had a group of Turgs with him as well."

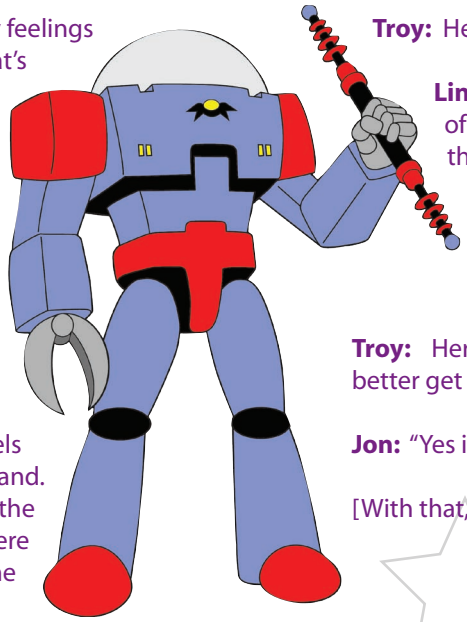
Well then, what about Bravesteel?

Dealing with Kargorr for the last 6+ years has been… challenging. He's loud, obnoxious, and hard to deal with. That being the case, we recently made a trip back to Cartoon Land to find someone who could keep an eye on Kargorr and give us a break from him. That's right; we wanted to hire a babysitter. We had the good fortune of tracking down Kargorr's old arch nemesis from *Galactic Heroes*, the valiant Jason Bravesteel. He agreed to return with us and even lend a hand with this book. At long last, we can ditch Kargorr off on someone else!

As much as we at Spectrum Games like Mr. Bravesteel, we must warn you that he tends to take himself too seriously sometimes. For example, at the end of each *Galactic Heroes episode*, he used to end the obligatory public service announcement with the phrase, "… and that, my friends, is a fact." Okay, let me correct that statement. He *still* says it. More often than he should, in fact.

Troy: "Turgs, eh? It won't hurt my feelings to thump those bums around, that's for sure."

Jon: Sogonn looks to the monkey man and asks, "Do you know the quickest path to Mount Vogarr? I fear we have no time to lose."



Lindsey: "Of course, I do. My people have spent thousands of years constructing and maintaining underground tunnels that spread all throughout the land. The tunnels even snake through the mountain itself. I could get you there in no time flat. Come." With that, he bounds into the cave.

Troy: Herk follows.

Jon: So does Sogonn.

Lindsey: Led by the monkey man, you rapidly make your way to the base of Mount Vogarr. Crude steps and ladders enable you to move up through the mountain with relative ease. You emerge from a cave mouth, not far from the peak. A mechanized voice can be heard. "I recognize that voice," says the monkey man with more than a hint of fear. "That's him!"

Troy: Can we tell where it's coming from?

Lindsey: Yes, just over the nearby ridge.

Jon: Sogonn draws his energy blade and dramatically rushes over the ridge.

Troy: Herk lumbers after him, his fists clenched and ready for battle.

Lindsey: The monkey man hides amongst the boulders, peeking around to see what happens. Meanwhile, as you both clear the ridge, you see the Amulet of Xaydon sitting atop some kind of platform that is covered in mystic runes. About a dozen Turgs are hooking the relic up to a large machine by means of a long cord. Standing between you and the relic is none other than Destruktron. [Lindsey rolls a die and consults the result] Your arrival takes him completely off guard. He spins around to face you.

Jon: Being the overly heroic type that he is, Sogonn declares, "You shall not complete your evil scheme, Destruktron!"

Troy: Herk pipes up. "We're gonna stomp ya, Tin Can!"

Lindsey: A smile forms across the human side of his face. "Oh really?! Well, it just so happens that you're too late! Even as we speak, the Amulet of Xaydon's power is being transferred to my Trans-Vector Battery… and once that happens, your king and his pitiful kingdom will pay for opposing Nekrottus! Muhahaha!"

Troy: Herk looks at Sogonn and says, "Looks like we'd better get a move on."

Jon: "Yes indeed, old friend."

[With that, the battle commences!]

TIME TO GEAR UP

What You Need

Playing *Cartoon Action Hour* requires very little in the way of materials. Each participant will need a pencil, some scratch paper, and a character sheet (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.

Dice Terminology

The *Cartoon Action Hour* system utilizes 12-sided dice (usually referred to as d12s or even simply "dice"). In most cases, you will be directed to roll one of these dice and either add or subtract a certain number from the result. This is expressed by adding a + or -, followed by the exact number. For example, if we want you to roll one die and add 3 to the result, the text will say *d12+3*. Similarly, *d12-2* indicates that you should roll a die and subtract 2 from the result.

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

In the coming channels, you're going to be learning all the nifty details of how to play *Cartoon Action Hour*. The text in this section is intended to give you a quick summation of the concepts behind the rules. You should read this before venturing forth into the rest of the book.

Traits

All characters in the game have Traits. Traits represent a combination of several things, such as skills, knowledge, raw abilities, and talents. They can also represent less mundane aspects of a character, such as powers, weapons, spells, armor, gadgets, alien abilities, vehicles, and companions.

There is no list of set-in-stone Traits. Rather, you get to create them yourself.

Of course, having the Traits and knowing how good the character is at them are two different things altogether. A Trait is measured by something called a rating. Most Traits have ratings between 0 (average) and 8 (high-leveled superhuman), but higher ratings are certainly possible. The lower end of the spectrum (i.e., Traits that the character isn't very good at are reflected by Detrimental Trait ratings, of which there are two: 1X (mediocre) and 2X (poor).

If a character doesn't have a Trait that covers a particular area, the rating defaults to 0.

Checks

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. In most cases, a check tests one of the character's Traits.

Making a check is about as simple as could be. Roll a die and add an appropriate Trait rating to the result. If the Trait has a Detrimental rating or the character doesn't have an appropriate Trait, don't add anything to the roll. The GM compares the result to a Difficulty Number (plus the roll of a die) that he selected to reflect the trickiness of the task. If the total equals or exceeds the DN result, the character is successful.

Opposed Checks

Sometimes, a character's actions are directly contested by another character. In such cases, both participants in the struggle make a check. Whoever gets the highest result wins.

Opposed checks are used quite often in the game. In fact, the combat system revolves around them.

Benefit Dice

Characters are sometimes allowed to roll one or more Benefit Dice in addition to the initial die normally rolled for a check. In such cases, you get to use the highest-rolling die.

Detriment Dice

Detriment Dice are the flipside of Benefit Dice. Sometimes characters are forced to roll one or more Detriment Dice in addition to the initial die normally rolled for a check. In such cases, you must use the lowest-rolling die.

Combat

As alluded to previously, combat checks are simply opposed checks using Traits that are appropriate to combat situations. If the attacker wins the check by as much as the defender's Threshold score (a stat listed on every character sheet), the defender is given a Setback Token. The accumulation of a fourth Setback Token signals that the character suffers Defeat. If the attacker wins the check by more than the defender's Threshold score, the defender is abruptly Defeated (called Insta-Defeat). A Defeated character is no longer involved in the scene; he is trapped under rubble, knocked unconscious, captured by the villains, etc.

Oomph

Player Characters all have Oomph. Oomph represents that certain edge that heroes have over villains in the retro-toons. Players can spend Oomph to do some pretty cool stuff, such as re-rolling failed checks, adding additional dice to a check, removing Setback Tokens, avoiding Insta-Defeat, and using "creative control" to alter a scene or do things normally impossible for your character to do.

THE SIDEBARS

In addition to the normal variety, there are two types of special sidebars that appear throughout this book. Each type has its own distinct visual style so that you'll be able to quickly tell them apart.

Kargorr and Bravesteel: In these sidebars, Kargorr and (or) Bravesteel gab about various aspects of the game. Sometimes, these are designed for the sake of amusement, but most of the time, there are nuggets of wisdom to be found. Very few of these nuggets come directly from Kargorr, mind you. He's a twit.

Now You Know: Here is where you'll find insight into the game, directly from the designer herself. These sidebars tend to be less formal than the text found elsewhere. The intent is for them to be like a one-on-one discussion about the game rules.

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!

Cynthia Sez: Originally, John Blackstar was 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.

Cynthia Sez: 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. (aka Cyber 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.

Cynthia Sez: 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 pulp, superheroes, and sci-fi.

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."

Cynthia Sez: 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!

Cynthia Sez: 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!

Cynthia Sez: 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, Reptillion 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."

Cynthia Sez: Pretty standard fare here, with very little to offer. The writers did go for more character interaction though, so I'll give credit where credit is due.

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.

Cynthia Sez: While I've always preferred its comic book counterpart, I feel that this cartoon has a lot to offer. The animation was excellent and it maintained a team-based approach at all times. No character really hogged the spotlight.

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 Greyskull from the vilest of cretins... Skeletor, who was aided by his own minions such as Beast Man, Mer-Man and Evil-Lyn!

Cynthia Sez: 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 villains in my mind.

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!

Cynthia Sez: 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 1980's.

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!

Cynthia Sez: 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.

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.

Cynthia Sez: Jem was always entertaining, despite some outwardly silly music videos that appeared. It was the perfect hybrid of Madonna, Barbie, and more traditional action cartoons.

MASK

DIC, 1985-86

Cashing in on the transformable vehicle craze of the mid-1980's, 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.

Cynthia Sez: MA-MA-MA-MASK! The earlier episodes were remarkable, for the most part. In 1986, 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.

Cynthia Sez: 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.

She-Ra: Princess of Power

Filmation, 1985-86

Adora (aka 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.

Cynthia Sez: Probably the best attempt to combine elements that appeal to both genders in a cartoon. Only Jem could even come close.

Silverhawks

Rankin-Bass / 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 Johnathan Quick, now known as Quicksilver, and his metal bird TallyHawk.

Cynthia Sez: 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 absolutely drove me nuts. Cowboy hats and metal bodies don't mix so well. As a side note, Spectrum Games' former vice-president, Eddy Webb (being the wise guy that he is) once bought me the Bluegrass action figure as a gag gift.

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.

Cynthia Sez: Thundarr is my absolute favorite cartoon! The writing was great, the characters (designed by two legends, Alex Toth and Jack "King" Kirby) were interesting, and it had atmosphere! The setting itself was unbelievable, as we were treated to seeing various remains of landmarks and locales. I can't recommend this cartoon enough.

Thundercats

Rankin-Bass, 1985-87

After their planet's destruction, a group of felinoid 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.

Cynthia Sez: 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.

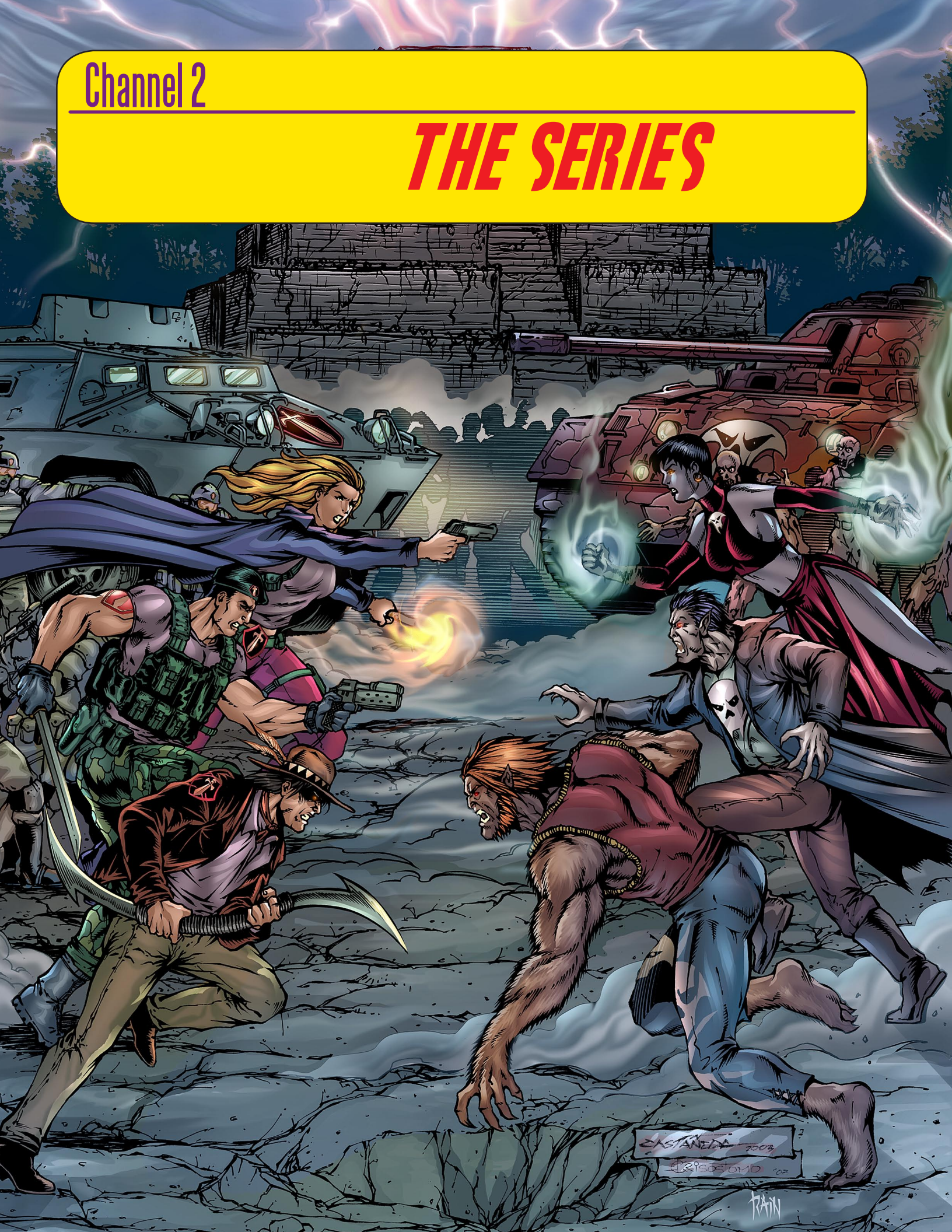
Cynthia Sez: This was a truly pivotal series for cartoon fans! In my mind, robots were never this believable, especially in terms of personality. A must see.

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. Merklynn 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.

Cynthia Sez: Definitely not typical kiddie fare. The animation was jaw dropping and the stories were top-notch, often mixing involved action with a bit of wry humor. I've never understood why this series didn't last longer than it did. Perhaps it was simply ahead of its time.


Channel 2
THE SERIES

WHAT IS A SERIES?

This channel is directed primarily at the Game Master. As such, when we say "you", that's whom we are referring to.

Now on to the question poses by the header: what is a series? On the surface, this may sound like an easy question to answer – a series is the setting that the games will take place in. That wouldn't be a totally inaccurate answer, but a series is actually much more than that. The series is comprised of numerous elements, from the obvious (sub-genre, setting, situation, rogues gallery, etc.) to the not-so-obvious (game stat requirements/limitations, themes, etc.).

In short, the series is the foundation upon which your game will rest. It defines everything you need to know about the "cartoon series" that you and your friends will be playing in.

Before you can set up and run a game, you'll need to create the series, just as players must first create characters. The other option is for you to select one of the featured series found in Appendix One (pages XX – XX) and run it. The latter option is recommended for your first game.

With this channel, we will discuss constructing a series from the ground up, all the while offering you advice for doing so more effectively. Let's get the ball rolling.

There are No Limits

Before we dive right into the thick of things, let's clear the air a bit by saying there are absolutely no limits to how you can build your series. Feel free to break, bend, or otherwise mangle the rules presented in this book. If you want to have more Oomph to spend for the NPCs, bump the total up a few notches. Or if you'd like to disallow Traits that are of a technological nature, engrave it in stone. The sky is the limit… and even *that's* debatable.

Kargorr Sez:

Bah! I'm supposed to get up here and suggest that you mollycoddle those ungrateful players by trying to involve them in the series creation process. I was instructed to inform you that this will make it a more interactive experience and all that kind of hooey.

But you know what?

I'm not going to do that! Instead, I'm going to order you to do the exact opposite! That's right, don't let those pitiful clods impede on your fun! You're the Game Master! What right do they have to trespass on your territory? Tell them to go away and do "player stuff", like fiddling with the points on their characters or annoying complete strangers by telling them in detail how awesome their characters are! They don't deserve to have input on the series!

THE SERIES GUIDE

The heart and soul of series creation is the Series Guide (see Appendix 2). It provides you with enough space to put all the pieces of your series together in one place. It can then be photocopied and given out to the players for easy reference. We're now going to delve into the various sections of the sheet, describing each one in detail. There are four sections:

- Series Information
- PC Creation Quirks
- Rules Information
- Cast Information

Series Name

It goes without saying that the series is going to need a name. Try and devise a name that both accurately sums up the series and sounds spiffy. Creating a catchy name goes a long way toward making the series stand out in the minds of the players.

If you're stuck for ideas, there's no shame in picking your players' brains. They might have a lot of fantastic suggestions to offer.

EXAMPLE: *Eric plans to create a new series. He's had some ideas floating around lately about a series that somehow revolved around an aquatic theme. He wasn't yet sure about the specifics yet, so he decided to play around with some cool sounding names and see what develops from there. After jotting down a bunch of possible names, he settles on "Oasis Warriors".*

Kargorr Sez:

I've seen far too many cartoons named after the goody-goods that plague them. Is *that* fair at all? I think not! In fact, if any of you doltish Game Masters name your series after the so-called hero group, I shall find out about it! And when I do, I shall hunt you down like a Zukk Dog and…

Bravesteel Sez:

Kargorr! You can't go around threatening customers. That's just bad manners.

Kargorr Sez:

Yeah, like I give a zag about manners. Idiot.

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"

EXAMPLE: *Since selecting the name, Eric has started to formulate more details about his series. His rough idea is that the bad guys control the only region of lush, green land (complete with a huge lake) on a dry and uninviting world, while the good guys seek to overthrow them so that all citizens can have access to it. This gave him the inspiration he needed to come up with a tagline – "The battle for Abundia rages on!"*

Premise

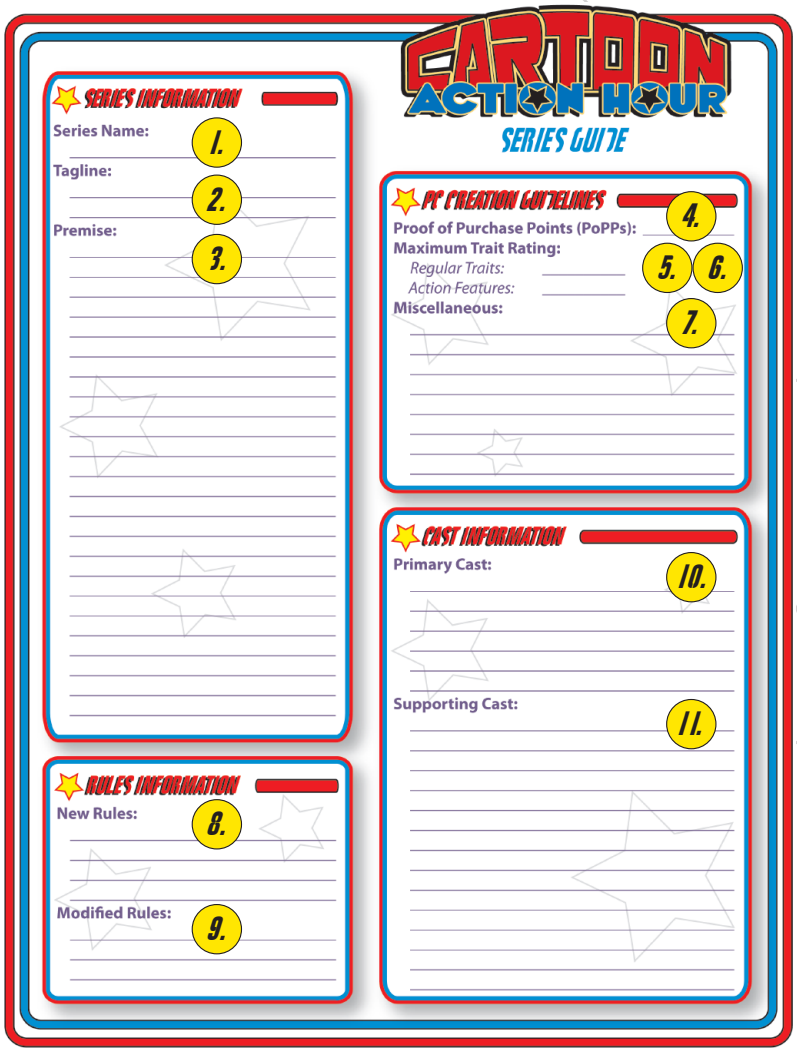
Remember how some of the retro-toons had a voiceover during the opening theme music that summarized the series concept or back-story? Well, that voiceover is what you should think of the premise as. This paragraph should explain what's going on, as well as who the principle protagonists and antagonists are.

A good premise is of utmost importance. Who would want to play in a series that was saddled with an uninteresting or poorly conceived premise behind it? Below, you'll find some advice for developing the premise.

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 site 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.

Not all series need to have a gimmick, but it can spice things up if handled well.

Protagonist Roles

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 get a grip on what the PCs are going to be, the rest of the premise should more or less fall into place.

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 protagonists are sorcerers from a fantasy world. Still, stranger things have happened in the realm of the retro-toons.

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.

You'll find a more in-depth look at developing the premise later on this Channel.

EXAMPLE: *Eric's series concept is really beginning to take form. He figures that it might be fun to incorporate a simple gimmick, so he goes with an idea that's already right in front of him – water. The action figures could all utilize water in some capacity, such as wielding guns that shot water out. His protagonist and antagonist roles have already partly been thought up when he was working up the tagline. Ditto for the primary setting.*

With all that in place, Eric writes the following: "Three hundred years in the future, mankind has spread throughout the stars, colonizing planet after planet. On one such planet -- a dry and barren world known as Crusticus – a sinister being by the name of Malefector rules with an iron fist. He occupies the only lush and inviting region to be found on the planet; a land called Abundia. It has beautiful green forests, plentiful lakes, and food enough for all of Crusticus. Unfortunately, Malefector isn't too keen on sharing and has forbidden all humans from entering Abundia. Despite numerous attempts by the human colonists who crash-landed on the planet to reason with him, the tyrant still refuses. With their people in need of food, water, and shelter, the bravest souls have banded together to overthrow Malefector so that Abundia's resources will be made available to all.

Proof of Purchase Points

This states the amount of Proof of Purchase Points the character receives to create characters with. The standard number is 30, but you can alter it by filling in a different amount. If you want the characters to be closer to ordinary people than most cartoon heroes, you might opt to lower to default to 20 or 25. If you want the characters to possess higher abilities than most cartoon heroes, the default could be raised to 35 or 40. Anything higher than 40 will result in extremely powerful characters.

Maximum Trait Rating (Regular Traits)

This dictates the highest Trait rating allowed for PCs. If you need for all the PCs to be within the normal range of human ability, then you should choose 4. Feel free to set it at what level you want. A maximum of 8 is the standard for most series. Keep in mind that ratings can effectively be pushed beyond the maximum rating, due to Modifiers and situational adjustments.

Maximum Trait Rating (Action Features)

In most cases, theirs will be the same as the amount you selected for regular Trait ratings. In some cases, particularly for settings in which the PCs are normal humans, you might consider increasing the maximum for Traits that are Action Features (see page 31). This will enable you to create weapons, gear, and other such goodies that aren't capped off at 4.

Miscellaneous

In this section, you can write down requirements and disallowances that can't be covered elsewhere on the Series Guide. Some examples include: "All PCs must be robots," "PCs may not possess Traits that represent mental powers," "PCs

must purchase a science-based Trait at rating 2 or higher", "PCs must be teenagers","PCs may not have more than 3 base Oomph","PCs must be members of the Alien Busters team".

EXAMPLE: *Eric starts thinking about the specifics of character design guidelines. He figures that the default amount of 30 PoPPs should suffice, though he momentarily considered dropping it to 25. Since the PCs are going to be humans, he decides to institute a maximum rating of 4 for regular Traits, but a maximum rating of 8 for Action Features. As for the Miscellaneous section, Eric writes down, "PCs must be human settlers".*

New Rules

If you have developed rules that pertain only to your series, you should record them here. You should think such rules through very thoroughly before implementing them into the game, as vague or unbalanced rules can throw a serious monkey wrench into the series.

Modified Rules

If you have tinkered with existing rules to better suit your series or play style, then this is where you should write them down.

EXAMPLE: *After giving it some thought, Eric determines that the standard rules will work fine for Oasis Warriors.*

Primary Cast

This is where you'll need to list all the PCs. There's also an allotted section for you to track how many episodes each character has participated in.

Supporting Cast

All the NPCs are listed here. The section is separated into two categories – Friends (the entire "good guy" NPCs) and Foes (the entire "bad guy" NPCs). There's also an allotted section for you to track how many episodes each character has participated in. The entirety of Channel 6 is devoted to creating NPCs.

NOW YOU KNOW...

Series Ideas

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:

(Continued on the following page...)

Kargorr Sez:
If you really wish to make your series shine, I would suggest that you cast a certain divine conqueror in the role of Master Villain. I shall give you a hint: his name rhymes with Zargorr.

Bravesteel Sez:
Oh, so you'd suggest casting Vargor, the lead villain from the old *Crusaders of Nazagar* series?

Kargorr Sez:
What? No! That's not…

Bravesteel Sez:
You know, now that you mention Vargor, I am inclined to agree. He *would* be a fantastic choice for a lead villain.

Kargorr Sez:
I was talking about ME, you dolt! ME!! *KARGORR*, NOT VARGOR!

***** Kargorr storms off *****

Bravesteel Sez:
He's such an easy target.

- **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 mentioned in the "Gimmicks and Fads" sub-section earlier on 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 are some 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.
- The heroes are members of a pop band.

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-arcing 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.

Channel 3

CHARACTER CREATION

QUICK OVERVIEW

What would a cartoon be like without a cast of characters? Frankly, it would be nothing. Without characters, there can be no cartoon. This is why the channel that follows is so important. By reading it, you will gain all the insight you need in order to construct your own character.

The process is actually quite simple and fun. There are four steps that must be followed, preferably in the order provided below.

Step One: General Information
Step Two: Subplots
Step Three: Traits
Step Four: Stats

Consulting the Series Guide

By its very nature, *Cartoon Action Hour* is extremely series-driven. That is, the series that the GM plans to run will determine a lot about the type of characters the players can create. There's no point in creating a barbarian if the GM has prepared a futuristic series that revolves around giant transforming robots.

Before the GM allows the players to start designing their characters, he should read Channel 2 that deals with creating a series. Using the information there, he'll need to fill out a *series guide* (found in the Appendix) that lays down the series' premise and dictates any requirements for character creation.

STEP ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

This step involves laying the character's foundation by listing several crucial bits of information.

Character Name

1.

Although the types of names varied from series to series, you'd be hard pressed to find a retro-toon hero with a bland one. Even "normal" names were almost invariably laced with implications: Jason Steel, Jazz Malone, Kyle Starr, Bart Brimstone, and so on.

Some retro-toons skipped real names altogether, opting to utilize code names such as Steel Jaw, Tuff Stuff, Lazer Burn, Stonewall, and the like.

Whatever naming convention is appropriate to the series, you should strive to pick a name that "says" something about the character. If the character is quiet and shy, don't name him Loud Mouth or Jimmy Silvertongue. While such misnomers may be ironic and humorous, they aren't terribly cartoon-like and should therefore be avoided.

Kargorr Sez:

Pay attention, imbecilic reader! This is where the book starts to get really good. In this channel, you will be taught about creating villains of a magnitude almost as grand as my magnitude… but still distinctly less grand!

Bravesteel Sez:

Kargorr, that last sentence barely made any sense. Regardless, Kargorr is partially correct. The rules below can be used for creating villains, but they can also be used for creating heroes and even neutral characters. For more information on creating NPCs, flip over to page 70.

Kargorr Sez:

Who cares about making heroes and neutral characters? The villains are all that matter!

Player Name

2.

This is about as self explanatory as it gets. Write down your name or simply "NPC" if applicable.

Series

3.

This is an easy one. Simply write down the name of the series you'll be playing in.

Group Affiliation

4.

Most characters in the retro-toons belonged to a team, group, or organization. This information will be listed on the series guide and is relatively cut and dried.

5 Appearance

Given the toy-centric nature of the retro-toons, it helps to think of your character as an action figure. What features would make it an action figure that would appeal to the show's target audience? Kids aren't going to beg their parents to buy them the toy of a nondescript guy in a business suit. No, siree! But kids *would* beg them for the toy of a cyborg with metallic armor and four arms! Why? Because it looks cool, that's why!

Describe the character while keeping all that in mind. By designing a rad looking character, you'll firmly entrench it in the retro-toon genre.

6 Factoids

Now that you understand the qualities that all *Cartoon Action Hour* heroes have in common, you need to consider a handful of tidbits about the character's personality or background that make your hero unique. Write down several of them on your character sheet. These are called *Factoids* and they help you define your character's personality without you having to scribe an entire bio. Plus, Factoids give you a bit more breathing room than a full bio, allowing you to develop him or her more thoroughly as the series progresses. If something interesting about your character comes up during play, simply add a new Factoid to your sheet. It's that simple.

Here are some examples:

- "Can be very foolhardy"
- "Writes novels"
- "Independently wealthy"
- "Plays guitar"
- "Enjoys reading literature"
- "Extraordinarily good-looking"
- "Parents mysteriously disappeared when he was ten years old"
- "Has a crush on *[insert character name]*"
- "Talks with a thick southern drawl"
- "Paints in the abstract art style"
- "Has a quick temper"
- "Always speaks in rhyme"
- "Calls people 'man' a lot"
- "Has a sister named Veronica, who is a television reporter"
- "Cannot speak"
- "Likes to quote movie lines"
- "Is the only person in her family who isn't a sorcerer"

Another cool thing about Factoids is that you can use them as inspiration for later steps in the character creation process. They can help you determine Traits and Subplots.

Furthermore, they can give the GM intriguing ideas for episodes during the series. For example, if your character has "Doesn't know who his father is", the GM might base an episode around the character trying to learn the truth… even if the truth isn't pleasant.

Lastly, the GM may grant you a +1 to a check if he feels a Factoid may actually be of assistance. A character may not be given this bonus more than once per episode.

Bravesteel Sez:

As great as they were, the retro-toons were often, as they say, a "boys' club". By that, I mean that women were seemingly in short supply. The reason is a simple one. You see, folks, most retro-toons were designed to sell the associated line of action figures. At that time, female action figures were "peg-warmers". That is, they did not sell well in stores. This resulted in the toy companies producing less of them, which spilled over into the cartoons as well. And that's a fact.

Kargorr Sez:

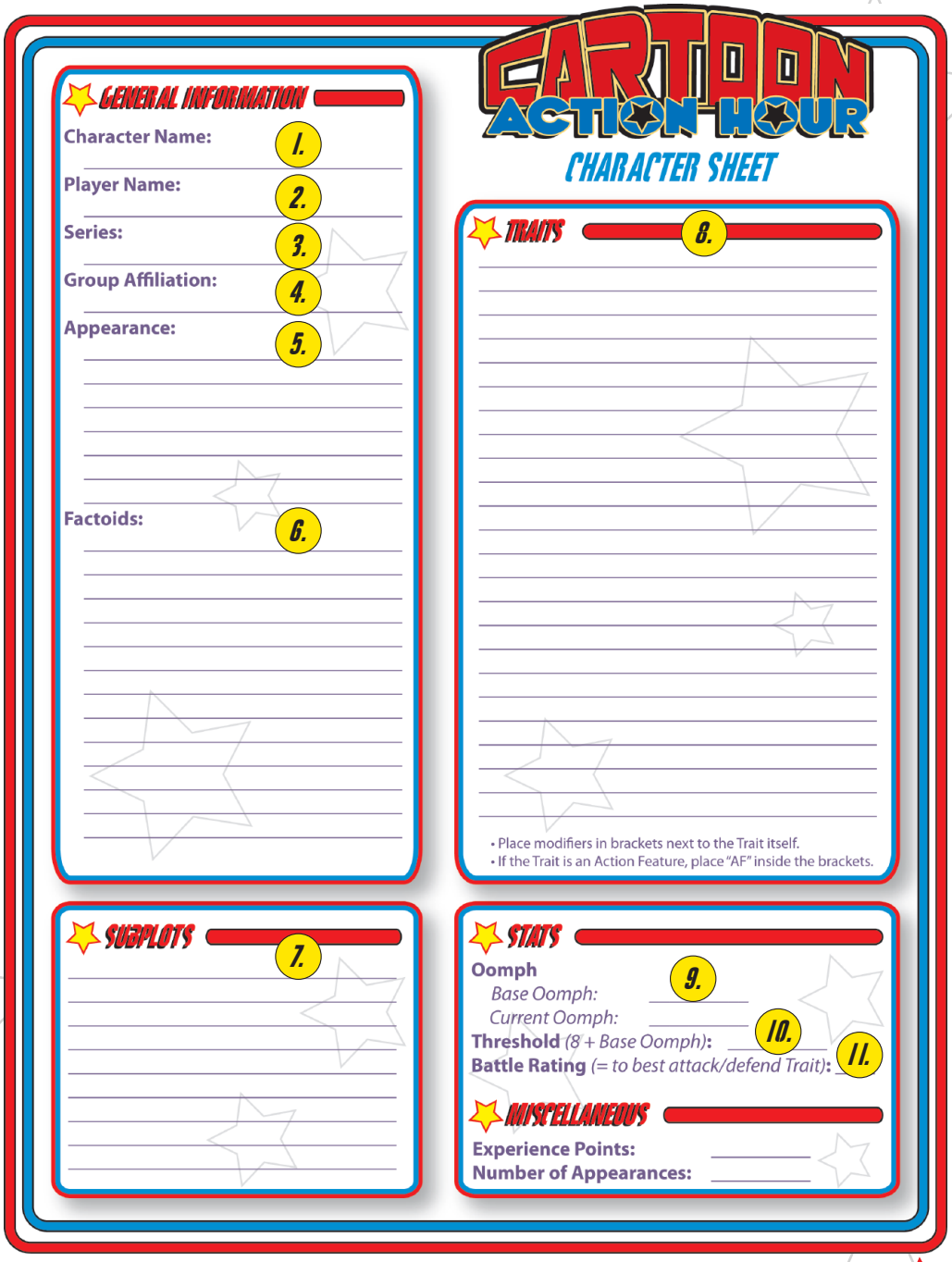
"And that's a fact." Trust me, loathsome reader; by the end of this book, you shall be sick and tired of hearing him say that dreadfully chipper catch phrase. I had to put up with it for the entire run of the *Galactic Heroes* series.

EXAMPLE: *Shelly is preparing to create a character for the Warriors of the Cosmos series. Her goal is to create a super-strong heroine who is part human and part machine. Knowing that the cartoons of the '80s were seldom subtle about such matters, the name "Bionikka" enters into her mind. The unusual spelling of the name also seemed suitably toy-friendly, thus cementing it as her choice.*

As for the character's appearance, Shelly is still a bit unsure. She wants Bionikka's cybernetic nature to be readily apparent (again, going back to the lack of subtlety). She figures that it might be cool to have a perfectly human head and left arm, with everything else being mechanical in nature. Still, she wants the cybernetics to look somewhat sleek, at least by 1980s standards. The idea is for her body to be obviously female, even though it's metal.

Shelly plans to have some fun with Bionikka's Factoids. She figures that it might be fun if Bionikka's inept when it comes to repairing herself, so she writes down, "Terrible with mechanical things". She also wants to move away from the fact that women in the retro-toons tended to be level-headed caretaker types and thusly gives her, "Hot-tempered personality" and "Not very personable". Shelly finishes off Bionikka's Factoids by presenting what could become an interesting plot point later on by giving her, "Has no memory of her life prior to becoming cybernetic".

Finishing things up, she writes down "Warriors of the Cosmos" for the Series entry and "Guardians of Iconia" for the Faction entry.



CLASSIC RETRO-TOON CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

The retro-toons were chock full of what we like to call "character archetypes." Many characters fit these molds while still maintaining their own individuality and uniqueness. Here's a selection of these archetypes for you to use as inspiration for your own concept!

The Leader: This character was traditionally the most levelheaded of all the heroes. He knew how to accomplish whatever the group needed. He was often portrayed as the straight man.

The Brute: This guy provided the muscle. While there were an endless variety of brutes in the cartoons, many of them were either daft or big teddy bears.

The Renegade: This character was a maverick that always did things his own way, often disregarding the concerns of others. More often than not, the renegade was the youngest of the heroes and dressed or wore his hair a bit... differently.

(Continued on the following page...)

CLASSIC RETRO-TOON CHARACTER ARCHETYPES (CONTINUED)

The Martial Artist: This is the character who, in most situations, could take out the bad guys with his bare hands. They were often ninjas, and were nearly always introspective and spiritual.
The Veteran: This character was the grizzled old guy with lots of experience. Quick to grumble about the brash actions of the younger heroes, he always tried to give others advice based on his experience.
The Charmer: Smooth-talking and handsome, this character could charm the heck out of anyone. He was typically easy-going and had a half-smile when using his wiles.
The Brainiac: While he didn't possess any substantial physical abilities, this character used his intelligence to make himself a worthwhile addition to the team. He was often the wizard, the computer expert, or the strategist.
The Cowboy: Complete with a thick southern drawl and maybe a Stetson hat, the cowboy was usually portrayed as the classic "good ol' boy." His specialties varied wildly, from piloting ships to fist fighting, but he usually spouted off country-fried nuggets of wisdom such as, "This is gonna get hotter than a pig tap-dancin' on a barbeque grill!"
The Grease Monkey: Gearheads, Mechanics, or Fixers. Whatever you want to call them, nearly every series had one. These folks would rather be under a hover-car or a planetary starship than duke it out on the field of battle.
The Rookie: This archetype was new to the team – or his powers. Just learning the ropes was hard enough, but often he had a teenaged alter ego's social life to contend with as well.
The Smart Alec: The character that took everything lightly and only lost his glib replies and witty banter in the most dire of circumstances. Villains often lost their temper when confronted with his jokes, puns, and running commentary on their wacky uniforms or code names.

STEP TWO: SUBPLOTS

7

Subplots are complications that collectively act as a pain in the neck for the character that possesses them. You get to select up to three Subplots you want for the character.

Whenever a Subplot significantly impedes the character during the course of an episode, the GM will award the player a point of Oomph, which you can use to nudge Lady Luck in the character's favor (see pages 56-68 for more information about spending Oomph). Similarly, the player can "activate" one of his character's Subplots, given the right situation. Whether it's triggered by the GM or by the player, a Subplot cannot earn the character Oomph more than one time per episode.

You can choose Subplots from the ones provided below, or you can make up totally new ones (with the GM's approval). Again, a character can have up to three Subplots. This doesn't mean that he can't have more problems than that, but you won't be getting Oomph for dealing with them. You may swap existing Subplots for new ones as the series progresses, but only if the GM approves.

Archenemy

Someone hates your character… a lot. They hate him so much, in fact, that they go out of their way to make his life difficult. Upon taking this Subplot, you must decide who your character's archenemy is. *You gain Oomph whenever the archenemy makes a significant impact on your character's life.*

Emotional Ties

Having loved ones is a beautiful thing. That is, until it becomes a major headache! Upon taking this Subplot, you must decide whom your character has emotional ties to. It could be another PC or an NPC. Your character feels compelled to help or save this character, which can complicate his life considerably. Examples include: a pesky kid brother, a devoted girlfriend, an elderly aunt, or an accident-prone best friend. *Whatever the case may be, you gain Oomph whenever the character's devotion gets him in hot water (such as having to rescue his loved one from the clutches of the antagonists).*

Mental Hang-Up

The character has some kind of mental or emotional problem. There's no end to the possible variations – phobias, disorders, compulsions, hatreds, obsessions, and so on. Upon taking this Subplot, you must choose what type of hang-up the character is saddled with. *You gain Oomph whenever the Subplot gets in the character's* way.

Mystery Complication

By taking this Subplot, you're allowing yourself to be completely at the GM's mercy. When you least expect it, something will turn your character's world upside down. *Whenever this surprise is sprung on the character, you gain Oomph.*

Physical Flaw
The character's body doesn't function right, hampering him dramatically. There's no end to the possible variations – blindness, missing limbs, muteness, deafness, no opposable thumb, and so forth. Upon taking this Subplot, you must choose what type of flaw the character is plagued with. *You gain Oomph whenever this Subplot hinders the character.*

Reliant
The character requires something in order to continue living a comfortable life… or perhaps even living at all. This is usually used to represent the qualities of various races (such as Fish People that can't be out of the water beyond a certain amount of time), but it can also reflect other flaws as well (such as a character who is dependent upon the respirator built into his power armor). Upon taking this Subplot, you must designate the nature of the reliance. Furthermore, you must work with the GM to devise a suitable penalty for being without the item/substance in question. *You gain Oomph whenever the character's reliance limits his actions.*

Secret
The character has a past that he keeps secret… and for good reason. If the secret were to get out, his life would be ruined or at the very least, drastically altered for the worse. Alternatively, the character might not have skeletons in his closet, but instead has knowledge that must be kept secret at all costs. Upon taking this Subplot, you must decide what the secret is. *You gain Oomph whenever the existence or potential revelation of the secret adversely affects the character.*

Stigma
The character doesn't really fit into society. He's monstrously ugly, holds highly unpopular opinions, belongs to an ostracized race, or otherwise isn't appreciated by the majority of the people in the series. Upon taking this Subplot, you must decide what the stigma actually is. *When the stigma gets in the way or negatively affects the character, you earn Oomph.*

Susceptible
The character suffers some manner of adverse reaction to an item, material, or substance that is harmless to others. This is often used to represent the qualities of various races (such as Fire People who can be thwarted by water), but can be applied to reflect other situations as well (such as a superhero whose powers are completely negated while in the presence of zinc). Upon taking this Subplot, you must designate the nature of the susceptibility. You must also consult the GM to come up with a suitable penalty for being near the item or substance in question. *You gain Oomph whenever the character suffers damage from this Subplot or if the character's actions are negatively affected by it.*

Vow
The character has made a promise that he means to keep, no matter what! Upon taking this Subplot, you must decide on what this promise is. *Whenever the promise is difficult to keep, you gain Oomph.*

Weakness
The character is affected more intensely by damage of a certain nature or from a particular source. Upon taking this Subplot, you must define what kind of damage the character has a weakness to. Additionally, you should collaborate with the GM in order to figure out how much extra damage the character suffers. *You gain Oomph whenever the character suffers damage from this Subplot or if the character's actions are negatively affected by it.*

EXAMPLE: *Shelly decides that being a cyborg could be a fun source of Subplots for Bionikka, so she mines it accordingly by giving her "Susceptible (to water)". This seems to fit, given that water can screw up mechanical and electrical parts. As per the requirements for Susceptibility, she has to devise a suitable penalty for being exposed to the item/substance. She comes up with the notion that it would decrease all physical Traits by 1. She presents the idea to the Game Master, who says that the penalty is adequate. Her second Subplot is related to one of Bionikka's Factoids. Shelly jots down, "Mental Hang-Up (suffers from amnesia)".*

STEP THREE: TRAITS

8

Each character has its own set of factors that affects what he or she can do in the game. *Cartoon Action Hour* represents these factors with Traits. A Trait is a word or even phrase that can almost always be classified as one of two things:

1) **Something the character can do** (an innate ability, skill, talent, superpower, magic ability, alien characteristic, etc.)
2) **Something the character possesses** (a weapon, piece of equipment, armor, mystic artifact, high-tech gadget, vehicle, companion, shield, etc.)

Proof of Purchase Points
You receive a set amount of Proof of Purchase Points (you can call them POPPs if you'd like) that you can spend on Traits and base Oomph (see page 40). The exact amount depends on the series, so you should consult the Series Guide to find out for sure. Most series grant you 30 Proof of Purchase Points.

Devising Traits
Don't start looking for a definitive list of Traits to choose from, because there isn't one (unless you count the examples given elsewhere in this section). Instead, you get to come up

with the character's Traits yourself. Use your imagination. If you envision your character as a butt-kicking ninja, then write that down. "Butt-Kicking Ninja" is a very appropriate Trait to have. What if you intend for your character to be a spell-slinging wizard? Simply put pen to paper and give him the "Spell-Slinging Wizard" Trait? How about if you want him to be a charming ladies man? Well, I think you know the drill by now. You can't get more descriptive than "Charming Ladies Man".

Consider the "narrowness" of the Traits you create. The rules are set up so that an edge is given to Traits that are more specific. And be careful choosing something as encompassing as the aforementioned "Spell-Slinging Wizard" for reasons that will become clear later on.

Overall, it's best to create more specific Traits. For one thing, doing so will give you the aforementioned edge. For another thing, specific Traits will be more likely to get the approval of the Game Master. A wide-open Trait like "Butt-Kicking Ninja" is certainly possible, but you might consider breaking it up into several different Traits, such as "Martial Arts", "Stealth", and "Extremely Agile".

Remember that you can also come up with things that your character is deficient at. These should actually be things that hinder your character in some way, so if you try to give the character something like "Knitting" or "Tying Shoestrings", the GM will probably instruct you to think of something else. Some of the most interesting characters have downsides that keep him from being perfect. It may sound odd to voluntarily give your character detrimental Traits, but have faith. It will all pay off for you, as you'll see shortly. Unlike positive Traits, these Traits generally shouldn't represent unnatural aspects of the character (gear, powers, etc.). Should your concept require it, you will need to ask the GM for permission.

Check out the huge text box crammed full of sample Traits if you need inspiration. Heck, you can even swipe them outright if you're feeling less than creative or just want to get your character ready in a hurry.

Determining Trait Ratings

Once you decide on your Trait names, it might be helpful to know how potent they are. That's why we have ratings. Every Trait is given a rating, generally ranging from 0 to 8. In fact, if a character doesn't have an appropriate Trait that is helpful to the situation at hand, he defaults to 0. It must be noted that ratings can go higher than 8, but you must obtain permission from the GM in order to have a rating that high.

The rating itself has a separate meaning depending on what the Trait is supposed to represent.

- If the Trait is an innate ability, a skill, or something else that reflects the character's own talents, the rating represents the character's level of competency with it.
- If the Trait is a weapon, equipment, vehicle, or armor, the rating reflects its quality.
- If the Trait is a power, alien ability, spell, or other superhuman ability, the rating represents a combination of its raw efficiency and the character's ability to put it to use.

VARIANT RULE: ADDED STRUCTURE

Players may feel somewhat intimidated by the unstructured means of making a wish list of Traits. They may not know how many Traits they should aim for or be clueless as to whether or not they should take Traits with negative connotations. Yet other players may be exactly the opposite, hoping to gain an advantage by taking one or two Traits and dumping all his Proof of Purchase Points into them, thus creating a cosmically proficient character.

If the GM wishes to alleviate the problems discussed above, this variant can be employed. The players are instructed to write down the following:

- *8 things the character can do well.*
- *3 things that the character possesses.*
- *2 things the character does poorly.*

This will eliminate some of the guesswork for new players and prevent experienced players from concentrating too heavily on several Traits.

Kargorr Sez:

Bah! What manner of foolishness is this? I demand to know why those lousy players are allowed to make up practically any Trait they want! This could be abused with ease, giving the Game Master a huge headache later in the game!

Bravesteel Sez:

You're actually right, Kargorr. Unscrupulous players could abuse the system in this regard. However, the Game Master has the power to veto any Trait that seems too far out of whack.

Detrimental Trait Ratings

Start off by looking at the Traits that are detrimental to your character – things like "Clumsy," "Dumb as a Stump," "Arrogant", "Easily Persuaded", or "Weakling". Unlike Upon identifying such Traits, assign them a Detrimental Trait rating between 1 and 2, with 1 representing a Trait that is a relatively minor limitation and 2 representing a Trait that is a fairly major limitation. Place the Detrimental Trait rating in parenthesis and place an "X" next to it so you don't confuse it for a regular Trait rating. For example, "Can't Handle Pain (2X)". When this Trait is used, you must roll a number of Detriment Dice (pages 48-49) equal to the Detriment rating, in addition to the normal die.

Once you do so, add up all the Detrimental Trait ratings. The result is the number of extra Proof of Purchase Points you will receive. For example, your character has two negative Traits: "Slow-Witted (1X)" and "Horrible Driver (2X)". This will net you a total of 3 Proof of Purchase Points (1 + 2 = 3). You cannot gain more than 6 Proof of Purchase Points in this way.

Subplot/Detrimental Trait Overlap

There may be instances in which an idea could logically be used as both a Subplot and a Detrimental Trait. When this appears to be the case, you must choose between the two. That is, you cannot take something as both a Subplot and a Detrimental Trait.

Positive Trait Ratings

As mentioned previously, you automatically gain a certain number of Proof of Purchase Points to spend (30 is standard), in addition to any extra you gained by taking Detrimental Traits. Each Proof of Purchase Point spent gives a single Trait a cumulative +1 rating up to and including a rating of 4. Each +1 rating beyond that costs 2 Proof of Purchase Point. Therefore, if you spend 4 Proof of Purchase Points on one of your Traits, its rating will be 4. If you want a rating of 5, however, you'll be shelling out 6 Proof of Purchase Points.

Action Features

When you come up with a Trait, you should ask yourself, "Is this something every character can do, at least to some degree?" If the answer is "no", then the Trait is an *Action Feature* (or *AF*). An Action Feature is simply a term that describes a Trait that represents something that not every character can do or has access to. For example, not everyone has a flying device, so the "Jet-Pack" Trait is an Action Feature. Likewise, traveling through time is not something that just anyone can accomplish. Therefore, "Time Travel" is an Action Feature. On the other side of the coin, everyone can exert strength. As such, "Lifting" is not an Action Feature.

In addition to asking yourself the aforementioned question, there is one other factor that plays into deciding whether or not a given Trait is an Action Feature. If a Trait has one or more Modifiers (see below), it's almost always an Action Feature. There may be an exception here and there, but they are very, very rare.

An Action Feature functions the same as a normal Trait, except that a character cannot possess it or use it unless at least 1 PoPP is spent on it. That is, they don't default to rating 0 like normal Traits do.

Trait Rating Benchmarks

The table below should give you an indication of what the ratings mean for Traits that represent abilities such as innate abilities, skills, and talents. The table does not measure things such as gear, traditional superpowers (fire generation, invisibility, etc.), vehicles, companions, and so forth.

Rating:	Description:	Rating:	Description:
2X	Poor	4	World-Class
1X	Mediocre	5	Enhanced
0	Average	6	Superhuman I
1	Good	7	Superhuman II
2	Great	8	Superhuman III
3	Awesome	9+	Cosmic

DURATION

Traits that represent powers, spells, or other supernatural/superhuman abilities are often considered to have a fixed duration. This is determined by common sense and the GM's decision. Whenever the duration of a Trait isn't obvious, you can assume that the effects last until the end of the current scene. Giving it the "Extra Duration" Bonus can alter this.

A few examples of Traits that are considered to have a duration: "Paralysis", "Gas Cloud", "Transform Enemy", "Sleep", "Invisibility", "Mind Control", and "Increase Trait". In almost every case, any Trait with the "Trait Boost" or "Trait Zap" Modifiers will have a fixed duration.

Modifiers

Some Traits have special qualities that can't be defined with just a rating. This is most common with Traits that represent unnatural characteristics like equipment, weapons, and powers. Perhaps the Trait usually acts to increase the rating of another Trait or maybe it can only be used on a limited basis. Whatever the case may be, these qualities are reflected by giving your Traits something called Modifiers. There are two general categories of Modifiers: Bonuses and Restrictions. Bonuses add to the Trait's usefulness, whereas Restrictions detract from its usefulness.

- Give a Trait a Bonus by spending a Proof of Purchase Point. Unless specified otherwise in the Bonus write-up, a Trait can only be given a specific Bonus once. You cannot give a Bonus to a Trait with a Detrimental Trait rating.
- Give a Restriction to a Trait and receive an extra Proof of Purchase Point to spend. You can never gain more than 6 Proof of Purchase Points in this way. You cannot give a Restriction to a Trait with a Detrimental Trait rating.

Bonuses

Advantage: An Advantage is a minor miscellaneous benefit that improves the Trait's effectiveness. Upon selecting this Bonus, you must choose what the benefit is and write it down next to the Bonus itself. The GM may veto the chosen Advantage if he feels it is too potent. Some examples include: "Can bounce the attack off of objects", "Effects are not visible", or "Can affect incorporeal targets". Unlike other Bonuses, you may take this Bonus multiple times; each time represents a different advantage.

Area: This generally can only be applied to a Trait that normally affects one character or object. It can now affect everyone/everything near the original target. The exact size of the area doesn't really matter (it's the world of retro-toons, not a military simulation), but as a guideline, it shouldn't be any larger than 10 feet in diameter. If a check is required, you only roll once, applying the result to all the targets instead of just one.

Big Gun: This Bonus should be given to Traits that represent a weapon designed mostly to deal damage to vehicles and structures. It doesn't actually score direct hits on 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). In order to be given this Bonus, the Trait must also have the "Enhancer" Bonus. When firing against characters, subtract 2 from the bonus given by the Enhancer; if the Enhancer normally only provides a +1 boost, then this will cause a –1 penalty to the Trait being enhanced. When firing against a vehicle or structure (such as a building), add 3 to the bonus given by the Enhancer. When firing at anything else, use the normal bonus given by the Enhancer.

Cluster (this requires 3 Proof of Purchase Points): Some Traits are just too encompassing to even be allowed. While the GM is the final arbiter of exactly what Traits fall into this category, the most common are ones like "Spell Caster", "Wizard", "Mental Powers", etc. These allow the character to do too much with too little investment of Proof of Purchase Points. When the GM deems the Trait too encompassing, he may require you to take this Bonus, which may be purchased multiple times. Each time it is purchased, choose one of the following categories: Attack/Defense Cluster (combat-related abilities), Transformation Cluster (changing yourself or others), Manipulation Cluster (altering the environment or minds), Movement Cluster (traveling unconventionally), and Miscellaneous Cluster (abilities that fit nowhere else). It must be noted that other Modifiers must be taken as normal (e.g., you must still buy "Transform" if you take a Transformation Cluster).

Companion: The Trait represents some manner of companion that helps the character out (and sometimes even gets him in hot water). Before you can start play with your character, you'll need to create the game stats for the companion (see pages 34-35).

Defend: This applies to combat-based Traits. It allows your character to defend himself or others against other attacks. Once per episode, you can automatically cause an attack to miss your character or a nearby character. This must be declared before the attack check has been made.

Enhancer: The Trait with this Bonus still has its own rating, but its primary use is to increase the rating of another Trait under appropriate circumstances. To determine how much of an increase this Trait provides, divide its rating by 2, rounding

fractions up. The most common use of the "Enhancer" Bonus is to represent weapons and armor. A Trait may only benefit from the "Enhancer" Bonus of one other Trait at a time.

Extra Duration: This Bonus can only be given to Traits that would have a duration (see the sidebar on page 32). The Trait's effects last until the end of the episode, rather than merely the rest of the scene. You may take this Bonus one additional time (but no more than that); the second time causes the Trait's effects to last until the end of the current season. You must get the GM's permission to take it a second time.

Multiple Forms: This applies only to Traits with the "Transform" Bonus. This allows the character to use the transformation to turn the target into an additional alternate form (which must be created as well). This Bonus may be purchased more than once, with each additional purchase representing another form.

Retained Trait: Upon taking this Bonus, select one of the character's Traits that wouldn't ordinarily be retained while in the alternate form (see pages 35-37). That Trait is retained. This Bonus only applies to Traits with the "Transform" Bonus.

Situational Boost: The Trait's rating is increased by 2 under certain circumstances. Upon selecting this Bonus, you must choose what the circumstance is and write it down next to the Bonus 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". You may take this Bonus multiple times; each time represents a different circumstance.

Specialty (this requires 3 Proof of Purchase Points): The Trait must have a rating of 2 or higher in order to take this Bonus. When making a check with this Trait, roll 2 dice and take the most favorable result (see *Benefit Dice* on page 49). This is done before applying any effects, increases, or decreases to the result. You may take this Bonus up to two times for a given Trait; the second time allows you to roll three dice and choose the most favorable result (rather than just 2 dice).

Snare: This Bonus represents a Trait that can nearly immobilize a target character if successful. If the Trait normally requires an opposed check, then Snare works if you are successful in the check. If the Trait doesn't ordinarily require an opposed check, then you must engage in one, using this Trait's rating versus an appropriate Trait of the target. A snared character can do nothing but try to break free (a Miscellaneous action) each turn, though the GM can rule otherwise if the situation warrants it. To break free, the snared character must make an opposed check using an appropriate Trait versus the Trait that snared him.

Trait Boost (Self): Choose a Trait upon taking this Bonus. The character is granted a +1 bonus to that Trait after successfully using this Trait. Given the wide spectrum of possible Traits, you should use common sense with how this is applied. The GM is the final arbiter on the matter. This Bonus can be purchased multiple times. Each time you take it, add an additional 1 to the rating boost or select another Trait to be boosted by +1.

Trait Zap (Target): Choose a Trait or general type of Trait (e.g., athletics-related Traits, intelligence-related Traits, strength-related Traits, etc.) upon taking this Bonus. The targeted character suffers a -1 penalty to that Trait or type of Trait while affected by this Trait. Given the wide spectrum of possible Traits, you should use common sense with how this is applied. The GM is the final arbiter on the matter. This Bonus can be purchased multiple times. Each time you take this Bonus, subtract an additional -1 from the rating zap or select another Trait or type of Trait to be zapped by -1.

Transform: The Trait allows the character to change himself, other characters, or even objects into another form entirely. Upon taking this Bonus, you must select one of the following: Self, Others, Objects. This will dictate whom you or what you can transform. This Bonus assumes that the character can transform the intended target into one specific alternate form. You must purchase the "Multiple Forms" Bonus if you wish to have more than one alternate form. Your character will need to follow the rules found in the *Creating Alternate Forms* section.

Vehicle: The Trait represents a vehicle that belongs to the character. Before you can start play with your character, you'll need to create the game stats for the vehicle (see page 38-39). Keep in mind that these rules are primarily intended for the creation of smaller or less powerful vehicles. It's possible to create more powerful vehicles, but it can get expensive in a big hurry. In most cases, more powerful vehicles should be left to the GM, where she can create stock vehicles for the PCs to use.

Restrictions

Accessory: This Trait is derived from some kind of item that can theoretically be taken away from the character temporarily (dropped, stolen, lost, etc.). Think of the Trait as representing an accessory that comes with an action figure. If it would logically be an attachable accessory, then it could very well have this Restriction.

Disadvantage: A Disadvantage is a miscellaneous flaw that impedes the Trait's effectiveness in some way. Upon selecting this Restriction, 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". You may take this Restriction multiple

times; each time represents a different disadvantage.

Fickle: The Trait is unreliable and cannot always be counted on to function. After declaring that you're using the Trait, but before you make the check, roll a d12. If you roll 4-12, proceed as normal, but if you roll 1-3, it doesn't work this time.

Linked: This Trait is linked directly to another Trait. Upon taking this Restriction, decide which Trait it's linked to. This Trait cannot be used unless the "parent Trait" is also used. If the linked Traits require you to make rolls or checks, each of the Traits are rolled for separately.

One-Shot (this grants you 2 Proof of Purchase Points): This Trait can only voluntarily be used once per episode.

Oomph Powered: This Trait requires you to spend a point of Oomph each time you willingly use it for a check. This Restriction can be taken multiple times. Each time you take it, add an additional 1 to the Oomph cost for using the Trait.

Rotating: This Restriction helps represent characters that switch off between using two or more sets of Traits during the series. In most cases, these Traits each have the "Accessory" Restriction, to reflect equipment, armor, or weapon sets. At the beginning of each game session, you must tell the GM which set your character will use during the episode. Only the Traits in the chosen set can be accessed this episode. Once you select a set, you may not switch off until the next episode. You must give this Restriction to each Trait in a set. Furthermore, you must note which set each Trait belongs to ("Set A", "Set B", etc.). A character cannot have more than 3 different sets.

Situational Setback: The Trait's rating is decreased by 2 under certain circumstances. Upon selecting this Bonus, you must choose what the circumstance is and write it down next to the Bonus 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". You may take this Bonus multiple times; each time represents a different circumstance.

Trait Boost (Target): Choose a Trait or general type of Trait (e.g., athletics-related Traits, intelligence-related Traits, strength-related Traits, etc.) upon taking this Bonus. The target is granted a +1 bonus to that Trait or type of Trait after you successfully use this Trait. Given the wide spectrum of possible Traits, you should use common sense with how this is applied. The GM is the final arbiter of the matter. This Restriction can be purchased multiple times. Each time you take it, add an additional 1 to the rating boost or select another Trait or type of Trait to be boosted by +1.

Trait Zap (Self): Choose a Trait upon taking this Restriction. The character suffers a -1 penalty to that Trait while using this Trait. Given the wide spectrum of possible Traits, you should use common sense with how this is applied. The GM is the final arbiter of the matter. This Bonus can be purchased multiple times. Each time you take it, subtract an additional -1 from the rating zap or select another Trait to be zapped by -1.

Uncontrollable: You cannot control this Trait. It might activate randomly or produces an equally random effect when used. You are at the GM's mercy, as he can choose what the effects are and when they activate.

Creating Companions

A Trait with the "Companion" Bonus requires you to create the companion's game stats. Follow the quick and easy steps below:

1) Name and Description
2) Purchase Traits
3) Choose Subplots

Kargorr Sez:

Why must this pitiful game have companions in it? Nothing irritates me more than supposedly cute characters designed to make children love them! They were infuriating nuisances that should be forgotten at all cost. Especially that wretched, no-good Ziggle! He was so awful that the artists kept changing how he looked. I suppose they were attempting to make him less obnoxious! Guess what. It didn't work!

Bravesteel Sez:

You're just sour because Ziggle defeated you once. For you folks who haven't watched Galactic Heroes, let me fill you in on what transpired. You see, it all happened when…

Kargorr Sez:

Enough, simpleton! No one wants to hear your mindless blithering!

Companions have one less Threshold score than your character and do not possess their own Oomph (though they can benefit from the character's Oomph).

Name and Description

Come up with an appropriate name for the companion and describe what it looks like in one or two sentences. Use your imagination to develop a cool concept for it.

Purchase Traits

Companions have their own Traits, just like characters. Look at the rating of the Trait that has the "Companion" Bonus. Then, add 8 to that number. This is the amount of Proof of Purchase Points you can spend on the companion. These points cannot be spent on anything except the companion itself. That is, you can't use them to purchase more Traits or base Oomph for your character.

Whereas characters have to pay 2 Proof of Purchase Points per rating point over 4, companions only pay 1. Thus, a Trait with a rating of 6 will cost 6 Proof of Purchase Points rather than 8.

There are a few Traits that are rather common for companions to have. We have taken the liberty of including them below, along with a brief description of why and how they are used.

Can be Ridden: The companion is essentially a mount (such as a horse, elephant, giant panther, etc.). The rating could be used to represent the number of characters it can carry.

Cute Appearance: The companion is adorable or harmless in appearance. It can be used to deceive foes or to get them to attack a more threatening-looking character.

Funny Antics: The companion is humorous and often acts silly. This can be used to confuse opponents and even annoy them to the point that they gain a Setback Token (see page 54) in combat situations. That's right! This can be used as a Trait when making an attack check.

Bumbler: This is a Detrimental Trait. The companion somehow always finds a way to goof up, which can create headaches for itself and its allies. The companion might be clumsy, absent-minded, overly anxious, or flat-out careless.

Animal Intelligence: This is a Detrimental Trait. The companion has limited intelligence and isn't capable of performing complex thought processes aside from survival instincts and the like.

Attack: This indicates a natural non-ranged attack form for a critter. You can name it something more evocative (like naming it after the precise attack – "Bite", "Tentacle Squeeze", "Rend", etc.), but it all amounts to the same thing. You needn't purchase a separate Trait for the specific attack form (such as "Claws" or "Teeth"). The exception to this is if you want to give the critter a really exotic attack, like flame breath, psi-blast, or tentacle squeeze. This Trait represents a critter's primary means of defending itself (much like a human's fists).

Choose Subplots

You may give the Companion up to two Subplots from the same list available to the character (pages 28-29). Your character receives the Oomph for Subplots when they complicate things.

Creating Alternate Forms

A Trait with the "Transform" Bonus usually requires you to create the alternate form's game stats. Below, you'll find rules and guidelines for how to handle various types of transformations.

The steps to create an alternate form are as follows:

1) Name and Description
2) Target
3) Nature of the Form
4) Purchase Traits
5) Choose Subplots

Name and Description

Come up with an appropriate name for the form and describe what it looks like in one or two sentences. Use your imagination to develop a cool concept for it.

Target

Before we get into statting up the alternate form, you must choose who or what the Trait affects:

- **Self:** This indicates that the character himself transforms into the alternate form. Self-transformation generally requires no check to see if it works; it can be assumed that the character can automatically transform by taking a Miscellaneous action. If, for some reason, the GM feels that circumstances necessitate a check, use the Trait's rating versus a DN of his choosing.

  The character may remain in the alternate form for as long as you like. If you would like to give it a fixed duration or some other limitation on how long the alternate form can be maintained, you should give the Trait the "Disadvantage (Duration)" Restriction.

- **Others:** This indicates that the character transforms other characters into the alternate form.

  - ***Willing Characters:*** Transformation generally requires no check to see if it works… as long as the target is willing to be transformed; it can be assumed that the character can automatically transform the target by taking a Miscellaneous action. If, for some reason, the GM feels that circumstances necessitate a check, use the Trait's rating versus a DN of his choosing. The character may remain in the alternate form for as long as you like, as the character isn't resisting it. If you would like to give it a fixed duration or some other limitation on how long the alternate form can be maintained, you should give the Trait the "Disadvantage (Duration)" Restriction.

  - ***Unwilling Characters:*** If the target is resistant to being transformed, you must take a Miscellaneous action and make an opposed check using the Trait's rating versus the target character's Trait that reflects strength of will or perseverance. If your character is successful, the transformation occurs. It is considered to have a fixed duration. Once the duration has expired, the target goes back to its base form.

- **Objects:** This indicates that the character transforms inanimate objects into the alternate form. Transforming objects generally requires a

CARRYING OVER PHYSICAL TRAITS FOR VEHICLE ALTERNATE FORMS

Carrying Over Physical Traits

It's perfectly feasible for the Game Master to allow certain physical Traits to carry over to the alternate form, especially in campaigns centered around Giant Transforming Robots. In fact, we encourage GMs to allow this for GTR-based series.

Armored Vehicles

One candidate for this is toughness-based Traits. In such a case, the characters should not receive the free +3 bonus to such Traits. If you want your character to be tougher in vehicle form than in robot form, you should buy a Trait like "Armored" and give it the "Enhancer" Bonus. Keep in mind that this Trait shouldn't be granted the free +3 bonus either. The reason is that the character is already getting an advantage by utilizing a Trait that was already purchased.

Weapons

Another reasonable example would be a Giant Transforming Robot whose vehicle form is a tank. The tank's cannon transforms into an arm-mounted cannon when the character is in its robot form. It would seem rather silly to make the character pay for the weapon twice.

Miscellaneous action and a check, using the Trait's rating versus a DN of the GM's choosing.

Nature of the Form

The nature of the alternate form is as important as who can be transformed by the Trait. Below, we discuss some of the most common forms. You must select one of them to determine how you must proceed from here.

- **Humanoid/Creature/Robot:** The alternate form is an animate humanoid, creature, or robot. Follow all the rules for creating alternate forms.

- **Weird Stuff:** Sometimes, a form is just so weird that the rules may not adequately cover it. Like, for example, transforming into a rock. In these cases, work with the GM to come up with an easy solution. It's usually good enough to assume certain things about the alternate form and forego writing up stats for it.

- **Vehicle:** The alternate form is a vehicle and is created using the vehicle creation rules. The rules for the free +3 bonus to one speed-based Trait and one toughness based Trait remains the same as for regular vehicles. Ditto for the lessened cost for Trait ratings over 4.

  The character's mental-based Traits (but not physical-based Traits) will be retained while in vehicle form, though more can be added that will be exclusive to the alternate form. When purchasing Traits, think of the alternate form, almost entirely as a vehicle.

  The vehicle form has a Threshold score equal to your base form's Threshold +2.

  The vehicle's capacity to hold people isn't terribly relevant and should usually be obvious based on the type of vehicle it is – a motorcycle holds two, a car holds 4-6, a jet fighter holds 1-2, and so on. If it's not obvious, discuss it with your GM and work it out.

Purchase Traits

Look at the rating of the Trait that has the "Transform" Bonus. Then, add 8 to that number. This is the amount of Proof of Purchase Points you can spend on the alternate form. These points cannot be spent on anything except the alternate form itself. That is, you can't use them to purchase more Traits or base Oomph for your character's base form. It must also be noted that you aren't required to spend the full amount of Proof of Purchase Points. It stands to reason that you wouldn't want to utilize too many points if the goal is to turn enemies into mice.

The character's mental-based Traits will be retained while in the alternate form, though more can be added that will be exclusive to the alternate form. Simply spend the amount of Proof of Purchase Points given above on developing Traits.

Whereas characters have to pay 2 Proof of Purchase Points per rating point over 4, alternate forms only pay 1. Thus, a Trait with a rating of 6 will cost 6 Proof of Purchase Points rather than 8.

Choose Subplots

You may give the alternate form up to two Subplots from the same list available to the character's primary form. (pages 28-29). Use common sense to determine which of the character's existing Subplots apply while he's in the alternate form.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT ALTERNATE FORMS

Oomph and Alternate Forms

Characters retain their Oomph while in an alternate form.

Setback Tokens and Alternate Forms

Setback Tokens carry over from one form to the other. So, if your character acquires 2 of them while in his primary form and then transforms into his alternate form, the 2 Setback Tokens remain in effect.

Maneuverability for Giant Transforming Robots

When creating a vehicle form for a GTR, you needn't give the "Maneuverability" Trait (or its equivalent) the "Enhancer" Bonus unless you want the character to be driveable by human-sized characters while in that form.

Creating Vehicles

A Trait with the "Vehicle" Bonus requires you to create the vehicle's game stats. Follow the quick and easy steps below:

1) Name and Description
2) Purchase Traits
3) Choose Subplots

Vehicles have a Threshold score equal to your character's Threshold +2 and do not possess their own Oomph (though they can benefit from the character's Oomph).

Name and Description

Come up with an appropriate name for the vehicle (if you'd like) and describe what it looks like in one or two sentences. Use your imagination to develop a cool concept for it.

Purchase Traits

Vehicles have their own Traits, just like characters. Look at the rating of the Trait that has the "Vehicle" Bonus. Then, add 8 to that number. This is the amount of Proof of Purchase Points you can spend on the vehicle. These points cannot be spent on anything except the vehicle itself. That is, you can't use them to purchase more Traits or base Oomph for your character.

Vehicles tend to be faster and more rugged than characters. If the vehicle, has Traits that deal with its speed or toughness at a rating of 1 or more, add 3 to the rating automatically. If the vehicle has no such Traits, they remain at their original rating. Note that this bonus is only afforded to one speed-based Trait and one toughness-based Trait per vehicle.

The vehicle's capacity to hold people isn't terribly relevant and should usually be obvious based on the type of vehicle it is – a motorcycle holds two, a car holds 4-6, a jet fighter holds 1-2, and so on. If it's not obvious, discuss it with your GM and work it out.

MINOR AND MAJOR VEHICLES

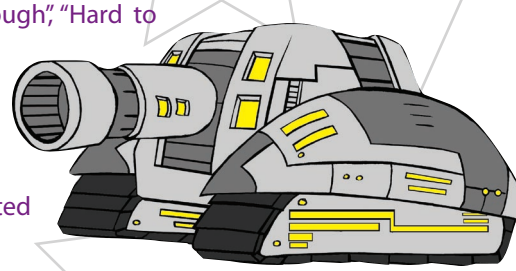
The rules for giving your characters vehicles are primarily geared toward generating relatively minor vehicles. While it's possible to give your characters more powerful vehicles, you'll end up paying a sizable lump of PoPPs for them.

In general, the more potent vehicles will be in the hands of the Game Master. She can create vehicles for you and your allies to use, which saves you from having to drop practically all of your PoPPs into your own large-scale vehicle.

Whereas characters have to pay 2 Proof of Purchase Points per rating point over 4, vehicles only pay 1. Thus, a Trait with a rating of 6 will cost 6 Proof of Purchase Points rather than 8.

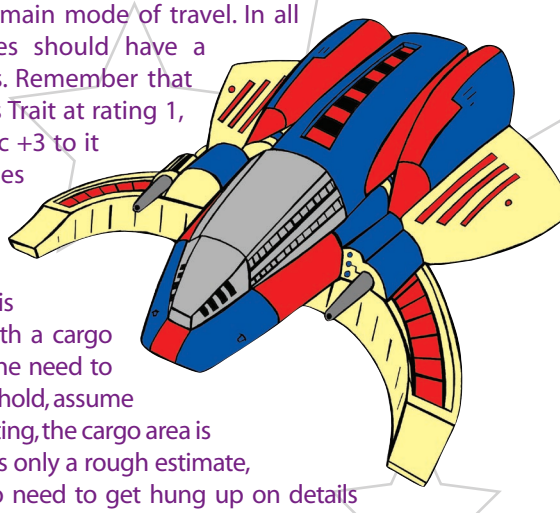
There are a few Traits that are rather common for vehicles to have. We have taken the liberty of including them below, along with a brief description of why and how they are used.

Armored: This represents the vehicle having a metal structure that is reinforced to take damage. *Armored* can be renamed "Rugged", "Tough", "Hard to Damage", etc. Remember that if you at least take this Trait at rating 1, you'll get an automatic +3 to it (though this only applies to one toughness-related Trait per vehicle).



Maneuverable: This represents a vehicle that can pull off quick turns and cutting moves. It is highly recommended that you give it the "Enhancer" Bonus. This will enable you to apply it to your character's existing Traits like "Piloting" for maximum effect. If the vehicle is an alternate form of a character, "Enahncer" is not necessary.

Fast: A vehicle with this Trait (or one like it) can move at a good speed using its main mode of travel. In all honesty, most vehicles should have a Trait along these lines. Remember that if you at least take this Trait at rating 1, you'll get an automatic +3 to it (though this only applies to one speed-related Trait per vehicle).



Cargo Space: This represents a vehicle with a cargo hold. If you really feel the need to know how much it can hold, assume that for each point of rating, the cargo area is 10 feet by 10 feet. This is only a rough estimate, mind you, so there's no need to get hung up on details ("But I wanted it to be irregularly shaped!").

Secondary Mode of Travel: A vehicle is assumed to have one type of movement (land, air, space, underwater, above-water, subterranean, etc.). With this Trait, you are giving it another mode of travel, using this rating to determine the vehicle's speed when traveling via the secondary mode. This rating does not gain the free +3 increase afforded to primary modes of travel. Upon taking this Trait, you should somehow include the mode of travel in the Trait name. "Space Flight," "Tunneling," "Submersible Speed" "Atmospheric Flight", and "Ground Movement" are all examples

of this naming convention. It is worth noting that you needn't take this Trait to represent landing wheels on an airplane, as they really have no maneuverability.

Weapon: Well, you should probably name the Trait the same as the actual weapon (i.e., "Blaster" or "Vibro-Cannon" instead of simply "Weapon"). In any event, the weapon should not be given the "Accessory" Restriction.

Choose Subplots

You may give the vehicle up to two Subplots from the same list available to the character (pages 28-29). Your character receives the Oomph for Subplots when they complicate things.

Gestalts

A being comprised of multiple characters is referred to as a *gestalt*. The characters that make up the gestalt are called the *component characters*. As strange as it sounds, this was a relatively popular trend in the retro-toons. Kids would naturally want to create the gestalt, so they would scurry out and snatch up all of the action figures of the component characters. It was an effective marketing strategy, but more importantly, the idea of characters combining to become one entity is just fun-tastic. Creating gestalts in *Cartoon Action Hour* is surprisingly simple.

First of all, each component character needs to have a Trait called "Gestalt", followed by the name of the entity. Thus, if the gestalt is named Mauler, each character would need to be given the "Gestalt – Mauler" Trait. The characters needn't have identical ratings for the Trait, making it possible for one character to have "Gestalt – Mauler 4" and another to have "Gestalt – Mauler 2". If the GM insists, you will have to designate what part of the gestalt's body your character represents (left arm, head, torso, etc.).

Once the characters are completed, all the players involved must create the stats for the gestalt itself. Add up the component characters' "Gestalt" ratings and multiply it by 2 This is the number of Proof of Purchase Points the gestalt is to be created with. For the most part, this is handled identically to creating normal characters, with the following exceptions:

- Since gestalts tend to be extremely large, you should seriously consider taking a Trait called "Gargantuan" (or something similar). This Trait can be used to indicate size, strength, and ruggedness. If you take at least a rating of 1 in it, add 3 to it automatically.
- The gestalt doesn't have its own base Oomph score. Any of the component characters can spend their own Oomph while in gestalt form.
- The gestalt's Threshold is equal to the highest Threshold of the component characters +3. However, if the gestalt is Defeated, all the component characters are Defeated as well, though they remain in gestalt form.

Vehicle Gestalts

Rather than the characters making up the gestalt, it could be decided that the characters' vehicles (i.e., Traits with the "Vehicle" Bonus) will fill that role. In such cases, they are individually referred to as the *component vehicles*.

- The component vehicles must be given the "Gestalt" Trait instead of the characters.
- Since gestalts tend to be extremely large, you should seriously consider taking a Trait called "Gargantuan" (or something similar). This Trait can be used to indicate size, strength, and ruggedness. If you take it at least a rating of 1 in it, add 3 to it automatically.
- The gestalt doesn't have its own base Oomph score. The characters with the component vehicles can spend their own Oomph to affect the gestalt.
- The gestalt's Threshold is equal to the highest Threshold of the component vehicles +1. However, if the gestalt is Defeated, all the component vehicles are Defeated as well, though they remain in gestalt form.
- Trait ratings over 4 only cost 1 PoPP per rating "point"

Companion Gestalts

In a vein similar to vehicle gestalts, you can decree that your characters' companions (i.e., Traits with the "Companion" Bonus) will merge together to form a gestalt. In such cases, they are individually referred to as the *component companions*.

- Should you wish to go this route, the component companions must be given the "Gestalt" Trait instead of the characters.
- The gestalt doesn't have its own base Oomph score. The characters with the component companions can spend their own Oomph to affect the gestalt.
- The gestalt's Threshold is equal to the highest Threshold of the component companions +1. However, if the gestalt is Defeated, all the component companions are Defeated as well, though they remain in gestalt form.
- Trait ratings over 4 only cost 1 PoPP per rating "point"

Who Makes the Decisions?

All involved players should agree upon the actions of the gestalt. Should there be a disagreement that cannot be worked out quickly, the player with the highest "Gestalt" rating gets to choose. Tiebreakers should be determined randomly.

EXAMPLE: *The possibilities are endless for a cyborg character, so Shelly starts off with a wish list of Traits. Once she establishes what the character can do, she intends to go back and determine how well (or poorly) Bionikka can do them.*

Initially, she writes down, "Cyborg", which could be used to cover super-strength, resilience, endurance, and so on. However, Shelly feels that it covers too much ground, which could actually

penalize her when making a check against a more focused character. Instead, she chooses to split that one Trait up into several Traits. She writes down, "Robot Strength", "Metal Body", "Enhanced Leaping", and "Immunity to Poison/Disease". She also wants to have Bionikka's body be capable of producing a weapon, so she gives her "Blaster Arm".

Even though Bionikka's a cyborg, Shelly doesn't want all of the Traits to be derived from that fact. She looks over her Factoids and Subplots for inspiration, and tries to think of some new ideas as well. She comes up with the following Traits: "Stubborn", "Perceptive", "Good Shot", "Resourceful", "Goal Oriented", and "Mechanics" (with the intention of picking up a Detrimental Trait rating to the latter).

According to the series guide, Shelly receives 30 Proof of Purchase Points which can be spent on Traits and Base Oomph (see Step Four).

Shelly starts off by giving Bionikka a Detrimental Trait rating of 2X on "Mechanics", which grants her an additional 2 PoPPs. This gives her a total of 32 PoPPs to spend. While distributing her PoPPs, she drops "Immunity to Poison/Disease", "Enhanced Leaping" and "Goal Oriented". She goes light on Modifiers, opting only to give "Blaster Arm" the "Enhancer" Bonus.

After allocating the points to the Traits she had chosen, Bionikka's list looks like this:

Robot Strength 6 [8 PoPPs]
Good Shot 3 [3 PoPPs]
Metal Body 6 [8 PoPPs]
Blaster Arm 4 (Enhancer +2) [5 PoPPs]
Perceptive 2 [2 PoPPs]
Resourceful 2 [2 PoPPs]
Mechanics 2X [+2 PoPPs]

She has spent a total of 28 PoPPs so far, saving 4 to increase Bionikka's Base Oomph by 1 during the next step.

STEP FOUR: STATS

During this step of the process, you'll need to calculate your character's Base Oomph, Threshold, and Battle Rating. In short, this is the easiest part of the character creation process. There's not much thinking to be done here, so you're on the downhill jaunt now.

9. Base Oomph

Most major characters in fiction have an edge over other characters. In the retro toons, it was easy to reflect this — all the writer had to do was script it that way! In *Cartoon Action Hour*, though, we do things a bit differently. We represent this edge by using a currency called *Oomph*. During the game, PCs can spend Oomph to help them out in various ways. NPCs do not receive Oomph. To find out more about how Oomph works in the game, check out pages 56-58.

PCs begin with a base Oomph score of 2. NPCs receive no Oomph; they use one pool of Oomph reserved for NPCs. Bolstering the character's base Oomph costs 4 Proof of Purchase Points for each +1 increase. A starting character's base Oomph cannot be higher than 4.

If you wish to play an NPC as a PC, simply consider its Oomph to be 2. Add 1 for each point of Threshold the character has over 10.

10. Threshold

It's possible for a single attack to cause a character to be *Defeated* (see page 55). This stat measures how hard it is to put the character out with one attack.

The character's Threshold score is equal to 8 + the character's base Oomph score. Most NPCs should have a Threshold score of 10. If the NPC is supposed to be just an ordinary non-action oriented character (a mundane scientist, lawyer, bystander, etc.), it should have an 8. Unlike with PCs, however, you can spend 4 PoPPs to increase an NPC's Threshold by 1. A starting character's Threshold cannot be higher than 12

11. Battle Rating

A character's Battle Rating is used for scene-based combat (see pages XX – XX for more information). It reflects the character's overall efficiency when a fight breaks out.

Battle Rating is equal to the character's highest Trait rating that could be used for attacking or defending in combat situations. Do not apply modifiers granted by Traits that have the "Enhancer" Bonus. However, you can use the rating of such a Trait if it's the highest applicable rating your character has.

EXAMPLE: *Shelly saved 4 PoPPs in order to boost Bionikka's base Oomph by 1. Her base Oomph is now 3. Her Threshold, accordingly, is 11 (8 + base Oomph). Her Battle Rating is 6 (equal to her "Metal Body" rating).*

NOW YOU KNOW...

Getting the Most Out of Traits

This section is intended to help you get the most out of the Trait rules. Every player should read it before creating a character. The Trait system is designed to enable you to create virtually any skill, ability, power or gear that you could ever want. However, this flexibility requires you to have a firm grasp on all the nuances of the rules.

Trait Focus

Here's something that you should keep in mind. Some Traits tend to be more specific than others. Generally speaking, the more specific a Trait is, the better the character is when compared to less specific Traits. For example, a character that has "Marine Biologist 3" is considered to be better than a character that has "Biologist 3" when dealing with marine life. But it's a trade-off, because the character with "Biologist 3" is going to have knowledge about other types of life than the one with "Marine Biologist 3". Another example is "Martial Artist 2" versus "Ninja 2". In a straight fight, the character with "Martial Arts 2" is going to have an edge over the one with "Ninja 2". The reason is because the former is very specific to fighting skills, whereas the latter would also incorporate stealth and subterfuge. "Ninja 2" covers more ground and is thus not as specific. This will result in a bonus to the more specific Trait when opposing a less specific one.

Overly Encompassing Traits

Even with the Trait focus rules in effect, it's possible for players to abuse the open-ended nature of Traits. There are times that the GM just has to say "no". For example, if I had a player who gave his character a Trait called "Invulnerable Bad Ass with Mind Powers", I would thump him on the head with something heavy before informing him that this Trait just isn't going to cut it. I would tell him that he needed to split it into three Traits ("Invulnerable", "Bad Ass" and "Mind Powers").

The game system also has a handy little Bonus called "Cluster". This is mostly intended for use with such Traits as "Sorcerer", "Psionic Powers", "Spell-Slinger" and the like, but the GM can use it for virtually anything. Each time "Cluster" is purchased, the player selects one of several categories (Attack/Defense Cluster, Manipulation Cluster, etc.) that cover a certain area within a broader scope. For example, a character with the "Wizard" Trait has taken the Manipulation Cluster.

This will allow him to cast spells that can alter the environment (create darkness, cause wind gusts, create a glue-like substance on the ground, etc.) or even the minds of others (change emotions, control minds, hypnotize others, etc.). That character, though, couldn't use spells that attacked characters, enabled flight, or turned characters into baboons. He would need to purchase additional Cluster categories for that.

Naming Traits

Naming a Trait may seem trivial to some. However, in a game in which virtually all of a character's abilities are defined by how you name his Traits, I can't stress enough how important it is. Let's look at some of the most problematic areas of naming Traits.

Superhuman Levels

Human levels of ability are represented by ratings of 2X to 4. A Trait that has a rating of 5 or more is considered to be beyond the scope of human achievement. This should be taken into consideration when selecting a Trait's name. If you named a Trait "Superhuman Strength" and only had a rating of 2, I would call you on it if I were the GM. A rating of 2 does not equate to superhuman levels of ability.

The same holds true from the opposite end of the spectrum. You shouldn't name a Trait "Relatively Strong" if it has a rating of 8. That's misrepresenting the amount of strength the character possesses. If the rating signifies that the effectiveness of the Trait is superhuman, then you really need to reflect that when creating a name. Something as unassuming as "Relatively Strong" just isn't going to cut it.

You can, however, choose to keep the name rather generalized. Continuing with our examples, it would be appropriate to simply name the Trait "Strong", as it doesn't imply an exact level of competency. "Strong" works as well for rating 1 as it does for rating 8.

Detrimental Traits

Perhaps the trickiest Traits to name are Detrimental Traits. Well, that's not entirely true. It's perfectly acceptable to use the same Trait names as those commonly used for regular Traits. For example, you could simply call the Detrimental Trait "Agility". Since it has a Detrimental rating, it's obvious that it means the character is poor at it.

That's one naming convention. Another involves taking a standard Trait name and modifying it a little, so that the name itself indicates that the character isn't good in that area. For example, rather than using "Agility", you might call it "Lack of Agility".

The final naming convention is to take the traditional name used for a regular Trait and simply reverse it. A Thesaurus is always helpful for finding antonyms. For example, rather than "Agility" you might call it "Clumsy", "Oafish", "Lummox", or "Awkward".

(Continued on the following page...)

Weapons and Armor

Weapons and armor (as well as anything resembling them – natural claws, force fields, etc.) are represented by the "Enhancer" Bonus. It allows you to add 1/2 of the Trait's rating to another Trait's rating for appropriate tasks. For example, you give your character "Mystic Mallet 3 [Enhancer +2, Accessory]". When you use your character's "Close Combat Specialist 3" in a fight sequence, you can add +2 to the rating, giving you a total of 5.

At first glance, Enhancer seems like a pretty crummy deal. After all, it's more cost-efficient to simply bolster one of your existing combat-related Traits up than to create another Trait that only gains half of the rating's benefit. Once you start looking closely, though, you'll find that Enhancer is actually a very good bargain, as it can be applied to more than one Trait. So, if your character has "Close Combat Specialist 3" and "Strong 2", you could use the "Mystic Mallet 3" to add +2 to the former Trait in combat or the latter Trait when trying to knock down a tree. In other words, it's very versatile.

And don't forget that the rating on the Trait with the "Enhancer" bonus is not useless. Let's say someone was trying to destroy the "Mystic Mallet". The rating would be used for the opposed check to keep it from happening.

When creating characters with rough skin, metal skin, rocky skin or any other non-removable protection, I recommend that you forego making the Trait an Enhancer. This reflects the fact that it's the character's natural toughness rather than an add-on that makes him tougher.

Linking for Effect

While it's possible to create a Trait that is incredibly comprehensive, you'll find that it's less effective than a focused Trait (see *Trait Focus* above). If you want the Trait to do quite a few things, you might consider creating separate Traits and giving all but one of them the "Linked" Restriction. This ensures that one Trait isn't going to be incredibly unfocused.

Subplots versus Detrimental Traits

There is a very fine line between what should be taken as a Subplot and what should be taken as a Detrimental Trait. Honestly, it should come down to one question: Can you imagine the GM telling you to make a check using it as a Trait? If the answer is "yes", then it should usually be taken as a Detrimental Trait. If the answer is "no", it's probably going to be a Subplot. This can be ambiguous, however. If something sounds like it could go either way, use your best judgment. After all, you'll be compensated regardless… it's just a matter of how you'll be compensated. When in extreme doubt, it's best to assume that it's a Subplot.

For example, let's say that you wanted your character to be a super-intelligent panther-like beast. You immediately write "Animal" down as a Detrimental Trait. After doing so, you begin to question your decision, wondering if perhaps it would make more sense to make it a Subplot. In the end, you ask yourself if you could envision the GM requiring you to make an "Animal" check and decide that the answer is no. After all, it's not a matter of how good the character is at being an animal. Thus, you list it as a Subplot (likely "Physical Flaw").

More About Modifiers

As one of our contributors stated, if there's one aspect of character creation that's going to raise questions, it's Modifiers. Truthfully, I agree, which is why this section exists. Let's not waste any time and dive right into the thick of it.

The Modifiers were created so that each one covers a lot of ground, thus making it so that there's no need for a massive list that must be poured over constantly. This has the unfortunate side effect of creating some potential ambiguities.

Let's start off by stating that these Modifiers are meant to be malleable. That is, the players and GM can tweak the heck out of them to better fit the character concept.

For example, let's say that the player wants a magical weapon that grants the character a +1 boost to its "Eye For Detail" Trait. The closest Modifier to this would be "Trait Boost (Self)". However, the rules for that Modifier state that in order for the boost to work, the Trait has to be used successfully first. In other words, the character would have to make a successful attack against an enemy to gain the +1 boost. With the concept the players has in mind, it just doesn't make sense. After discussing it with the GM, it is decided that the boost applies automatically whenever the character wields the weapon.

To make a long story short, Modifiers are not etched in stone. Heck, you can even develop new ones as long as your GM approves. The Modifiers were created simply to give a brief list of possibilities... not to stifle your creativity. Don't be timid about talking to the GM about making changes.

Giant Transforming Robots

In the retro-toons, there was no shortage of robots that could turn into other things (usually vehicles). Fans of giant transforming robots (GTRs) are given all the tools necessary to create them as characters in *Cartoon Action Hour*. It just might not be obvious right off the bat. I hope to fix any ambiguities here.

In order to make a GTR, the main thing you need is a Trait with the "Transformation" Bonus. Once you have that, the rest is cake. There's only the matter of creating the alterante form (i.e., the vehicle). Check out the section about how to create alternate forms on pages 35-37. It will guide you through the process, which involves essentially creating a vehicle as per the rules on pages 38-39. You won't want to overlook the purple text box that spans across the bottom of pages 36 and 37. That has critical information about alternate forms.

Lastly, you'll need to understand that GTRs are going to have superhuman ratings for Traits that involve strength, resilience, size, etc. Ratings of 6-7 should be considered average for such Traits.

(Continued on the following page...)

Sample Traits

What follows is a whole slew of Traits that you can use as inspiration. Or you can steal them outright. Either way is fine by us. You'll see that some of these Traits overlap to a certain degree, but that's okay. There may be subtle differences that come out during play.

The sample Traits have been divided up into loose categories for convenience. Keep in mind that the Traits could easily belong to more than one category. For example, "Force Field" is listed under "Beyond Human" section. However, it could very well be considered to be in the "Accessories and Built-In Gear" section if you defined the Trait as stemming from a gadget.

Abilities, Skills and Perks

"Acrobat"
"Actor"
"Agile"
"Amazing Endurance"
"Animal Wrangler"
"Archer"
"Armorer"
"Athletic"
"Attractive"
"Bad Mama-Jamma"
"Barbarian"
"Beastmaster"
"Biologist"
"Born to the Saddle"
"Boxing"
"Brainiac"
"Bruiser"
"Businessman"
"Careful"
"Charisma"
"Charming"
"Circus Performer"
"Clever"
"Climbing"
"Comical Demeanor"
"Compassionate"
"Computer Expert"
"Con Artist"
"Cooking"
"Cool Under Fire"
"Cop"
"Cosmic Enforcer"
"Court Jester"
"Courtier"
"Crack Shot"
"Craftsman"
"Detective"
"Dive for Cover"
"Dodge"
"Eagle Eyes"
"Entertainer"
"Escape Artist"
"Etiquette"
"Ex-Noble"
"Fast as Lightning"
"Fast Draw"
"Fast Runner"
"Fast-Talker"
"Friends in High Places"
"Gambler"
"Gladiator"
"Good at Giving Orders"
"Good Judge of Character"
"Great with Swords"
"Gymnast"
"Hard to Hit"
"Has a Way with Words"
"Helicopter Pilot"
"History of /[insert topic]/"
"Horseman"
"Imposing"
"Intimidating"
"Inventor"
"Knowledge of Jungle Beasts"
"Laborer"
"Ladies Man"
"Lawyer"
"Linguist"
"Lord of /[insert race]/"
"Lore Master"
"Lure Foe into Traps"
"Maker of Robots"
"Manipulative Conniver"
"Marksman"
"Martial Artist"
"Master of Disguise"
"Master of Illusions"
"Master of Video Games"
"Master Repairman"
"Mathematical Genius"
"Medic"
"Mentor"
"Millionaire Playboy"
"Muscle-Bound"
"News Reporter"
"Nimble"
"Ninja"
"Operate Tank"
"Pathfinder"
"Perceptive"
"Plumber"
"Power Lifter"
"Prankster"
"Priestess"
"Quick-Witted"
"Ranger"
"Resilient to Cold"
"Resist Mind Powers"

(Continued on the following page...)

"Resistant to Disease"
"Resourceful"
"Respected Commander"
"Rock and Roller"
"Rock Star"
"Rugged"
"Safecracker"
"Scientist"
"Scout"
"Scrappy Fighter"
"Search"
"Skillful Combatant"
"Smooth Diplomat"
"Sneaky"
"Socialite"
"Soldier"
"Space Cop"
"Space Pilot"
"Spotting Hidden Enemies"
"Stomp Attack"
"Stout"
"Strategy"
"Street Fighting"
"Streetwise"
"Strong as an Ox"
"Strong Swimmer"
"Surveillance"
"Survival"
"Swamp Survivalist"
"Swordmaster"
"Tenacious"
"Thief"
"Tough as Nails"
"Tough"
"Tough-Guy"
"Tracker"
"Unorthodox Tactics"
"Use Technology"
"Vehicle Mechanic"
"Wanderer"
"Warrior"
"Wealthy"
"Weaponsmith"
"Well-Connected"
"Will of Iron"
"Willful"
"Wise"
"Wrestling"

Accessories or Built-In Gear
"Arm-Mounted Cannon"
"Chest Plate"
"Clad in Iron"
"Cybernetic Arm"
"Enchanted Ring"
"Grenades"
"Intelligent Suit of Armor"
"Laser Cannon"
"Laser-Shooting Machine Gun"
"Magic Amulet"
"Massive Club"
"Mystic Helmet"
"Pistol"
"Plate Armor"
"Power Armor"
"Rifle"
"Rocket Pack"
"Shield"
"Sword"
"Throwing Stars"
"Ultra-Sword"

Beyond Human
"Astral Projection"
"Become Incorporeal"
"Blends Into Surroundings"
"Can See Invisible Objects/Characters"
"Electrical Zap"
"Energy Blast"
"Energy Bow"
"Fire Breath"
"Flight"
"Force Field"
"Hypnosis"
"Invisibility"
"Magic Arrow Spell"
"Mind Control"
"Move Objects With Mind"
"Mystic"
"Negate Power"
"Night Sight"
"No Need to Breathe"
"Scaly Skin"
"Shapechanger"
"Shield Spell"
"Skin Oozes Acid"
"Spell-Slinger"
"Super Vision"
"Super-Climbing"
"Super-Fast"
"Superhuman Dexterity"
"Super-Leaping"
"Super-Strong"
"Telepathic"
"Teleport"
"Thunder Punch"
"Transform into Sports Car"
"Wizard"
"X-Ray Vision"

Sample Critters, Weapons and Vehicles

As we mentioned a short while ago, Cartoon Action Hour gives you the tools necessary to create almost anything. That's all fine and dandy, but sometimes you may find it hard to know where to start. How powerful should a laser pistol be? What should the stats for a tiger be? What Traits should a sports car be given?

If you find yourself wondering such things, never fear. Here are some write-ups for some common stuff. Even if you don't find what you're looking for here, you can use the write-ups as a guideline. For example, you can look at the stats for a shark and figure out what a whale's stats would be accordingly. In short, these write-ups are meant to give you a starting point.

Critters

Big Cat: Animal Intelligence 2X, Agile 4, Keen Senses 5, Bite/Claw 5, Stealthy 2, Sturdy 2 [16 PoPPs]
Horse: Animal Intelligence 2X, Move Quickly 5, Can Be Ridden 2, Jump 2, Hardy 2 [9 PoPPs]
Shark: Animal Intelligence 2X, Swimming 6, Bite 6, Stout 6 [16 PoPPs]
Big Dog: Animal Intelligence 2X, Bite 4, Keen Senses 5, Running 5, Rugged 2 [14 PoPPs]
Eagle/Falcon: Animal Intelligence 2X, Flight 6, Swoop 2, Spot 5 [11 PoPPs]
T-Rex: Animal Intelligence 2X, Bite 8, Running 2, Massively Muscular Body 8, Tough Skin 4 (Enhancer +2) [21 PoPPs]

Weapons

Pistol 1 (Enhancer +1, Accessory) [1 PoPP]
Rifle 3 (Enhancer +2, Accessory) [3 PoPPs]
Big Rifle 5 (Enhancer +3, Accessory) [6 PoPPs]
Cannon 7 (Enhancer +4, Area, Accessory) [11 PoPPs]
Bow 3 (Enhancer +2, Accessory) [3 PoPPs]
Knife 1 (Enhancer +1, Accessory) [1 PoPPs]
Sword 3 (Enhancer +2, Accessory) [3 PoPPs]
Big Sword 5 (Enhancer +3, Accessory) [6 PoPPs]
Battle Axe 7 (Enhancer +4, Accessory) [10 PoPPs]
Grenades 5 (Enhancer +3, Area, Accessory) [7 PoPPs]

Vehicles

Sports Car: Maneuverable 4 (Enhancer +2), Fast 6, Sturdy Frame 5 [10 PoPPs]
Jeep: Maneuverable 3 (Enhancer +2), Fast 5, Sturdy Frame 5 [8 PoPPs]
Cycle: Maneuverable 6 (Enhancer +3), Fast 6, Sturdy Frame 4 [11 PoPPs]
Fighter Jet: Maneuverable 3 (Enhancer +2), Fast 8, Sturdy Frame 6, *Subplot* – Cannot stop in mid-air [12 PoPPs]
Helicopter: Maneuverable 3 (Enhancer +2), Fast 6, Sturdy Frame 5, Cargo Space 2 [11 PoPPs]
Starfighter: Maneuverable 4 (Enhancer +2), Fast 8, Sturdy Frame 5, Secondary Mode of Travel (Atmospheric Flight) 5, Laser Cannon 8 (Enhancer +4, Big Gun), *Subplot* – Cannot stop in mid-air [27 PoPPs]
Tank: Fast 4, Sturdy Frame 8, Turret Cannon 8 (Enhancer +4, Big Gun) [16 PoPPs]

Channel 4
RULES OF PLAY
NICO
SUAYAN
CRISOSTOMO
RAIN

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Cartoon Action Hour is a storytelling game. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the game is to (surprise, surprise!) participate in telling an entertaining story. This means that the rules exist to serve the story, not vice versa. The rules can also add to the excitement and suspense when appropriate.

So, when is it appropriate? The answer is, "whenever the GM feels it's appropriate". This may seem like a cop-out, but it's really not. You see, one of the GM's duties is to help guide the story in the most dynamic way possible. If she feels a situation would be made better by using the rules to determine the outcome, then so be it. On the other hand, if she feels that the rules would add nothing to the scene, she can forego it and narrate the outcome using common sense as her guide.

This is what makes RPGs different than other types of games. The rules are guidelines to be used or ignored as the GM sees fit. Some GMs use the rules a lot, adding a sense of structure and uncertainty, while others prefer to let the rules stay in the background, only bringing them out as a last resort. Most GMs fall somewhere in between these extremes.

Generally speaking, a character should be able to perform any reasonable action without having to roll, such as opening an unlocked door, walking across the room, parking a car in an empty spot, or speaking to a friend. If the outcome of an important or dramatic action is in doubt, though, the GM should consider asking the player of the character attempting the task to roll dice. As a good rule of thumb, a Trait requires a roll for every task if it has a negative Trait rating. Ratings of 0 or higher assume a level of competence with that trait, allowing basic tasks to be handled without rolling dice.

TIME IN CARTOON ACTION HOUR

Time is a strange thing in *Cartoon Action Hour*. Sometimes, it matters in a big way and other times, it doesn't matter at all. If this sounds confusing, relax. Just read this section and everything will become clear.

There are several different increments of time:

Turns: A turn is the smallest unit in the game and it represents a few seconds worth of time. The exact amount isn't important; it generally lasts long enough for each character to do something relatively brief – making an attack, leaping behind a nearby power generator, pulling off a fancy maneuver in a starship, and so forth. Turns are usually only dealt with in combat or other situations where time is of the essence.

Scenes: A scene in the game is pretty similar to a scene in the retro-toons. Whenever the show goes ("cuts away") to another situation or location, the scene is usually over. There are exceptions to this and this is ultimately the GM's call. For example, the GM might be running two scenes concurrently, switching back and forth between them every so often in order to keep the action moving for both groups of characters. In this case, she may rule that neither scene is over when she cuts away to the other one.

Episodes: An episode usually represents the events that transpire during a single game session. In most cases, one full story will be told during an episode, though it's definitely possible for the GM to make it a two-parter (or more, if she desires).

Seasons: A season is defined as a collection of 8 episodes, though the GM can adjust that number to better fit the group's playing style and tastes. PCs may only advance after a season is over.

Series: A series is an ongoing game, featuring mostly the same characters and underlying themes throughout. There is no limit to the length of a series; it can consist of a season or numerous seasons.

TASKS

A task is defined as a challenge that requires skill, talent, knowledge or effort on the part of one or more characters in order for success to be attained. Sample tasks include attacking a particular foe, leaping over a gaping chasm, suckering someone into doing what you want them to do, building a device, resisting mind control, using most powers to gain a particular effect, pushing aside a heavy boulder, swimming through rapids, grabbing onto an overhang as you fall off a cliff, and so forth.

MAKING CHECKS

Whenever a character attempts to perform a task, the GM may ask the character's player to make a *check*. A check is the method we use to determine success or failure and is defined as any roll involving a rating, To make a check, the player describes what his character is going to do.

Based on the description of the action, the GM chooses which one of the character's Traits is most appropriate to the situation (if any). In many cases, the player controlling the character can choose the Trait used, though the GM can rule that it's not appropriate. When selecting a Trait to use, players are encouraged to come up with interesting and colorful ways to implement it.

The GM also selects a *Difficulty Number* (or DN) to represent how hard she feels the task is; the higher the DN, the tougher the task.

- **If the character has a Trait with a Detrimental Trait rating:** The player rolls a die plus a number of Detriment Dice equal to the Detrimental Trait rating (see *Detriment Dice*, below).
- **If the character doesn't have an appropriate Trait:** The player rolls a die and adds 0 to the result.
- **If the character has an appropriate Trait that could help him out:** The player rolls a die and adds the Trait rating to the result.
- **If the character has a Trait with the "Specialty" Bonus:** The player rolls a die plus a number of Benefit Dice equal to the number of times the Bonus was purchased (see *Benefit Dice*, below).

If the total result is equal to or more than the DN result (which is the DN plus the roll of a die, as rolled by the GM), the character is successful. If the GM wishes to eliminate the random element of the DN result, she can simply assume that she rolled a 6, adding the DN to it.

EXAMPLE: *Erica declares that her character, Tyson Maxx, is going to climb a vertical mountainside, a task to which Martha (the GM) assigns a DN of 2. She asks Martha if she can use her Athletics Trait. She agrees that it's a logical Trait to use under the circumstances. Martha rolls a die and gets 5, but has to add the DN to it, making the DN result 7 (5+2=7). This is the number that Erica has to equal or exceed with her roll. She chucks the die and scores 6. Tyson Maxx has an Athletics rating of 3, so that's added to the roll, making her result 9. Since 9 is higher than 7, Tyson Max is able to climb the mountainside!*

Detriment Dice

While making a check, characters may find themselves forced to roll one or more Detriment Dice. This is usually due to one of three factors. Sometimes, more than one factor applies to a check.

1) The character has a Trait with a Detrimental rating (see page 31). In this case, the player rolls a die (as per normal) plus a number of Detriment Dice equal to the Detrimental Trait rating. The lowest-rolling die is the one used. This is done before applying any

effects, increases, or decreases to the result. Once the lowest result is determined, add 0 to it.

2) The character uses the same Trait for the same task during any given scene. In this case, the player rolls a die (as per normal) plus a number of Detriment Dice equal to the amount of subsequent times the Trait was used for the task. The lowest-rolling die is the one used. This is done before applying any effects, increases, or decreases to the result. Once the lowest result is determined, add the character's normal Trait rating to it.

3) The opponent suffers an effect determined by the GM (toxic gas, grogginess, poison, etc.). In this case, the player rolls a die (as per normal) plus whatever number of Detriment Dice the GM instructs you to roll. The lowest-rolling die is the one used. This is done before applying any effects, increases, or decreases to the result. Once the lowest result is determined, add the character's normal Trait rating to it.

EXAMPLE: *Later in the episode, Tyson Maxx finds himself having to sneak past a guard. Unfortunately, he has "Lack of Stealth 2X". This doesn't bode well for him. Erica has to roll her normal die as well as two Detriment Dice. The results come up as follows: 3, 9, and 11. Since 3 is the lowest number, that's the one Erica gets stuck with.*

Benefit Dice

While making a check, characters may find themselves being allowed to roll one or more Benefit Dice. This is usually due to one of two factors. Sometimes, both factors apply to a check.

1) The character has a Trait with the "Specialty" Bonus. In this case, the player rolls a die plus a number of Benefit Dice equal to the number of times the Bonus was purchased for the Trait. The highest-rolling die is the one used. This is done before applying any effects, increases, or decreases to the result. Once the highest result is determined, add the character's normal Trait rating to it.

2) The character is participating in an opposed check and her appropriate Trait is more focused than the Trait being used by the opposing character. In this case, the player rolls a die plus a Benefit Die. The highest-rolling die is the one used. This is done before applying any effects, increases, or decreases to the result. Once the highest result is determined, add the character's normal Trait rating to it.

EXAMPLE: *After accidentally alerting the guard, Tyson Maxx finds himself in a combat situation. Fortunately for him, he has "Master Combatant 4 [Specialty x2]". Erica rolls her normal die and two Benefit Dice (since she purchased the "Specialty" Bonus twice) and lands the following results: 3, 4 and 10. Since 10 is the highest, that's the number Erica uses, adding Tyson Maxx's rating of 4 to the result. Her total result is 14.*

Combining Benefit Dice and Detriment Dice

It may happen that your character ends up with both Benefit Dice and Detriment Dice. When this occurs, Benefit Dice and Detriment Dice cancel each other out on a one-for-one basis. If you have Detriment Dice left after all the canceling is done,

you must utilize them for the check. If you have Benefit Dice left after all the canceling, you may utilize them for the check. If there are no Benefit Dice or Detriment Dice left after all the canceling, only the normal die is rolled for the check.

EXAMPLE: *Tyson Maxx has two Detriment Dice and one Benefit Die. The Benefit Die cancels out one of the Detriment Dice, leaving only a single Detriment Die remaining. That Detriment Die is used for the check.*

Trait Rating Adjustments

It's not uncommon for various circumstances to temporarily increase or decrease a Trait's rating. While no rules ambiguities arise from increasing a rating, decreasing ratings to a number below zero is another matter. Just to clarify, ratings can be reduced to 1X and 2X. Should a rating be dragged lower than that, treat it as 2X, but subtract 1 from the roll equal to the difference. For example, if a character has a rating of 1 and suffers a –5 penalty, the player would roll 2 penalty dice (as per a rating of 2X), subtracting 2 (the difference) from the die results.

Difficulty Numbers

Difficulty Numbers (or DNs) usually range from 0 to 8, though higher DNs are possible. The GM can assume that most tasks have a DN of 0, but if it's logically harder than an average task, a different DN should be chosen. If the task is extremely simple, it's best to assume that the character succeeds. To the right, you'll see some guidelines to give you a better idea of how tough each DN is.

DN:	Descriptor:	Explanation:
0	Moderate	An average person can pull the task off about half the time.
1-2	Challenging	An average person will have a difficult time pulling this task off, though a trained or skilled individual should be capable of succeeding most of the time.
3-4	Hard	A trained or skilled person will find it tricky to succeed at the task.
5-6	Very Hard	Even a trained or skilled person will usually fail at the task.
7-8	Extremely Hard	Hardly hardly anyone can succeed at this task, and even the ones who can pull it off can't do it with any regularity.
9-10	Nearly Impossible	Only those with superhuman levels of ability will find themselves successful at the task, except for with an occasional brush of luck.
11+	Beyond Comprehension	Normal humans will virtually always fail at the task and even superhumans will find it intensely hard to come out successful in the endeavor).

Flubs

If you roll a natural 1 (i.e., the die actually lands on "1") while you're making a check, a *flub* occurs. The action automatically fails and you may not alter it by spending Oomph (see page 57). The GM can also choose to make particularly bad or embarrassing happen when a character rolls a flub.

Boons

If you roll a natural 12 (i.e., the die actually lands on "12") while you're making a check, a *boon* occurs. When this happens, you may double the rating being used for this check result. For ratings of zero, simply add +1 to the result; and for negative ratings, add nothing. The GM can also choose to make something extremely good or beneficial happen when a character rolls a boon.

Degree of Success

Sometimes, the GM may need to know by exactly what margin a character succeeded. How much the check beats the DN result by is called the *degree of success*. The larger the degree of success, that is achieved, the better the result of the task. If the check total equaled the DN result, the character may have only partially succeeded, but if it was ten more than the DN result, then the character succeeded in spectacular fashion.

In many cases, however, simple success or failure is sufficient.

Opposed Checks

There will inevitably be instances where your character's actions will be directly opposed by another character, such as when one person is pursuing another on foot, when one person is trying to push open a door that's being blocked by

TO TELL... OR NOT TO TELL!

The GM is not obligated to announce the DN result to the players. In fact, keeping it secret heightens the suspense, ensuring that the players remain on the edge of their seats. Some GMs, though, tell the players what the DN result is, exchanging suspense for functionality. After all, at least the players cannot accuse him of cheating this way.

In the end, it's the GM's call. There is no right or wrong answer.

another person, or when one person is attempting to pull off a con job on another person. When this happens, an *opposed check* is in order.

Whenever an opposed check is called for and one person will likely succeed over the other (such as an arm wrestling contest), each character involved in the struggle makes a check using the appropriate Trait ratings. Compare the results to each other. Whoever rolls higher wins the check. In the case of a tie, the character with the narrowest Trait wins. If it's still a draw, the check is re-rolled.

The GM may also choose to assume a roll of 6 for NPCs to help speed play.

In some cases, the GM may require the player to role-play the situation before rolling, especially if a PC is trying to fast-talk, con, or otherwise persuade an NPC. If the player roleplays well or is particularly clever, then the GM may increase her rating (usually by +1 to +3) for this check. If the player roleplays poorly, she may be given a negative modifier (typically, a -1 to a -3) for this check.

Situational Adjusters

With normal checks, the GM can easily reflect factors that help or hinder the character(s) by adjusting the DN. Since opposed checks don't use DNs, the GM can reflect the aforementioned factors by increasing or decreasing the check results. These are called situational adjusters.

Generally speaking, the GM will assign a +1 situational adjuster to a check result for each helpful factor involved. Similarly, a –1 situational adjuster is subtracted from a check result for each hindering factor involved. If the GM feels a factor is extremely helpful or hindering, the adjuster can be bolstered to +/- 2 or +/- 3. If the same factor helps or hinders both characters equally, ignore the adjuster outright.

Keep in mind that the same rules apply for reducing Trait ratings to below 2X during opposed checks as during regular checks (see page 48).

Applying Trait Focus

When Traits oppose each other, a Trait that is very focused will usually have an advantage over one that is less focused. Take a look at the following list of Trait pairs. The Trait on the left is focused, while the one on the right is not. This should give you a representation of the differences between focused and unfocused Traits.

- "Fireball Spell" / "Wizard Spells" (one spell versus any number of spells)
- "Repair Tanks" / "Can Fix Just About Anything" (fixing one type of machinery versus fixing any number of machinery)
- "Sword Master" / "Master of Weapons" (proficiency at one single type of weapon versus proficiency at all weapons)
- "History Buff" / "Knowledgeable" (knowledgeable about one topic versus knowledgeable about most topics)
- "Quick Punch" / "Expert Combatant" (proficient at one type of attack versus proficiency with any number of attacks)
- "Dodge" / "Defensive Fighter" (good at avoiding attacks versus good at avoiding attacks and an implied use of defensive attack moves)
- "Stealthy" / "Ninja" (being quiet versus combat ability in addition to being quiet)

The GM should use her best judgment when determining which Trait (if any) is more focused. When in doubt, assume that both Traits are equally focused.

Having a more focused Trait grants two benefits:

1) The character with the most focused Trait wins any tied check results.
2) The character with the most focused Trait rolls a Benefit Die (see page 49)

Teamwork

Teamwork was an important theme in most of the retro-toons. There were numerous moral lessons about helping a friend in need, cooperating with your teammates, and relying on one another to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds.

Whenever two or more characters work together on a task that involves a check, you must declare which character is the lead for the task. This is usually the character with the highest appropriate rating, but any lead can be chosen. Once the lead is picked, make the check as normal, but for each person assisting, they can add half of their appropriate rating, rounded up (minimum of +1).

The bonus can make the total higher than the series maximum rating.

Chases

Chases in *Cartoon Action Hour* are very abstract, and intentionally so — the thrill of a chase isn't in how many feet per second the characters cover, but whether or not the pursuer catches the pursued. When a chase starts, the GM decides on how many *Chase Points* the chase starts at, and how many points it takes to escape. Chase Points is a general term to describe how far apart the characters are — a good chase can start out at 10 points, with 20 set as the escape total, but GMs shouldn't feel constrained to these totals if they feel that the distance should be different, or that escape should be easier or harder.

Every turn, each character involved in the chase makes an opposed check, using Traits that are appropriate (e.g., "Athletics," "Running," "Winged Flight", etc.).

- If the pursuing character has a higher degree of success, the degree of success comes off the distance (with a minimum of 1 Chase Point removed).
- If the chased character wins, they can add the degree of success to the Chase Points (again, with a minimum of 1).
- If the pursuing character and/or the chased character tie, nothing changes and the chase continues.

If the chase points drop to 0, the quarry is caught, and if they equal the escape total, the chased vehicle escapes.

Before the checks are made, each player should describe what their character is doing in her attempt to catch or flee from the other character. This adds color to the chase sequence and keeps it from being a mere cluster of dice rolling. If a player is particularly creative, the GM may even grant him a bonus that turn.

Vehicle chases work in an identical fashion,

SIMPLIFIED CHASES

For quicker and less detailed chases, the GM may opt to require a single opposed check using appropriate Traits. If the pursuing character wins, she catches the pursued character. If the pursued character wins, she gets away.

TURN-BASED COMBAT

Turn-based combat is the default style of handling fight sequences. It offers the most amount of detail and lets each player have full control over every move her character makes.

Initiative

When a fight breaks out, it's important to know what order everyone acts in. Generally, the GM can use common sense to determine the order. For example, if the villains sneak attack the heroes, the villains are likely to go first.

Of course, if it's ambiguous or the GM wants to insert a little randomness, she can call for an *initiative roll*. When preparing for an initiative roll, the GM must decide if she's going to have them roll individually or if she's going to have them roll per side.

Whichever she chooses, it's important to note that initiative rolls are not considered checks, so players cannot spend Oomph to affect their outcome.

Method 1: Individual Initiative

With individual initiative, each player rolls a die and adds her character's base Oomph to the roll. The GM rolls a die as well, but adds 1 to the roll for most NPCs and 3 to the roll for the episode's master villain. Characters act in turn, starting from the highest roller and ending with the lowest roller. This order is maintained for the rest of combat.

This method is more detailed and offers more variety, but it also complicates things a bit.

Method 2: Group Initiative

With group initiative, the player whose character has the highest base Oomph rolls the die and adds that number to the result. The GM does the same, but adds 1 to the roll for most NPCs and 3 to the roll for the episode's master villain. It's entirely possible to have multiple groups of NPCs; in this case, the GM rolls for each side separately. The highest rolling side or team acts first, followed by the next highest rolling team, and so on. This order is maintained for the rest of combat.

What Happens in a Turn?

During a turn, each character involved in the scene can move and then take an *action* or take an action and then move. Once all the characters have done so, the turn is over and a new one begins.

In most cases, it doesn't matter exactly how far a character moves during a turn. The GM uses common sense as her guide. If the player describes her character running around the block during the turn, the GM will definitely put her foot down, unless she possesses a Trait that grants her superhuman speed.

Actions

An action is defined as something a character can do quickly and that requires at least some attention. Minor things that take virtually no time at all do not count as actions – spouting off a witty insult, drawing a laser from your holster, dropping an item to the ground, and so on. There are three types of actions available:

Attack

This action allows the character to move a short distance and then attack *or* move attack and then move a short distance.

The exact distance moved isn't important, but roughly 10 feet or so seems to be a good ballpark number.

Move
This action allows the character to relocate or otherwise change her location. The character should be allowed to move a greater distance than with an Attack action. The exact distance isn't important.

Miscellaneous
This can be any reasonable action not listed above. Some actions may take longer than one turn to accomplish and must be carried out in the turns that follow – this is up to the GM.

A few examples of miscellaneous actions include clearing a gun jam, rewiring an electronic door, setting a bomb, using a computer, etc.

Attack Procedure
The term "attack" in *Cartoon Action Hour* is something of a misnomer in many cases. While an attack can be of the traditional variety such as bonking someone on the head, punching someone's lights out, etc., it doesn't necessarily have to be. Many so-called attacks don't even cause damage in the physical sense. They can also be ways to demoralize, confuse or otherwise put an enemy at a disadvantage. In order to keep the rules unified and concise, however, we still refer to them as "attacks".

Important Terms
There are three terms that are crucial for understanding how combat works:

Combat Check: The opposed check made by both the attacker(s) and defender(s) to determine if the attack is successful. It is comprised of the attack check and the defense check.

Attack Check: The opposed check made by the attacker using a Trait that could be used by him to defeat an enemy.

Defense Check: The opposed check made by the defender using a Trait that could help her to avoid being defeated by the attacker.

If an attack action is chosen, a combat check is necessary. The player controlling the attacker describes what she wants the character to do and selects his most appropriate Trait to use. The player controlling the defender describes how she wants to avoid the attack and selects her most appropriate Trait.

Combat Check
The combat check functions almost identically to any other opposed check. The differences lie in the potential repercussions should the attacker succeed. For purposes of reference and clarity in later text, the combat check consists of two components: the attack check and the defense check.

The Attack Check: Cartoon Action Hour doesn't have a list of ready-made combat Traits, thus making it impossible for us to tell you exactly what Traits to use when attacking. Instead, we instruct you to select a Trait that could feasibly be used to defeat an enemy (see *Creativity and Combat Traits* below).

The attacker makes a check as normal, using the chosen Trait. This is called the attack check. The GM may object to the Trait you choose if she doesn't feel that it's appropriate.

Kargorr Sez:
Bah! This combat system seems positively droll! Where's the narrative? Where's the storytelling? It all seems so lifeless.

Bravesteel Sez:

The narrative and storytelling is all there, but it's not built directly into the game system. Instead, it's up to the players and Game Master to bring the combat sequences to life with vivid descriptions and running commentary. This section is all about the hard, fast rules, which is why it may seem so lifeless to you. That, and the fact that you have no imagination, both play a role in your perception of the combat rules.

Kargorr Sez:
Me?? Unimaginative?? How dare you make such a bold – and yet false – accusation! If anyone lacks imagination, you boob, it's *you*! I mean, compare our wardrobes. Mine is lavish, regal, and ornate, whilst yours is tight, white, and tacky!

Bravesteel Sez:
Hey, watch it, buster!

The Defense Check: Just as with Traits used for attacks, there is no authoritative list of set-in-stone Traits usable for avoiding defeat. It's simply a matter of selecting a Trait that could be construed as being defensive in some way (see *Creativity and Combat Traits* below).

After the attacker makes the attack check, the defender makes her check as normal, using the chosen Trait. This is called the defense check. The GM may object to the Trait you choose if she doesn't feel that it's appropriate.

Situational Adjusters

In combat, situational adjusters (see page 51) apply as per normal opposed checks. They represent factors such as the target being in cover, the target being prone, the attacker being on higher ground, the attacker ambushing the defender, or whatever else the GM deems appropriate to the situation.

Using Teamwork in Combat

Teamwork in combat is not really much different than teamwork in non-combat situations. The only difference is that characters cannot team up for defense checks; only attackers can team up.

Enhancers in Combat

The "Enhancer" Bonus is a particularly useful Modifier in combat situations. Functionally, it allows you to add one half of the Trait's rating to another Trait. This is how weapons and armor are most commonly represented in the game. So, when making attack or defense checks, don't forget to apply an Enhancer if you have one that seems applicable.

The Aftermath

To see what the effects of the attack are (if any), you'll need to determine who won the combat check.

- ***No Effect:*** If the Attack Check is lower than the Defense Check the attack has no effect whatsoever. The defender remains in the battle.

- ***Hit:*** If the Attack Check was equal to or more than the Defense Check by an amount equal to or less than the defender's Threshold score, the defender receives a Setback Token (see below). If this is the character's fourth Setback Token, the character is Defeated (see below).

- ***Big Hit:*** If the attack check was more than the defense check by an amount higher than the defender's Threshold score, the defender is instantly Defeated (see below). Being Defeated, in this manner, is sometimes referred to as "Insta-Defeat".

Setback Tokens

During a combat sequence, 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 she 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, when the character gains her fourth Setback Token, she is Defeated (see below).

Gestalts and Setback Tokens

Setback Tokens gained by Gestalts (see page 39) are also applied to each component character/vehicle/companion when they return to their regular forms.

CREATIVITY AND COMBAT TRAITS

Despite the fact that there was never a shortage of combat sequences, you'd be hard-pressed to find much in the way of actual violence in the retro-toons. In most cases, a punch to the kisser is the most violent act demonstrated. A lot of the maneuvers used in these scenes involved the combatants using their heads (e.g., tricking a foe into stepping onto a net trap) Since this is the case, *Cartoon Action Hour* was designed to accommodate a less radical style of combat by allowing virtually any Trait to be used in fight scenes. If the character has a Trait called "Tricky", there's no reason why she can't use it to sucker an opponent into walking right off a cliff (and safely into the water down below). On the defensive end of the spectrum, it would be perfectly acceptable to use "Resourceful" to snatch up a nearby object and use it to block an incoming attack.

The point is that combat in *Cartoon Action Hour* isn't like traditional RPG combat. It's not necessarily about exchanging punches or shots until someone gets hit. It's much more abstract than that.

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. In *Cartoon Action Hour*, these situations are referred to simply as Defeat.

As noted above (*twice* even!), gaining a fourth Setback Token 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 she wishes (within reason and the boundaries of good taste). If that participant is a player, she can opt to leave it up to the GM instead. Not all players feel comfortable with this kind of thing. Here are some tried and true ways to describe a Defeat:

- The attack targets loose boulders, which roll onto the character, trapping him.
- The attack knocks the character unconscious.
- 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 attackers dog-pile the character, capturing him.
- The attack's impact causes the character to be sent back into vine-laden trees and she gets tangled up in them.
- 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, she 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.

Gestalts and Defeat

If a gestalt is Defeated, all the component characters/vehicles/companions are Defeated as well, though they remain in gestalt form.

Vehicle Combat

For the most part, vehicles follow the same rules as characters when it comes to combat. There are some differences, however.

Damage Issues

You must track the vehicle's Setback Tokens separately from your character's. Attacks are made against the vehicle first if it's enclosed or mostly enclosed. If the vehicle has a "Physical Flaw" Subplot that exposes the character, the attacker may choose to shoot at the character instead. Doing so imposes a –2 to the attack check result.

When a vehicle receives its fourth Setback Token, the vehicle becomes Defeated. It may explode, get bogged down in the mud, stop working, or whatever else seems appropriate to the situation. The character is then ejected from the vehicle and receives a Setback Token, as having your vehicle become useless is a pretty big setback. Don't worry; the character will have it up and running again or replaced either during a later scene or in time for the next episode at the GM's discretion.

The ejection can actually bring forth interesting circumstances of its own. If the vehicle was an aircraft, the ever-present parachute allows the character to glide safely back to the ground. If it was a spacecraft, an escape pod should suffice. Ground-based vehicles offer the best advantage, in that the character can continue fighting immediately.

Maneuverability

When pulling off tricky moves in a vehicle, the character operating it will be required to make checks involving an appropriate Trait such as ("Driving", Piloting", "Operate Ground Vehicles", etc.). This Trait's rating should be modified by the vehicle's Trait

VARIANT RULE: FASTER COMBAT

If you want to speed up turn-based combat, the GM can implement the rule that if the attacking character fails the combat check, she gains a Setback Token himself. This can account for frustration, a counter-attack by the defender, a nasty repercussion of the missed attack, and so forth.

that governs how well it handles ("Maneuverability", "Handling", etc.). This is the case while out of combat as well.

Ramming

Ramming is an attack check that uses the driver's Trait that measures how good she is at operating the vehicle. The ramming vehicle may suffer damage as well if at least one Setback Token is dealt out. In such a case, the ramming vehicle receives a Setback Token unless it can make a successful DN 4 check using a Trait that represents the vehicle's sturdiness ("Rugged", "Toughness", "Armored Hull", etc.).

OOMPH

Every PC in the game has an Oomph score. In addition to the Oomph obtained at the time of character creation (known as "base Oomph"), you can acquire more Oomph for your character during an episode (known as "earned Oomph"). This is accomplished by several different means:

- Dealing with the character's Subplots.
- Roleplaying creatively or in the spirit of the retro-toon genre.
- Participating in accomplishing the primary goal of an episode (which usually involves thwarting the villain's master plan).
- Whatever else the GM feels like giving it to you for.

Similarly, the GM may deduct Oomph from characters if they partake in actions that go against the spirit of the retro-toons. The following are some examples of things that could be construed as reasons to deduct Oomph. Note that deducted Oomph never permanently affects a character's base Oomph.

- Attacking another PC.
- Acting in an extremely violent manner ("I'm going to gut him with my sword!").
- A male character striking a female character (a big no-no in the retro-toons).
- Acting in a very uncooperative or anti-social manner (some characters have personalities that allow them to get away with a little bit of this, but not an excessive amount).
- Attacking an innocent NPC without provocation.
- Failing to help friends in need (even heroes with selfish tendencies always ended up coming through in the end).
- Having their characters curse or use tasteless humor.

It should be noted that the PCs should be exempt from deductions during the After-Show Messages, since those aren't really a part of the series continuity.

Oomph acts as currency that can be spent to help your character out when the going gets tough. It represents that certain "something" that sets heroes apart from the rest of the world. They aren't average Joes… they're larger than life heroes! You can think of Oomph as "star power" to a certain degree.

Maximum Oomph?

There is no upper limit to the amount of earned Oomph a character can have, but remember, it's easier to spend than it is to hang on to.

KEEPING TRACK OF OOMPH

In order to keep record keeping to a minimum, we recommend that you use beads, poker chips, hard candies, or paper money to represent your character's reserve of Oomph. Whenever you spend it, give it to the GM or place it in the center of the table.

Spending Oomph

Below is a list of ways to spend your character's Oomph.

Oomph Cost:	What You Get:
1	Re-Roll
1	Counterattack
2	Extra effort
2	Recover
3	Avoid Insta-Defeat
1 - 2	Creative Control

Re-rolls

Sometimes, Lady Luck has a way of smiling on heroes because, well, they're heroes. And heroes always had an edge in the retro-toons. 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 (or *dice*, if rolling Benefit or Detriment Dice), taking the better of the two rolls. Boons count as normal.

A check can only be re-rolled once and cannot be re-rolled if it rolled a 1.

If the check had Benefit Dice and (or) Detriment Dice, those dice are also re-rolled when Oomph is spent this way.

Counterattack

You may spend 1 Oomph to make a counter attack when being attacked by an enemy. This must be declared after the enemy makes the attack check. If the enemy fails to inflict a Setback Token or cause Insta-Defeat, she gains a Setback Token herself (Counter-attacks cannot cause Insta-Defeats). This is identical to the "faster combat" variant rule. If the GM is using that rule, Oomph can't be spent on this option.

Extra Effort

When the chips are down and all hope rests squarely on the shoulders of the hero, she can dig down deep to find the strength to persevere and prevail. By spending 2 Oomph after a check is made, you can roll an additional die and add it to the result.

This may only be done once per check and cannot be done at all if the original die rolled a 1. If you spend an extra Oomph on the re-roll option, you must choose to either re-roll the original die or this bonus die, but not both.

Extra Effort cannot be used for attack checks or defense checks.

Recover

Even the most valiant heroes get banged up, pounded on, hindered, or otherwise placed in peril. This inevitably leads to acquiring unwanted Setback Tokens. 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 at any time during your action (or at any time at all if the scene isn't scene-based). This doesn't use up your character's action.

This is cumulative, so you can spend 4 Oomph to remove 2 Setback Tokens.

Avoid Insta-Defeat

It takes a lot to put a hero's lights out or otherwise keep him down for the count. You may spend 3 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 3 Setback Tokens, she would become Insta-Defeated anyway.

Creative Control

The retro-toons were laden with plot devices, unlikely coincidences, odd uses of character powers/devices, and other such strangeness. This is represented in *Cartoon Action Hour* by allowing the players to change "reality" a bit. You may spend 1 or 2 Oomph to use creative control. The GM sets the exact cost according to how major the alteration is. Most alterations will only cost 1 Oomph, but if the GM feels the impact of the alteration is major, she may charge 2 Oomph. She can also refuse to allow an alteration if she 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 she 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 her staff shoots out energy and flies her out. This can be taken a step further by giving the character a one-shot Trait that she doesn't normally have ("Mastero leaps across

the ravine by way of a super-leaping Trait"). This is chalked up as being a continuity error or an editing glitch.

Getting Oomph Back

At the beginning of each episode, each PC starts off with a number of Oomph equal to the character's base Oomph, plus any Oomph awarded for succeeding in the goal of the last episode.

This means that all unspent earned Oomph (except what was given for accomplishing the goal) is lost at the end of an episode. So, the message here is: "go out and spend those suckers on doing heroic deeds and radical stunts with wild abandon!"

Lending a Hand

Being a hero often means being selfless and lending a hand to friends. This was touched upon in the Teamwork section (page 51), but Oomph offers yet another way to give assistance to your character's allies.

You may spend your Oomph to help out any PC or NPC that your character is in the same scene with. This is handled the same as if you were spending it on your own character, except that you can only spend it for re-rolls, extra effort, and creative control.

Furthermore, it's up to you to come up with an in-game reason for the boost. For example, if you spent Oomph to let the ally re-roll when trying to move out of the way of a falling boulder, you might say, "The boulder rolls right toward you, but you don't see it in time. Fortunately, an alert villager dives into you, knocking you clear of the boulder's path." Of course, the GM has the right to veto the reason if she feels it's not possible even in the world of the retro-toons.

Companions and Vehicles

Oomph can be spent on a character's companions and vehicles, as they are really an extension of the character himself.

Example of Turn-Based Combat

In this example, the group is playing the Warriors of the Cosmos series. The players are Bryan (as Combato) and Tim (as Kazgull). Norbert is the Game Master.

Norbert: You make your way through the marshy swamp, shooting and hacking the thick vines out of your way as you go. You find a relatively clear area of land, but upon entering it, you hear an all too familiar voice say, "It's so nice of you two to make it. I was beginning to think you were never going to show up. Now, it's time to put an end to your pathetic quest."

Bryan: Who is it?

Norbert: It's King Krab. He steps out from behind a massive tree across the clearing from you. But he's not alone. With him is none other than Eye-Catcher.

Tim: Kazgull points at them and says, "It's gonna take more than the likes of you to keep us from succeeding."

Norbert: Eye-Catcher retorts, "We'll see about that, fool!" Okay, it's time to make an initiative roll. We're going to do group initiative. Since you're both using NPCs as PCs, your Oomph is considered to be 2, +1 for each point of Threshold the characters have over 10… but since they both have 10, you have 2 Oomph apiece. One of you needs to roll a die and add 2. I roll a die and add 1, which is standard for most NPCs.

[Tim rolls and gets a roll of 7 before adding 2, for a total initiative of 9; Norbert rolls for the villains and lands a 3, which after adding 1, comes up to 4]

Norbert: You guys get to go first.

Bryan: Combato is going to use his "Retractable Roller Skates 4" to charge toward King Krab, hoping to bowl him over.

Norbert: The ground is too slushy and bumpy to use the skates. Sorry.

Bryan: In that case, I'd like to spend Oomph to make use the Creative Control option. The idea is to have an uprooted tree nearby so I can skate on it all the way over to King Krab.

Norbert: That sounds reasonable. Since it's not a hugely impacting alteration, I'll let you do it for the expenditure of 1 Oomph. It's time for the combat check. For the attack check portion, you'll be using "Retractable Roller Skates 4".

[Bryan rolls 8 and adds 4, for a total of 12]

Norbert: Very good roll, Bryan. Now King Krab has to make a defense check. He's going to hold his ground in an effort to shrug off the incoming attack. So, he'll use his "Toughness 3". He also has "Shell Armor 4", which has an Enhancer of +2. This means that he gets to add 5 to his roll.

[Norbert rolls 6 and adds 5, for a total of 11]
[Since Combato's result was higher than King Krab's result, Krabby receives a Setback Token]

Norbert: That was close, but ultimately Combato plows right into King Krab, knocking him off his feet and into a nearby body of water.

Tim: Cool, it's my turn. Are there any pools of standing water near Kazgull?

Norbert: Yes, several of them. But they're only about 2 feet

deep, unlike the deep one that King Krab was knocked into.

Tim: Kazgull is going to run toward one of the pools at breakneck speed and swing his battleaxe at an angle into the water, sending a miniature tidal wave in the direction of Eye-Catcher. I want it to collide into her and knock her on her duff. That should require Kazgull's "Savage Strength 4" and the Enhancer +4 from his "Battle Axe 7", correct?

Norbert: That is correct. You'd ordinarily add 8 to the roll, but because the water's not deep enough to get a really good tidal wave, I'm going to give you a –2 situational adjuster. So, you'll add 6 to the roll instead.

[For the attack check, Tim rolls 3. He adds 6 to it, for a total of 9]

Norbert: Eye-Catcher is going to use her "Athletics 2" to leap up and grab the branch of a tree branch, making the tidal wave go under her.

[For the defense check, Norbert rolls 12. That's a boon! He therefore doubles Eye-Catcher's rating, making it "Athletics 4". The 12 is added to the 4, for an impressive total of 16]
[Since Eye-Catcher's result was higher than Kazgull's result, the attack fails]

Norbert: She successfully pulls herself up onto the tree branch, while your miniature tidal wave misses altogether. Now, it's the villains' turn to act. Let's start with King Krab, who is now underwater. He's going to use "Strategic Mind 3" to trick Combato into coming into the water, where he'll have the distinct advantage. To do so, he'll float to the top of the water face down, acting like he's unconscious.

[For the attack check, Norbert rolls 9. He adds 3 to it, for a total of 12]

Bryan: Uh oh, this could be very bad for Combato. He's going to use his "Observation Sensors 2" in an effort to pinpoint a clue to the fact that Krab is playing possum.

[For the defense check, Bryan rolls 4. He adds 2 to it, for a total of 6]
[Since King Krab's result was higher than Combato's result, the attack succeeds]

Norbert: Since Combato's such a nice guy, he's afraid that King Krab might drown (though he wonders momentarily if he's able to breathe in water). He wades into the water and puts himself in King Krab's element. Sorry, Bryan, but Combato gains a Setback Token.

Bryan: But that's not an attack. Why did Combato get a Setback Token?

Norbert: Setback Tokens aren't necessarily representative of actual damage. It just reflects the character inching closer to the jaws of defeat… and by moving into the water (where King Krab is most at home), Combato just put himself in a bad situation.

Bryan: Oh, okay, I see. That makes sense now.

Norbert: As for Eye-Catcher, she is currently perched atop the tree branch. She bounces on it a few times for extra momentum and then dives off, aiming herself directly at Kazgull. The check will be made using her "Skilled Fighter 4" Trait. Since it has the "Specialty" Bonus, I get to roll a Benefit Die in addition to the die I normally roll.

[For the attack check, Norbert rolls two dice and gets a 2 and a 6. Obviously, he takes the 6. He adds 4 to it, for a total of 10]

Tim: I know it's risky, but I think I'm going to spend 1 Oomph to use the Counterattack option. So, Kazgull's going to use the blunt of his axe like a baseball bat, knocking her out of the ballpark, so to speak.

Norbert: Okay, but if you do, you'll lose an additional Oomph because that's a pretty serious attack on a female from a male character, which wasn't allowed in the retro-toons.

Tim: Good point. I'm not sure what I was thinking. I still want to do the counterattack though; I'll just come up with something different. I think Kazgull will hurl his axe at the base of the tree limb and sever it, causing her to fall to the ground. That's not too overt, is it?

Norbert: No, that's perfectly in the spirit of the genre. It's an indirect attack.

Tim: This will be using the "Fierce Fighter 4" Trait, with the "Enhancer" from his Battle Axe 7" Trait giving him a +4 boost.

Norbert: I really don't think that "Fierce Fighter" would be most suitable here, as you're not engaging in direct combat.

Tim: Well, he has "Wilderness Survival 3", which could give him knowledge about this type of tree – where to hit its limbs, how hard to throw the axe to penetrate its bark, and so forth.

Norbert: (laughs) Normally, I'd say that's grasping at straws, but I'm a sucker for originality, so I'll allow it. You still get to add the +4 from the axe.

[For the defense check, Tim rolls 8. He adds 7 to it, for a total of 15]
[Since Kazgull's result was higher than Eye-Catcher's result, Eye-Catcher's attack fails. However, since Kazgull spent

1 Oomph to pull of a counterattack, Eye-Catcher gains a Setback Token]

Norbert: Kazgull throws his battleaxe just as Eye-Catcher makes her final bounce. It chops right through the tree limb and she plummets to the ground with a resounding "thud" sound. It's time for the second turn of the combat.

This continues until one side or the other is defeated.

SCENE-BASED COMBAT

Fight sequences don't always need to be fully detailed. Sometimes, it's best to wrap combat scenes up quickly in order to keep the story moving. Scene-based combat allows you to play out an entire fight sequence with but a single opposed check.

When to Use Scene-Based Combat

Scene-based combat is useful for keeping things snappy. There are several circumstances in which you should use it rather than turn-based combat:

- When time is short.
- When the fight is relatively unimportant.
- When the PCs are fighting Goons (see later). Actually, this is *required* when fighting Goons.

The Battle Check

When scene-based combat begins, both combatants make an opposed Battle Rating check. Whoever rolls the highest wins the combat. The winner briefly describes how she dispatched her adversary. If a player feels uncomfortable with this, she can ask the GM to describe it instead.

The heroes always win ties.

Multiple Combatants

Combat isn't always a one on one affair. Sometimes, there are lots of people on each side. When this is the case, a d12 is rolled for each side, adding in the Battle Ratings of all participants to their respective die rolls. This gives each side a total result. Compare the results as per the method for carrying out a one on one battle. The higher rolling side wins the battle, with the heroes always winning ties.

The narrating should be done as a collaborative effort between the participants of the winning side. Of course, if the villains win, the GM narrates the battle.

Rolling Flubs and Boons

Rolling flubs and boons in scene-based combat is identical to rolling them for regular checks.

What Happens to the Losers?

If the bad guys lose the battle, they flee or get captured or, in the case of multiple villains, any combination thereof (GM's choice).

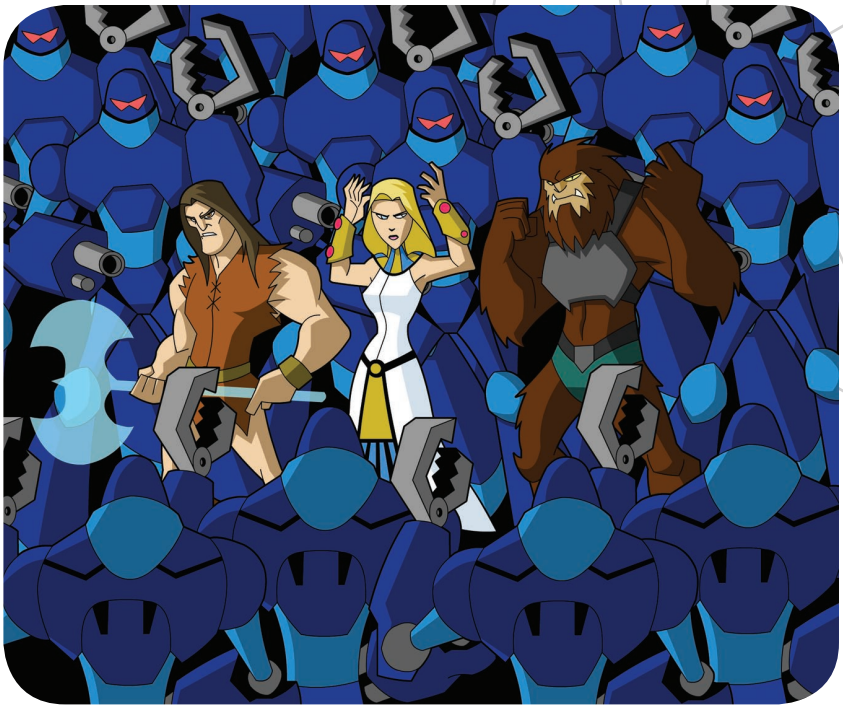
If the good guys lose the battle, they are forced to retreat if possible. If they lose by a margin of 6 or more, the enemies capture them.

Goons

Grunts, Mooks, and, Cannon fodder. Whatever you want to call them, Goons are expendable villains that attack in groups. Each such group is known as a *Goon squad*. A Goon squad attacks as a single character. That is, if there are three Goon squads in a battle, the GM would roll for each squad individually, adding their Battle Ratings as normal.

Goons don't pose as much of a threat as normal characters. This means that when the GM rolls for a Goon squad, she rolls a Detriment Die along with the normal die.

In most cases, Goons are incapable of participating in anything except scene-based combat. So, if a battle involves them, it almost automatically becomes scene-based. See below for the exception.



Mixing it Up – Goons and Non-Goon Villains

You may be wondering what happens if Goons and non-Goon villains alike are involved in the same combat scene. First of all, this was a relatively uncommon occurrence in the retro-toons. In most instances, the Goons would attack first, while the non-Goon villains stayed back, barking orders if necessary. Once the Goons were dispatched, they would make their move… but usually not until then. This should be the case in *Cartoon Action Hour* as well.

However, if the Game Master really feels the need to mix Goons and non-Goon villains up in the same combat, she can opt to make it a turn-based combat. In such cases, all Goon squads making non-combat checks are considered to be using Traits that have a rating of 0. When making combat related checks, Goon squads just use their Battle Ratings for everything, ignoring any Goon modifiers that aren't pertinent or compatible with turn-based combat. A Goon squad is Defeated if it receives a single Setback Token.

Spending Oomph

Oomph can be spent during scene-based combat, but only for the Re-Roll option. Since so much rides on that single die roll, however, re-rolling a character's check costs 2 Oomph instead of the usual 1. Otherwise, all the rules are identical.

GMs may not spend Oomph on Goons. They're just not important enough.

CHARACTER IMPROVEMENT

Retro-toon heroes and villains were far from unchanging. In fact, they changed more often than characters from other types of fiction. These character changes were typically brought forth by the release of a brand new, variant action figure. Sometimes, the new version of the action figure would simply sport a different costume, while other times, major alterations were made – new weapons, new play-features, increased abilities (as depicted on the bio cards), and so on. Invariably, such changes were translated over to the associated cartoon as well.

Likewise, characters in *Cartoon Action Hour* can only be improved or changed between seasons (i.e., after 8 sessions). Follow the procedure given here to advance characters:

1) Tally Experience Points
2) Make Improvement Rolls or Revamp the Character
3) Spend Proof of Purchase Points

Tally Experience Points

At the end of each season, the GM needs to figure up how many episodes each PC played a significant role in. This doesn't include cameos and other brief appearances. For each such episode, the character gains 1 Experience Point.

The exception to the "no cameos and brief appearances" rule is the *After-Show Message* (which is detailed on pages 86-87); characters who participate in at least one of them receive an additional Experience Point. This is not cumulative, so participating in two of them won't net the character a total of two Experience points.

Make Improvement Rolls

Once Experience Points are calculated, each character gets to make an *improvement roll*. To do so, roll a die for your character and add its Experience Points to the result. Using the total result, consult the table below: This will determine how many Proof of Purchase Points you receive to improve your character with.

Result:	PoPPs Gained:
1-5	2 PoPPs
6-10	3 PoPPs
11+	4 PoPPs

Base Oomph Increase

After you make an improvement roll, you can attempt to improve the character's base Oomph. To do so, roll a die. If the die rolls 11 or 12, the base Oomph goes up by 1. Base Oomph cannot be higher than 5 under any circumstances. An increase in base Oomph will result in a +1 increase to the character's Threshold as well.

Resetting Experience Points

After the improvement roll, your character's Experience Point total goes back down to 0. This doesn't mean that the character is no longer experienced; it means your character has essentially cashed the points in, in return for a boost in her abilities.

Revamp the Character

If you'd like to change a lot of stuff about the character, you can partake in a *revamp* instead of making an improvement roll. If this is the case, select up to two options from the list below and carry them out. It's possible to select the same option twice.

- Get rid of a Trait and gain a number of Proof of Purchase Points equal to the amount it's worth. So, if you dump "Acrobatics 3", you'll gain 3 Proof of Purchase Points. This amount is adjusted by the Modifiers attached to the Trait.
- Reduce the rating of a Trait by any amount (down

to a minimum of 1) and receive a number of Proof of Purchase Points equal to the worth of the amount you reduced it by. So, if you have "Athlete 4" and want to reduce it to 1, you'll receive 3 points back. Things may become slightly more complex when you move into the realm of 5+ ratings, as each rating above 4 is worth 2 Proof of Purchase Points.

- With the GM's permission, you can drop one Subplot entirely or you may replace one with a new Subplot.
- With the GM's permission, you can add or subtract any number of Factoids.

Spend Proof of Purchase Points

You may now spend the accumulated Proof of Purchase Points you gained from the improvement roll or the revamp. You can spend them as follows:

- Increase a Trait rating. This costs the same as during character creation (i.e., +1 for 1 Proof of Purchase Point up to and including a rating of 4; +1 for 2 Proof of Purchase Points thereafter).
- Add a new Trait, with the GM's permission. This is handled exactly like during character creation. Most GMs will accept new skills or gear, but will be less likely to allow new powers or other supernatural capabilities.
- Add a Bonus to a Trait, paying the normal cost for doing so (usually 1 Proof of Purchase Point).
- Add a Restriction to a Trait, gaining the normal amount of Proof of Purchase Points for doing so (usually 1 Proof of Purchase Point).
- Remove a Bonus from a Trait, receiving an amount of Proof of Purchase Points equal to its cost (usually 1 Proof of Purchase Point).
- Remove a Restriction from a Trait, paying an amount of Proof of Purchase Points equal to the normal amount that it grants you for taking it (usually 1 Proof of Purchase Point).

Adjusting Battle Rating

Don't forget to adjust your character's Battle Rating if its primary combat Trait has been increased.

Kargorr Sez:

I still say that the villains should be given more options for improvement than the pesky heroes. In fact, I hereby institute my very own optional rule: the Game master can increase all game stats for villains by as high an amount as she likes. See, this game design gig isn't so difficult.

Bravesteel Sez:

Well, Kargorr, you will be happy to learn that Channel 5 offers some additional methods for NPC advancements and one of them is more or less the same as your version. You can turn to page 66 for the details.

Kargorr Sez:

That blasted author stole yet another of my brilliant ideas! I shall thwart her with my newest doomsday device, the Insano-Mite Transducing Cannon!

Bravesteel Sez:

snicker Insano-Mite Transducing Cannon? You've GOT to be kidding me.

Kargorr Sez:

WHAT?! What's so funny about that, fool?!

NOW YOU KNOW...

Retro-Toon Roleplaying

This section is intended to give you some tips for being a good player.

Get Along, Gang!

Cartoon Action Hour is a game of cooperative storytelling. The word "cooperative" is there for a reason. Like in any roleplaying game, the player characters will have to work together to succeed in a common goal. That point should be stressed even more in this game than in most, because teamwork was one of the major themes of the retro-toons. Sure, characters bickered in the cartoons, but ultimately everyone pitched in to get the job done in the end. This was fodder for "moral of the story" after-show messages on numerous occasions.

So, the moral of *this* story (err… article) is that you, as a player, should endeavor to be a team player. It's okay to have your character disagree with her peers, but a plot point should be made of it. Perhaps your character was wrong and can only come out on top with the help of the other PCs. Or perhaps your character temporarily splits off from the group, only to find herself in deep trouble. As long as these situations arise only occasionally, and with maturity, uncooperative actions can be productive to the story.

By and large, though, the protagonists should get along. Don't constantly have your character argue with the other heroes just for the sake of arguing with them. It just sucks away the retro-toon vibe from the episode.

Share the Spotlight

A good Game Master allows each hero to have the spotlight pointed at her. A good player doesn't try to hog that spotlight. By all means, you should bask in the glory of the limelight; just don't keep the other players from having the same opportunity to do the same.

One common mistake that players make is that they get so excited that they flat out forget to step back and let another PC take the lead. They forge ahead to get their characters involved in everything that goes on during the episode. While this enthusiasm is admirable, it can lead to selfish roleplaying. Don't fall into that trap.

Don't Touch That Dial

Before playing Cartoon Action Hour (especially for the first time), try watching an episode or two of a retro-toon to refresh your memory and immerse yourself in the unique style of the genre. If you've not seen the old cartoons in many years, I would venture to say that this is imperative.

While watching these shows, you should pay close attention to the heroes. Analyze their behavior, fighting styles, speech patterns, and actions. This is an invaluable source of information about what makes retro-toon heroes different than the heroes of other genres.

The biggest obstacle would be that sometimes, the retro-toons aren't available for your viewing pleasure. You can't usually just walk down to your local video store and rent the Inhumanoids or Visionaries on DVD. If no one in your circle of friends has access to any of the 1980s cartoons, your best bet would be to log onto the Internet. You'd be amazed at what you can find there… and for ridiculously cheap prices if you search hard enough. The last source of retro-toon goodness would be to haunt stores, flea markets, and rummage sells.

Creative Combat Moves

It's too easy to say, "My character punches Mastermynd", far, far too easy. Describing your combat actions in such a way is downright lazy, so avoid it at all cost. This is a game about telling a story, and as a player, one of your duties is to help tell the story in question. That being the case, don't be afraid to ham it up with colorful and creative ways to attack those dastardly bad guys! Look for interesting ways to pull off nifty stunts using the environment. You can always spend Oomph for "creative control" if you need a boulder or deep pit to be present.

You should also make sure that you keep your maneuvers within the realm of the retro-toon genre. The violence depicted on those old shows was surprisingly non-violent. If you try to describe your character gutting a foe with her trusty broad sword, the GM will assuredly shoot your idea down… and she may even chuck a die at you for being so clueless.

Channel 5

GAME MASTERING

SUB-SECTIONS

This channel has been divided into four sub-sections: ***Other Rules***, ***The Supporting Cast***, ***Episodes***, and ***Game Mastering Advice***. It has been written with the GM in mind, so when the text says "you", it is referring to the GM.

SUB-SECTION ONE: OTHER RULES

NPC'S AN'T OOMPH

You'll no doubt have noticed by now that NPCs have no Oomph listed in their write-ups. Your first thought was probably something along the lines of, "Wow, what kind of idiots would leave out something so important?"

Well, the fact of the matter is, it was no mistake. NPCs have no Oomph. You read it correctly. They are sans Oomph. Just because they are Oomphless, however, doesn't mean they're up the creek without a paddle.

The Oomph Pool

At the beginning of each episode, the Game Master receives a pool of Oomph that he can spend throughout the course of that episode. The exact amount is equal to 6 plus the number of players participating in the episode.

Each time an NPC's Subplot come into play, an extra Oomph is added to the pool for the next episode.

Spending Oomph

The Oomph can be spent to help out any non-Goon NPCs. The GM may spend Oomph the same way PCs do, except that the "Creative Control" option cannot be used.

Gaining Oomph

Up to 4 Oomph can be gained per game, by activating NPC Subplots. You or the players can activate an NPC's Subplots, though each Subplot can only be activated once per episode. Whenever an NPC's Subplot is activated, add 1 Oomph to your pool of Oomph.

VILLAIN TRICK'S

Once per episode, 2 Oomph can be spent from the pool so that the series' master villain or the villain who is the primary antagonist for the episode in question can pull off a Trick. Performing a Trick doesn't use up the villain's move or action for the turn. There are several different Tricks to choose from.

Villainous Escape

Master villains are experts at evasion, fleeing, or otherwise slipping away from the grasps of their heroic adversaries. If you use this trick, roll a die. If it comes up a 1 or 2, the escape doesn't work. Any other result indicates that the villain manages to get away and is no longer involved in the scene. You should describe how he pulls it off, though. Don't just say, "He disappears". Be creative and invent some kind of wacky manner in which he makes good his escape – a hidden escape vehicle, a secret trap door, a collapsing ceiling that conceals him while he hightails it, or whatever else you can dream up.

Trap

The master villain has a hidden trap ready to use against the unsuspecting good guys. You may choose to do it against one particular character present or up to 3 of them. Roll a die. On a 1-2, the trap doesn't work properly or the character(s) avoid it. Any other result indicates that the trap nails the character(s). If the trap was successful, you may distribute three Setback Tokens among the characters as you see fit.

Whether the roll succeeds or fails, you should describe the nature of the trap. The more intricate, the better, though simplicity has its charms as well.

Motivate

The master villain can inspire his Leaders and Henchmen (see pages 72-74) to perform more effectively in combat by bellowing out orders, encouragement, or threats. Roleplay it accordingly and then roll a die. If it comes up a 1 or 2, the Trick fails to do anything special. Any other result allows all of his Leaders and Henchmen to gain a +2 bonus to all their checks for the remainder of the turn.

Big Speech

Master villains tend to be windbags. They hatch devilish plans and vile machinations… and they like to spew out all the details of it (In Excruciating Detail) This Big Speech can be distracting to heroes. Roleplay it out accordingly and roll a die. If it comes up a 1 or 2, the Trick fails to do anything special. Any other result imposes a –1 penalty to all their checks for the remainder of the scene.

Kargorr Sez:

Aha! Tricks! This, my devoted followers, is where I, Kargorr the Magnificent, can show my true expertise! No villain in all of Cartoon Land can even begin to match wits with me when it comes to trickery and deceit! I wrote the book on such matters! No, really. I actually wrote a book on it called "Kargorr's Guide to Awesome and Deadly Traps". Unfortunately, few people had minds intelligent enough to comprehend the glorious knowledge packed into that wondrous tome!

Bravesteel Sez:

It didn't sell well, did it?

Kargorr Sez:

Define "sell well."

Kaboom

Few things spice up an action sequence like the building coming apart at the seams while everyone dukes it out. Roll a die. If it comes up a 1 or 2, the Trick fails to do anything special. Any other result indicates that you should narrate something happening that would begin to make the place self-destruct. It doesn't have to be something the villain himself does, though it could very well be just that. Then, roll the die again, keeping the result secret from the players. Consult this chart accordingly.

Characters caught in the destruction are automatically Defeated.

Roll:	Time Until Destruction:
1-3	3 turns
4-6	4 turns
7-9	5 turns
10-12	6 turns

NPCs and Experience

The PCs aren't the only characters that can improve between seasons. NPCs get better as well. There are two methods you can choose from. It's suggested that you select one of them and stick with it throughout the entire series.

The Standard Method

The standard method follows the rules for improving PCs, except that NPCs cannot increase base Oomph, since they don't have base Oomph to begin with.

When determining whether or not an NPC is eligible for Experience Points, consider how much of an impact he made. See the guidelines below:

Villains

If the NPC is a villain, he should only be given an Experience Point for an episode in which he met at least one of the following criteria:

- The villain is the Master Villain and hatched a plot.
- The villain directly contributed to the Master Villain's plot.
- The villain directly opposed one or more heroes (PC or NPC) in a combat or chase sequence.

Heroes

If the NPC is a hero (or a neutrally aligned character), he should only be given an Experience Point for an episode in which he met at least one of the following criteria:

- The hero directly aided another hero (PC or NPC).
- The hero directly opposed one or more villains in a combat or chase sequence.
- The hero did something particularly selfless and brave.

The Freeform Method

The freeform method involves simply making some minor (or even major) adjustments to the NPCs' game stats as you see fit. This is the easiest method, but you have to be careful not to eclipse the PCs' abilities.

COMMERCIAL BREAK'S

"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.

Roll:	Commercial Break Table #1:
1-4	***No effect!***
5	***Snack Commercial!*** A random player must go refill drinks and retrieve snacks for everyone who wishes him to do so. In return, however, that player's character receives a point of Oomph.
6	***Time to devise a new Trick!*** The master villain can perform an additional Trick this episode This Trick requires no Oomph expenditure.
7	***Bad Situation!*** The next check made by any PC suffers a –2 to the result. 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 penalty off until the next check instead.

Kargorr Sez:

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

Bravesteel Sez:

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

Kargorr Sez:

Correct, buffoon! But back to my point, when people tune in, they want to see… ME! They don't wish to be bombarded with 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 Sez:

rolls eyes…which is you.

Kargorr Sez:

Which is me, yes!

8	***Commercial for the villainous action figures!*** Until the next commercial break, non-Goon villains 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!*** Add 2 to the GM's Oomph Pool.
12	***Overly long commercial break!*** Roll twice on this table, applying both results. Re-roll "no effect" results and duplicate results.

Roll:	Commercial Break Table #2:
1-4	***No effect!***
5	***Schoolhouse Rock 'N Roll!*** The network plays an educational music video during the 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 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 NPC to roll a Detriment Die when said NPC is getting ready to make a check. 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 gadget to use temporarily. The PC effectively has a temporary Trait that represents a gadget or power, with a rating of 3. Once it has been used, the PC no longer possesses it. The Trait must be used before the end of the episode.
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 that lasts until the end of the episode.
12	***Overly long commercial break!*** Roll twice on this table, applying both results. Re-roll "no effect" results and duplicate results.

HAZARDS AND THREATS

In *Cartoon Action Hour*, characters will encounter all manner of danger. 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 check to grab onto something, with an appropriate DN based on the situation at hand (e.g., grabbing onto an oily surface is going to be more difficult that grabbing onto a rocky cliff). The Trait used should usually reflect the character's reflexes, agility, quickness or ability to think quickly.

If the character falls, he could suffer damage. The character makes a check, using a Trait that represents his ability to shrug off damage. The DN depends on the length of the fall. Treat this like a combat check versus the character.

Fall:	DN:	Example:
Short	0	Off a table or car
Medium	1	Off a single-story building
Long	2	Off a 2 or 3-story building
Very Long	3-4	Off a 4 or 5-story building
Extremely Long	5-6	Off a 6 to 10-story building
Unbelievably Long	7-8	Off a skyscraper or mountain

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.

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.

A character can hold his breath for a number of turns equal to the rating of his endurance or swimming based Trait +3. Every turn the character remains submerged after that, he gains a Setback Token. Armor or similar Traits don't protect the character from this damage, unless specifically designed to do so.

You 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 2 Setback Tokens. Traits don't protect against this damage (there's just too much fire around), unless specifically designed to do so.

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.

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, if a character gets stuck in quicksand, roll a die and divide the result by two. That's how many turns it'll take for the character to sink. Each turn, he can attempt to get out, taking an action to do so. This will likely require a check of some sort. Which Trait is tested will depend on the surrounding area and the player's imagination in concocting an escape plan. For example, if there are tree branches hanging low, the character may be able to reach one, thus using a finesse-based Trait. The DN starts out at 2 and increases by +1 each turn.

Once the character runs out of turns, he is Defeated. At this point, you'll need to devise a way for him to survive. Perhaps someone fishes him out or maybe the quicksand leads to a subterranean underworld.

SUB-SECTION TWO: THE SUPPORTING CAST

QUICK NOTE ABOUT NPCS

There's no disputing the fact that the PCs are the stars of the series. However, if they have no other characters to interact with, that fact is meaningless. They need bystanders to save, allies to rely on, and villains to do battle with. Otherwise, what's the point of being a hero?

That's where non-player characters (aka "the supporting cast") come into play.

Of course, this means that it falls upon the shoulders of you, the Game Master, to play these characters whenever the PCs encounter them. Furthermore, it's your job to create the NPCs. The latter is what this channel focuses on.

NPC GAME STATS

When designing "throw away" NPCs (i.e., NPCs that have very little impact on the game and will only be used once), don't bother giving them game stats. Just give them a name and a personality and call it good. As long as they seem interesting, you're ahead of the game.

All the other NPCs deserve more attention; they should be given full game stats. This may seem like a big pain in the neck, but you'll be glad you did it later on, because few things can drag down a series like underdeveloped NPCs. When creating an NPC's game stats, you'll see how he or she springs to life as the process continues on. It's a truly rewarding experience.

Using the System

Channel 3 presents a fully detailed set of rules for creating characters. It is recommended that you use it when designing NPCs. The rules for doing so are no different than for PCs, except that you do not buy Oomph. NPCs do not have their own individual pools of Oomph.

PoPP Total

When utilizing the character creation system, you should first determine how many PoPPs the NPC will have. Not all NPCs are created equal, so you shouldn't feel as if all NPCs should be built with the same amount of PoPPs.

For friendly or neutral NPCs, you generally shouldn't give them more PoPPs than the PCs. There are exceptions, such as if the PCs aren't playing the leader of the hero team.

Villainous NPCs are trickier, since they'll be the ones the PCs will go toe to toe with on a regular basis. If they aren't given an appropriate amount of PoPPs, the results could be disastrous the first time you send them up against the PCs. As you'll see in the "Villain Hierarchy" section, there are four categories of villains. Each type features guidelines on the number of PoPPs you should build them with.

- ***Master Villains*** should be built with at least as many PoPPs as any one of the PCs. For a more intimidating Master Villain, increase the PoPPs further, possibly even doubling the PCs.
- ***Leaders*** should be built with as many PoPPs as any one of the PCs.
- ***Henchmen*** are the most varied lot of villains. They can be built with a small amount of PoPPs or as many PoPPs as any one of the PCs… or anywhere in between. An average Henchman should be built with 75% - 100% of the amount allotted to PCs.
- ***Goons*** are not statted out the same way as other characters, thus they don't have traditional PoPPs, per se.

Not Using the System

If you prefer a more freewheeling approach to NPC creation, you can forego the rules and just give the characters what you think they should have, without messing with PoPPs. You should be extremely careful using this approach, however, especially in the case of creating villains. If a villain ends up being overwhelmingly tough and trounces the PCs without breaking a sweat, then it certainly doesn't facilitate "fun". Try to make the NPCs as balanced as possible.

Bravesteel Sez:

There's no right or wrong method for creating NPCs. Obviously, using the system will result in more balanced NPCs, but *not* using the system will save you a great deal of time. And that, my friends, is a fact.

Kargorr Sez:

Poppycock! Everyone knows that creating NPCs (or at least the villainous NPCs) without using the system will exponentially increase the game's fun factor! After all, you can design them to be as powerful as you'd like without the foolish fetters of this confining game system! As such, you will avoid creating namby-pamby bad guys who get trounced by the series' heroes!

Bravesteel Sez:

You are positively hopeless. And that, my friends, is a fact.

Kargorr Sez:

Stop saying that awful catch phrase!

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 NPCs 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. 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 NPCs.

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.

Lastly, don't forget that many episodes of the retro-toons concluded with the comic relief character saying or doing something "amusing" and all the heroes sharing a good, deep belly laugh. When you can't figure out how to end an episode consider using this device.

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

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 NPCs, 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:

Ego: *All megalomaniac leaders have to possess an 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 somebody who's bad to the bone.

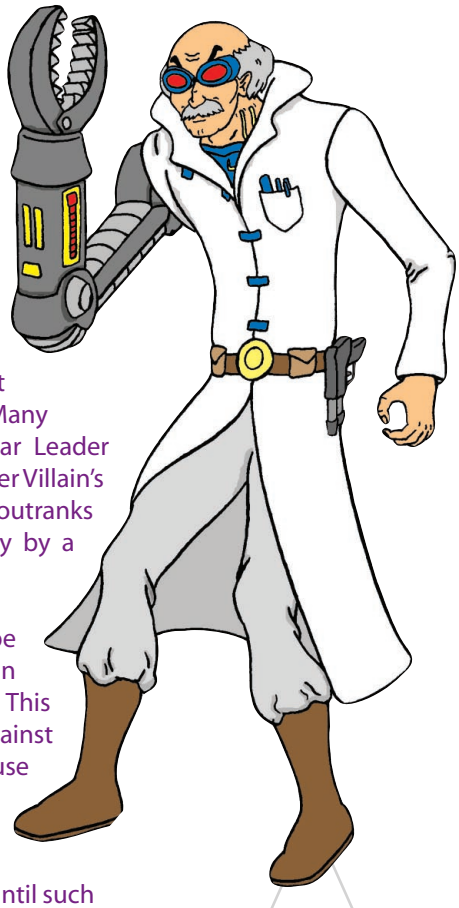
There's no need to stat the headquarters out. Describing it is usually enough. Villain HQs were seldom consistent in the retro-toons. If the writers wanted it to feature a huge cannon, then, by golly, it would have a huge cannon in that episode. And in all likelihood, it wouldn't be there the next episode.

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

Leaders are the baddies that are directly beneath the Master Villain. They often act as taskmasters, 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

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

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.

VILLAIN ORGANIZATION ARCHETYPE

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
- x8 Henchmen
- x2 types of Goons

Creating Goons

Goons are the workhorses of nearly every villain organization. From mobs of robots and aliens to power armored soldiers and mutated slime people, Goons are the Master Villain's first line of defense.

When creating Goons, you must understand that they are not singularly tough enough to be a significant threat to the heroes. That's why they almost always attack in groups, which are referred to as *Goon squads* (3-6 Goons). They do not act individually on the battlefield, but as a team. All combat against them is handled by the rules for scene-based combat.

It should be noted that, while Goons are most usually the province of villain organizations, heroic organizations sometimes employ them too.

Goon Ownership

In most cases, the goons simply belong to the organization just like the other villains. They aren't attached to one specific NPC.

Points

You'll receive a certain number of points to spend on a single type of Goon. The exact number depends on how powerful you feel they should be. If you'd rather randomize things a bit, roll 1d12+5; the result is how many

Kargorr Sez:

In my vast experience, I've found that nothing screws up a good plan like incompetent goons! That being the case, I urge all you wanna-be masterminds to fire your goons and replace them with… well, I don't know… *better* goons! You will not regret it!

Bravesteel Sez:

Actually fans Kargorr was the one responsible for all his own failures. And believe me when I say he had a lot of failures to account for.

Kargorr Sez:

Feh. So says you, you mouth-breathing ignoramus!

points the organization receives for building its rank and file Goons. These points must be spread among the different types of Goons within the organization.

- **Lowest of the Low:** 4 points
- **Substandard:** 5 points
- **Standard:** 6 points
- **High Quality:** 7 points
- **Elite:** 8 points

Battle Rating

A Goon's Battle Rating functions the same as those belonging to normal characters. Of course, they tend to be lower, but that's to be expected.

Battle Rating:	Point Cost:
-3	1
-2	2
-1	3
0	4
1	6
2	8
3	10

Goon Modifiers -- Bonuses

You can spend points on the following Bonuses for your Goons.

Rugged

2 points. The Goon squad only rolls 1 die for the Battle Rating check, rather than rolling the usual 2 dice and using the lowest result.

Extremely Rugged

4 points. The Goon squad cannot have both "Rugged" and "Extremely Rugged". The Goon squad rolls two dice for the Battle Rating check and uses the highest result.

Vicious Assault

1 point. If the side with this Goon squad loses the combat, choose one of the winning characters. That character must make a DN 2 check using a Trait that measures toughness. If she fails, the character gains a Setback Token automatically. Protective Traits cannot protect against this.

Specialists

1 point. This Goon squad may be given a Trait with a rating of 1. While Goon squads can be given any Trait, the Trait cannot be used in combat. For example, a Goon squad can have "Good Fighters", but it would be pointless because all combat involving Goons utilizes its Battle Rating. This is mostly used to create Goons that can perform other non-combat tasks, such as giving a Trait like "Repair" or "Communications" to a Goon squad designed to be mechanics and communications experts, respectively.

You may take this Bonus more than once. Each time it's taken, choose one of the following options:

1) Give the Goon squad another Trait with a rating of 1.
2) Add +1 to an existing Trait rating. A goon squad's rating cannot be more than 4.

Skilled Fighters

1 point. This Goon squad wins all ties on the Battle Rating check.

Mob Tactics

1 point. If the side with this Goon squad outnumbers the other side, each Goon squad with this Bonus adds +2 to its result. For purposes of determining whether or not the opposing side is outnumbered, count each Goon squad as 1 character.

Ensnare

2 points. This Goon squad can attempt to hinder the opponents by using tentacles, pincers, claws, nets or some other means of capture. Before the Battle Rating check is made, roll a die for each Goon squad with this Bonus. Each die that rolls 10-12 causes any one opposing character to reduce his Battle Rating by 2, down to a minimum of 0. If more than one of your Goon squads possess this Bonus, you can apply the penalties to enemy characters any way you wish. So, if two of the Goon squads have Ensnare and roll 10-12, you could choose to give two enemies a –2 penalty or you could give one enemy a -4 penalty.

Special Attack
2 points. This can be used to represent powerful weapons, flying-based swoop attacks, special powers, or whatever else you can conjure up. Roll a die before making the Battle Rating check. If the result is 1-6, the Goon squad receives no special bonus; if the result is 7-11, the Goon squad adds 1 to their check result. If the result is 12, add 2 to the check result.

Natural-Born Followers
3 points. When this Goon squad goes into combat alongside one or more non-Goon characters, add 1 to the squad's Battle Rating.

Goon Modifiers -- Restrictions
You can receive up to 4 points by taking Restrictions. Each Restriction write-up lists how many points you receive for taking it.

Dependent
+2 points. Unless the Goon squad goes into combat with at least one non-Goon ally, the squad is useless. The enemy automatically destroys it.

Weakness
+1 point. This is used for creating Goon squads that are vulnerable to something, such as the way aquatic humanoids might be less effective when out of the water or the way vampires are susceptible to holy symbols. Upon taking this Restriction, choose one substance, item, type of character, or situation. If this weakness is involved in the combat scene in any way, the Goon squad's Battle Rating check result is reduced by 4, down to a minimum of 0.

Fragile
+1 point. This Goon squad cannot be captured. They always either flee or are destroyed.

SUB-SECTION THREE: EPISODES

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.

Act One: The Setup

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" (see page 89) 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.

Kargorr Sez:

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?

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 NPC, 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 an NPC, 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 an NPC, 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!

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-allies, 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.

If the master villain is taken into custody, you should spend your Oomph on the "Villainous Escape" Trick (see page 65). Doing so is considered good form.

Kargorr Sez:

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.

Bravesteel Sez:

So, you're not good at escaping?

Kargorr Sez:

OF COURSE I AM, YOU FOOL! I mean.. err.. well…

Bravesteel Sez:

I thought you said that you never try to escape.

Kargorr Sez:

Gah! It was trickery on your behalf! Trickery!

OBJECTIVES

An episode without an objective is not much of an episode. You've got to give the PCs something to accomplish, lest they'll wander around aimlessly waiting for something to happen. The objective of an episode can be as simple or as convoluted as you like. As long as it provides a goal for the heroes, you're on the right track.

Ultimately, objectives can be broken down into several categories. These categories are not meant to restrict you in your plotting. Rather, they are relatively wide open, allowing you to work within the framework they provide. You'll find that they are surprisingly versatile. You could create two episodes in a row using the same category and still make them drastically different from one another. Let's look at these categories:

Capture: The heroes must apprehend one or more characters.

Defend: The heroes must protect one or more locations, objects, or characters.

Deliver: The heroes must bring one or more items, characters, or pieces of information to a designated place/person.

Destroy: The heroes must blow up or otherwise get rid of one or more objects or locations.

Escape: The heroes must escape or avoid capture by one or more enemies.

Fix: The heroes must repair a device or gadget.

Infiltrate: The heroes must sneak into a location.

Recruit: The heroes must convince one or more characters to join their side.

Rescue: The heroes must find and release a trapped or imprisoned character.

Retrieve: The heroes must locate one or more objects and bring it/them to a specified destination.

Scout: The heroes must check out or investigate something (a rumor, an area, a person, etc.).

It's possible to integrate more than one objective into an episode, though you should do your best to keep the story from becoming convoluted. In most cases, it will suffice to stick with one.

SECONDARY PLOTS

When designing an episode, you might consider adding another plot that is less significant than the primary plot. These are called secondary plots and they really don't have to take up that much room in your overall episode. How important they are is up to you, so use your best judgment.

The retro-toons regularly used secondary plots to bulk up an episode's content and to flesh out the characters more. You can use them for the same reason, but with an added bonus: it gives characters that may not be directly involved with the primary plot something to do that is still constructive to the story.

For example, let's say that your primary plot, for a *Warriors of the Cosmos* episode, revolves around Nekrottus capturing Iconia's greatest minds and forcing them to create for him a weapon of mass destruction. Obviously, the heroes are going to try to put an end to this madness. A secondary plot could be that one of the male heroes meets a sweet girl during Act One. They take a liking to each other and he finds out that her father is working on an important scientific experiment. She tells him that her father needs one important component in order to succeed and asks the hero to help. In truth, her father is willingly working for Nekrottus and needs the part for the doomsday device. The girl may or may not be wise to this fact. So, one hero may find himself inadvertently doing Nekrottus's bidding.

Not all secondary plots have to be tied directly to the primary plot, but you should be sure to draw both plots to a close during Act Three. To do otherwise would make the episode seem off kilter.

Don't forget that a fantastic source of secondary plot ideas could be the PCs' Subplots. You can mine those for all they're worth and the players will usually be happy about that, because they'll have the opportunity to earn Oomph by coping with the problems that arise.

USING THEMES

A good story can work on multiple levels. Even in the retro-toons (which tended to be more about fun than about deep meaning), the writers often subscribed to this belief. The most common method of doing so was to develop the story with a theme in mind. A theme is an underlying message, morality, philosophy, or weighty issue that can be woven into the fabric of the story to evoke a more meaningful experience.

You too can use themes when creating episodes. In fact, you are encouraged to do so. If you think back to the old cartoons, you'll recall that some of them had a "moral of the story" after-show message. That's what theme is all about.

Instituting a theme may sound heady and intimidating, but it's actually easy. Before starting on Act One, ask yourself what you want the overriding message of the episode to be. Let's say that you choose "teamwork" as your theme. At that point, you should think ahead a bit and come up with at least one idea for making teamwork be the key to solving a problem during the episode. It doesn't need to be fleshed out yet; you just need a seed. Perhaps you want to introduce a foe that's so powerful that none of the heroes could defeat it in a one-on-one confrontation. You could even take that a step further and plan it so that even the combined might of all the heroes would be insufficient to defeat it… so that they'll actually have to team up with the villains in order to do so.

The trick to instilling a theme is to make it subtle. You needn't bonk the players over the head with it to make it work. In fact, it's usually best if the players don't get it until the inevitable "moral of the story" segment at the conclusion of the session.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Most retro-toon series kept their episodes… well, episodic. That is, each episode was its own self-contained story that didn't carry over directly into the next episode. The advantage of this, of course, was that viewers could tune into any given episode without getting lost. The disadvantage was that the stories were limited in their breadth due to the fact that everything had to fit within a snug 22-minute package.

It wasn't uncommon, however, for the writers to craft a two-part or three-part story on occasion. This allowed them to tell a more epic story than they could within the normal restraints

of a single episode. Therefore, you can whip up some multi-part stories for your own series. In such a case, develop the overall story using the three-act structure. If, for example, you are going with a three-parter, Act Three would occur during the third episode, though it may not take up the entirety of the episode.

Each episode (except the final episode) almost invariably ended with three words emblazoned upon the screen: "To be continued…" And just as invariably, these words would appear just as a cliffhanger situation was established. This made the viewer anxious to watch the next episode to find out what happened to the heroes. Such devices can be used in Cartoon Action Hour as well. Just be prepared to have impatient players chuck things at you as soon as you say, "to be continued".

SUB-SECTION FOUR: GAME MASTERING ADVICE

THE JOBS OF THE GM

The term "Game Master" says it all. An emphasis must be put on "Master", for these two words so perfectly sum up what you must strive for as the GM. What must you try to master?

We're glad you asked.

Master of Storytelling

You are, in many ways, the primary storyteller. It's true. While the players have a gigantic impact on how the story unfolds, you are the one who knows what is really going on. You know about the ambush the bad guys have set up. You know when the main villain will strike. You know that the player's "buddy" is really in cahoots with the enemy. You know that the niece of one of the PCs is going to get kidnapped.

Of course, the PCs' actions can drastically affect all this stuff. After all, it's no fun for players to be railroaded by a pushy GM who already has everything etched in stone. You must be able to roll with the punches and improvise wildly in order to give the players freedom. Remember, this is an interactive storytelling game. And there's nothing interactive about stubbornly refusing to change things according to the PCs' actions.

The trick is to find a balance between totalitarian GMing and being an absolute pushover when it comes to how much freedom you give the players.

In any case, you control the pace of the game, the events that the PCs must deal with, who the bad guys are, and so on. For this reason, you should work toward becoming the master of verbal storytelling. The better you describe the scenes and events, the more enthralling the game will be.

Master of Acting

The players play the main heroes. You play everyone else! Any time the PCs meet up with another NPC, guess who steps into the shoes of that character? You do.

This means you might be playing quite a few characters in a given episode. That's okay - it can be a great deal of fun. Think about the diversity: you might be playing a crazy old coot in one scene and a buffed-out warrior in the next or perhaps both of them… in the same scene.

Master of Refereeing

Games are meant to be fun, and Cartoon Action Hour is no exception. There are a zillion things the players could be doing instead of sitting around a table pretending to be someone else. That's why you must make sure that a good time is had by all.

This means keeping things on track when trouble pops up. If the players spiral into an argument, it's up to you to defuse the situation. If one of the players begins disrupting the game by telling jokes or long-winded stories about gaming sessions of days gone by, you're the one who gets to straighten her out. If a player starts bickering needlessly about the rules, you get to settle the issue.

Master of the Rules

It's your responsibility to know the rules of the game. You can discard or modify the rules as you see fit, but you are the one who makes any and all judgments on the rules. Besides, becoming familiar with all the rules will speed the game up immeasurably, as you won't need to constantly refer to the rulebook during the game.

BASIC GM SKILLS

You'll develop certain skills and abilities as you run more and more games. To help you along, we'll discuss some of the areas you might want to concentrate on. Don't let yourself feel overwhelmed by these. To be honest, your skills will improve over time. The more you run games, the better you'll become.

Description

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 an NPC'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 Sez:

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 Sez:

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.

EMBRACING THE GENRE

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.

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

CARTOON LOGIC EXAMPLES

Some of these have already been mentioned in the main text and some are even enforced by the game rules. They are included here for the sake of completeness.

- When a flying vehicle explodes, there is always a parachute or escape pod employed.
- Guns may look like real guns, but they always shoot lasers. Bullets don't seem to exist in the world of the retro-toons.
- Bladed weapons are everywhere, but they never actually cut anyone.
- Fire usually just makes characters turn black with soot. Burns never appear. In fact, fire is usually more of an implied threat than something that actually hurts characters.
- Quicksand (or something similar) is common, even though no one seems to die from it. Instead, they are rescued or sucked into an underground land.
- When a character is violently flung around and lands hard on the ground (or into a wall), it always makes an exaggeratedly funny "bounce" or "thump" kind of sound, accompanied by the "camera" shaking to maximize the effect of the impact.
- Master villains are inexplicably inclined to rattle off their plans to captured heroes, thinking them to no longer be a danger.
- Characters leaping from one airship to another.
- One hero can take on an entire group of goons.
- Rugs are unceremoniously yanked out from under characters, sending them hurling through the air.
- Heroes can temporarily disorient a villain by cramming a garbage can (or whatever) over her head and upper torso. This is usually accompanied by the villain bellowing, "Who turned the lights out?"
- Huge guns don't deal as much damage to characters as they do to vehicles and structures. This is because they always seem to fail to score a direct hit on characters, resulting in a near hit. The impact from the nearby explosion sends the character into a hard object.
- Sentient beings cannot die, but non-sentient robots can be blown to smithereens with wild abandon. This is why robots were so common in the retro-toons.
- Noggin knockers (wherein a hero slams two villains' heads together) are common and effective attacks.
- Gargantuan monsters with gaping maws can be stymied (at least for a moment) by jamming a large stick in its mouth, wedging it open and preventing it from chomping down.
- When a gunfight breaks out, almost every shot misses… even when thousands of guns are being fired.
- Men seldom (if ever) strike women in a direct manner. If you watch the old cartoons, you'll notice that men hardly ever cause actual harm to the female characters, especially by a melee attack. In fact, whenever possible, men fought men and women fought women… and when it wasn't possible, men put on the "kid gloves" when dealing with them.

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.

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.

After-Show Messages

Many of the retro-toons were formatted so that each episode concluded with a 30-second vignette. The contents of these vignettes 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 an Experience Point for taking part in the After-Show Message, as per the rules on page 61.

Running the After-Show Message

As GM, your job is a simple one in this case – set the scene and let the PCs 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.

Multiple PCs

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 much experience, 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.

When running shorter episodes, you should consider utilizing scene-based combat for all but major showdowns. This alone will speed things up exponentially, giving you more time for non-combat sequences.

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 Movie

Over the years, numerous series have hatched one or more animated movies. These movies generally boasted a more grandiose story, a darker tone, better animation, and lots of changes to the series from that point on.

Death may not have been a part of the retro-toons, but when a cartoon series spawned its own cartoon movie, all bets were off! Even during these movies, though, death didn't come cheap. It was always a pivotal moment, chock-full of drama and sentiment.

Also, the movies' plots were set on a larger scale. The scope and the stakes were almost always magnified.

Making The Movie Work

Design the story as a movie. In other words, make the plot self-contained and make it grandiose in comparison to other storylines you've run for the series up to that point.

Pull out all the stops! Bring out the best bad guys! Do something unexpected! And, yes, allow death. But only when dramatically appropriate.

Playing out a movie is also a good excuse for changes in character attitudes, outlooks, or even physical form. Someone who's really tired of her character can even use the movie as a nice dramatic way to remove their character from the game and start anew (and remember, if they later decide they liked their old character better, cartoon heroes have a hard time staying dead for long).

What follows is a list of suggested rules for you to use:

- Whenever a character gains her 4th Setback token, she must make an opposed check using her Stamina versus the attack Trait's rating. Failure means that you can opt to kill her off. In all fairness, you should at least allow the character to hover at death's door long enough to say a few last words, hopefully something melodramatic and poignant.
- All PCs begin the movie with two additional base Oomph. This can push the number to higher than the normal limit of 5. The movie should be where all the coolest stuff happens and that begins with the PCs having more cinematic leeway.
- Characters receive 2 to 3 Experience Points (your call) instead of just 1 for participating in the movie.
- After the movie, characters that played a role in it may immediately advance. Treat it as if it were the end of a season.

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 an extra 2-4 PoPPs to build it with. If you're after a star that is moderately more proficient than the co-stars, add 5- 10 PoPPs. If you're aiming to make the star vastly more powerful, hand out an extra 11-20 PoPPs.

Cut Scenes

The "camera" doesn't need to be focused on the heroes all the time. In fact, the retro-toons often used a spiffy little method of showing what's going on elsewhere called *cut scenes*. Cut scenes can be a great asset to you when running *Cartoon Action Hour*.

A cut scene is simply a scene that takes place solely with NPCs. The players get to see what happens, but it's important to stress to them that their characters don't and therefore they cannot act upon it. It's just a narrative device that can make things more entertaining and retro-toon-a-rific.

The most common use of cut scenes is when the retro-toons would show the bad guys doing bad guy things. Perhaps the Master Villain is shown bawling out his underlings for their failure. Or maybe a couple of henchmen are depicted carrying out an important part of the Master Villain's most recent evil scheme.

Of course, not all cut scenes have to revolve around villains. You can employ them for almost any purpose, which often entails centering upon the PCs' allies or even completely neutral parties.

Putting Cut Scenes to Use

To carry out a cut scene, you must play the roles of all the characters participating in it. This may feel a bit awkward at first, but don't give up. It comes easier in time.

In addition to adding entertainment for the players, cut scenes prove useful in another way as well. They can be utilized to help show the passage of time. By moving away from the main scene to a cut scene and then back again, you can dictate that a certain amount of time has passed.

EXAMPLE: *The PCs are involved in a scene in which they are receiving their mission that will involve traveling to a far-away land. Once the scene wraps up, the GM goes to a cut scene that involves the villains. After that, he cuts back to the PCs, who have now just arrived at the aforementioned "far-away land".*

One last thing to remember is that cut scenes should be kept short and to-the-point. The players are there to get involved in the action, not to watch you perform a one-person stage show.

Appendix 1

FEATURED SERIES

ABOUT THE FEATURED SERIES

This channel presents you with three series that can be played immediately. Very little preparation is required, allowing you to hit the ground running. This reduces the amount of set-up time required to play *Cartoon Action Hour*.

It may be that none of the series presented here are to your liking. That's okay. We won't hold it against you. Everyone has different tastes, after all. The good news is that this section can still be of use to you, even if you don't intend to play in any of the series. You can use them as inspiration for your own series or simply to see how a series can be formatted.

SERIES FORMAT

The featured series found within these pages share certain similarities in the way they are formatted. That having been said, there are also some differences between them. These differences are usually due to the needs of the sub-genres. For example, *Warriors of the Cosmos* has information on various locales, whereas *Strikeforce Freedom* and *Transbots* go light on such things since their emphasis isn't on an exotic world with equally exotic locations.

So, with that in mind, let's look at the information shared by all three series.

PC Creation Guidelines

This section gives you everything you need to know about creating PCs for the series in question. The information matches what you find in the "PC Creation Guidelines" box of the Series Guide (see Appendix 2).

Backstory

Each series comes with a backstory that explains how the "cartoon" came to exist. This really doesn't affect the game in a direct manner, but it can give you some additional insight into what makes the series tick.

The Genre

This offers a really quick rundown of what milieu the series best fits into.

The Series

This is easily the most flexible of all the sections, in that each series write-up is slightly different than the others. In general,, this is where you go to get the full scoop on what the series is all about. By the time you finish reading this section, you should have a firm grasp on the series' technology level, as well as its major players, factions and so forth.

Character and Vehicle Write-Ups

This is a collection of character and vehicle write-ups. Some of these will be familiar to long-time fans of *Cartoon Action Hour*, while others are making their debut right here in this book. It only seems right that a book labeled "Season 2" should have new characters to represent the second seasons of the various series. You can use (or not use) these characters as you wish.

Episode Seeds

The last section offers some episode seeds that you can flesh out and run for your players. They are deliberately vague and open-ended, thus allowing you to customize them to suit your own style of Game Mastering.

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER SERIES?

Surely you've noticed that this book contains artwork taken from the three featured series. If so, then you've also probably noticed that it contains artwork from various series that aren't represented in this book. The three examples that come to mind are *Outlaws of Skull Gulch*, *Wasteland 2010*, and *Star Warriors*.

These series will be presented in upcoming *Cartoon Action Hour* products, so just be patient. You'll be able to have high-tech shootouts at high noon, explore the post-apocalyptic landscape, and engage in spaceship battles in no time at all.

PC CREATION GUIDELINES

Proof of Purchase Points: PCs are created using 30 PoPPs.
Maximum Trait Ratings (Regular Traits): 10
Maximum Trait Ratings (Action Features): 14
Miscellaneous:

- The characters must be Guardians of Iconia or at least allies of the Guardians.
- There are no computers in the series. While it does feature robots, gadgets, vehicles, and other technological doodads, actual computers have not been created.
- Thematic characters are appropriate, but aren't required. To theme a character, simply choose an animal, object, material, or whatever else you'd like, and base your character's identity off of it.

BACKSTORY

In 1978, the success of Star Wars the year before prompted B-List sci-fi novelist Gerald Peevey to cash in on the craze. He drafted a simple screenplay called "Warriors of the Galaxy" and shopped it around Hollywood, hoping for a lucrative movie deal. Most filmmakers passed on the project due to the required budget, but it caught the eye of director/producer Rommel Carver. An alliance was formed and the duo set out to produce an elaborate motion picture. Unfortunately, Carver had a severe gambling problem that devoured all their funds, which ultimately led to Peevey departing. His departure prompted a lawsuit by Carver, who claimed that he had full rights to the film's script. When all the smoke cleared, it was determined that Carver owned only the name "Warriors of the Galaxy".

The next year or so saw Peevey working hard on tightening the script and revamping some of the characters and concepts. In 1981, Peevey was approached by a man named Lewis Gretchman, who wanted to develop a line of 5.5-inch action figures based on the script. Gretchman was one of the producers who had initially turned down the script. He had since moved on to become a top executive for Grabbo Toys. Contracts were signed, the name was changed to "Warriors of the Cosmos", and the toy line hit toy store shelves in December 1982. It was a massive success.

Within months, Kilamir Studios propositioned Grabbo Toys and Peevey about airing a Warriors of the Cosmos cartoon series. The resulting show debuted in September 1983. While the ratings were phenomenal, two parent groups (Parental Care Committee and Mothers Against the Corruption of Youth) protested, citing that the primary villain, Nekrottus was too horrifying for children and that he represented Satan. They wanted the show off the air.

By February of the following year, the FCC was ready to cave in and force Warriors of the Cosmos into a premature retirement. Grabbo Toys and Kilamir Studios stood their

ground and a protracted court battle ensued. Eventually, the judge determined that the show was not a bad influence on children and could continue airing. The last laugh was on the parent groups, however, as this controversy only served to increase the show's popularity.

In the matter of a few short months, the show became a sensation, which led to further licensing of the franchise. The market was flooded with more merchandise than anyone could possibly keep up with. This is ultimately what would bring about the downfall of Warriors of the Cosmos. The market became so over saturated that it simply collapsed.

By the time the 1988 Fall season line-up was announced, Warriors of the Cosmos was limping. The creativity of the show was at an all-time low, resulting in unusual new ideas and uninteresting characters. In the end, the ratings were terrible. For this reason, the series was not picked up the following season. The phenomenon was officially dead.

Since that time, Warriors of the Cosmos has amassed a sizable cult following thanks to nostalgia and the realization that the show also functioned on a more adult level. The Internet proved to be a great asset to fans of the series, with dozens of fan-sites and discussion forums popping up at an astounding rate. An online petition to bring back the show began circulating in 2002. Hollywood was clearly listening. Global Pictures secured the rights to produce a blockbuster film based on the property, which took the world by storm when it was released in August 2007. While the film made some drastic changes, most fans felt that the changes were acceptable (though few were in favor of the addition of a romantic sub-plot between Noblara and Oshida). The movie was such a success that it is scheduled to spawn a sequel as well as the launch of a new animated series and toy line. For the first time in over twenty years, Warriors of the Cosmos is a huge hit!

THE GENRE

Warriors of the Cosmos can best be described as science-fantasy. High technology exists side by side with all the tropes of classic sword-and-sorcery fantasy. Lasers and swords. Airships and dragons. Cybernetics and castles. All these elements (and much more) are perfectly suitable for the series. It's all about juxtaposition!

THE SERIES

Iconia was once a utopia; a world full of prosperity and splendor… of unspoiled beauty and ever-present peace. But that was before the coming of Nekrottus, an evil sorcerer with a mind more evil and unfathomable than any before him. He founded the Blackskull Empire and brought with him a foul corruption that quickly begin to spread like wildfire. With the empire at his command, he proceeded to methodically conquer most of the world. Now, the only major kingdom that remains free is Haven, the crown jewel of civilization. It has become the last bastion of freedom in Iconia, but Nekrottus will not rest until it, too, has fallen under his control.

The king of Haven, a just and noble man named Rastor, has seen the devastation caused by Nekrottus and has set about assembling Iconia's mightiest warriors into a group with the single goal of taking the realm back and restoring order to it. They are the Guardians of Iconia!

Technology

The technology featured in Warriors of the Cosmos varies wildly from location to location. In the more remote regions of Iconia, technology is primitive to the extreme, harkening back to medieval times; some areas even bring to mind prehistoric technology. The heavily (or even moderately) populated areas, however, possess futuristic technology to one degree or another.

Transportation

Let's state right from the beginning that the Iconians have no access whatsoever to space travel, which is slightly ironic considering that the name of the series is Warriors of the Cosmos. The citizens hold the stars above in great reverence and no attempt has been made to traverse space, though rumor has it that Nekrottus has tinkered with the notion.

As for getting from Point A to Point B, most citizens use mechanical vehicles. Ground vehicles are more common, though small airships are gaining in popularity. Flight technology is currently rather limited to smaller aircraft; you won't find the Iconian equivalent to passenger jets.

Communications

Little advancement has come about in the area of communications technology. The wealthier citizens (particularly royalty) possess bulky screens and communication consoles. Unfortunately, everyone else depends on the "go over and talk to the person" method of communication.

Warfare

The most common way to fight is with close combat weapons, usually of the primitive variety. Swords, staffs, maces, axes, and the like are still the weapons you see the most. That having been said, high-tech weapons have been seen on the battlefields more often these days. While laser guns were considered rare a short time ago, they are now almost an everyday sight.

Old fashion plate, scale, and leather armor represents the status quo when it comes to ways of protecting oneself. The more advanced pockets of civilization have been sporting more advanced types of armor recently, though powered armor is still extremely rare.

FACTIONS

The following groups play an important role in the Warriors of the Cosmos.

Guardians of Iconia

This is the group the PCs belong to. It's not an organized group or military force. Rather, it's a collection of warriors with a common goal: to rid Iconia of Nekrottus and thereby bringing peace and prosperity to the land.

King Rastor himself leads the group, though he doesn't go out on missions or participate in adventures. He's perfectly content to stay away from all that and maintain his kingdom for all its citizens. This is not due to cowardice on his part, but due to a sense of loyalty to his subjects.

Beyond King Rastor acting as the leader, there is no real hierarchy amongst the Guardians. They are all of equal rank, which has worked extraordinarily well considering the wide variety of cultures and backgrounds represented.

Blackskull Empire

The Blackskull Empire began its existence as a miniscule kingdom with only a sliver of land under its control. Since its founding, however, the Empire has branched outward, absorbing one kingdom after another by force or by guile. Eventually, it swallowed up every major kingdom on Iconia, with the exception of Haven. Keep in mind that Nekrottus hasn't conquered every minor kingdom and unsettled area Iconia has to offer – he has concentrated on the more heavily populated regions, particularly those that contain a large kingdom or free city. He plans to absorb the minor kingdoms in due time. For now, he has a bigger fish to fry: Haven.

Unlike with the Guardians of Iconia, there is a very strict pecking order in the Blackskull Empire. Naturally, Nekrottus sits atop of the heap, so to speak. He has two individuals whom he trusts enough to consider his seconds-in-command, Shadow Queen and King Krab. When there are major operations that need to be carried out, you can bet that it will be one of them who are tasked with the "honor" of heading things up. The rest of his henchmen form the third rank and are generally held in low regard by Nekrottus, even though he allows them to take charge of minor missions. The final tier of rankings is occupied by his nameless, faceless cannon fodder, primarily the Turgs, Goop Zombies, and Blackskull Empire Troopers. They are, as far as Nekrottus is concerned, absolutely expendable.

The Fortress of Gloom

What would any self-respecting master villain be without a super-keen base of operations? Never let it be said that Nekrottus isn't up to snuff, for the Fortress of Gloom is a firstclass, Grade-A headquarters!

Located in the most remote and dangerous parts of the Outlands, the Fortress of Gloom is an imposing and impressive sight to behold. It is situated at the very top of one of the Fogshroud Mountains. The steep, rocky mountainside itself ensures that anyone wishing to attack the fortress is going to have their work cut out for them. It would be an uphill battle... literally.

The fortress is made of dark gray metal, which gives it a cold, unsettling appearance. There is a tall tower at each of the four corners of the building. The massive drawbridge dominates the front facing of the building. As if this wasn't imposing enough, large birds of prey seem to constantly be circling the upper reaches of the structure, as if waiting for someone to die.

Naturally, Nekrottus wouldn't dream of leaving his fortress unprotected. Although the inaccessible location of the Fortress of Gloom goes a long way toward making it defensible, that's not enough to satisfy the dread conqueror. He has installed numerous cunning traps – trapdoors, living statues, cage traps, lightning-bolt zappers, teleport traps, fear traps, and much more. An entire tome could be written on the subject of all the traps found in the Fortress of Gloom! Furthermore, Nekrottus always has a large number of troops to defend him and his precious fortress.

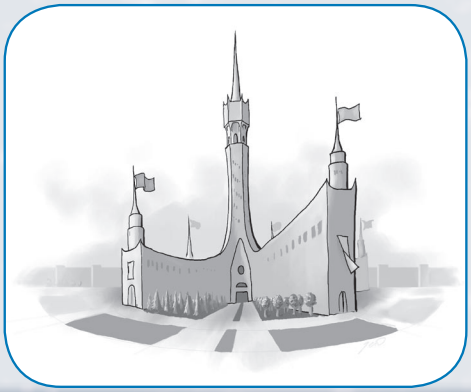
HAVEN AND ITS CITIES

Haven is the last major kingdom that has yet to fall beneath Nekrottus' bootheel. Even before the founding of the Blackskull Empire, Haven was the largest, most prosperous kingdom in the land. It was always this kingdom that solidified peace on Iconia. Haven itself covers a vast expanse of land, from the Dargor Mountains to the north to the Dread Valley to the south. Its most distinguishing feature is the lush, ancient forests that dominate the countryside. In addition to all the natural wonders of Haven, it also consists of two large cities and countless towns and villages, all scattered across the landscape.

Questa

Questa, the capital city of Haven, is where the Palace of Justice is located (see below). The city itself is surrounded by a twenty-foot tall wall with four massive defense cannons, capable of dealing with heavy vehicles as well as scads of enemy soldiers. The buildings in Questa are angular, made of white marble and shining metal, and are usually quite tall and regal.

The Palace of Justice itself is a star-shaped building – each "arm" of the star is dedicated to providing the living spaces of the ambassadors from other realms, and the Heart of Justice is the seat of power in the center of the star. Above the Heart is the highest tower, where Rastor and his family make their homes when in Questa proper.



The palace is fashioned of marble and paneled with goldenwood (grown in the Metal Forest, which is now under Nekrottus' control). The wood is known for its sheen, which looks greatly like polished brass. Below the palace is a series of storage areas, meeting rooms, and the largest library on Iconia. At the very bottom stands the Star-Chamber, a meeting place protected by the fiercest magics, where King Rastor holds meetings with his chosen warriors.

Darshire

Darshire is the main center of education in Haven, boasting two colleges: the Divine College of Wizardry and the Institute of Knowledge. While not as large as Questa, Darshire has always played an important role in Haven's development. Unfortunately, much of the city has become war-torn due to the infamous Battle of Darshire, which left a legacy of ruined buildings, bomb craters, piles of rubble, and damaged roads. On the upside, the colleges suffered minimal damage during the assault and were easily repaired.

Anyone who shows aptitude for magic can attend the illustrious Divine College of Wizardry – for a handsome sum of Zarklo Pieces. Only the most talented sorcerers are allowed to teach the ways of magic at the college and the pupils are expected to study extraordinarily hard in order to graduate. The campus is made up of several medium-size buildings of various shapes around one very large central building. Known as the Great Hall, the central building is where most of the truly important classes are taught.

On the more scientific side of things, most of Iconia's leading technology came from the Institute. Its many scholars work tirelessly to teach their students and create new and improved technologies. Much of the inventing is done in secret, darkened chambers deep beneath the college's buildings. The Institute of Knowledge comprises three buildings: the Chamber of Science, the Chamber of History, and the Chamber of Astrology. Each building is identical to the others except for a unique statue in front of them.

THE GUARDIANS OF ICONIA

FIRST SEASON (1983)

Bouldarr
"Rock-Skinned Warrior"

Quick Bio: This creature appeared mysteriously, seemingly out of nowhere, near a small town called Marlonburgh. Though mistaken for a monster by the locals at first, he rescued a group of them from a horde of Garka Beasts. He is a skilled and heroic fighter and very strong, but not much else is known about him. It is believed by some that he might be one of the last remaining Bouldarians, an ancient race of rock people that once dwelled in the Darkrain Forest. Even his name, "Bouldarr", was given to him by his human friends, since he cannot remember anything from his past for some reason.

Appearance: His body consists of a beige mineral substance that looks almost exactly like pure rock. This makes him both very sturdy and heavy. Huge crudely shaped arms and legs extend from his torso, with feet that feature only rudimentary toes, but he has got massive hands with five fingers on them. You can only guess where his ears and his nose are, whereas his eyes are like glowing triangular slits.

Factoids: "Often talks about rocks", "Reminds one of a loyal puppy dog", "Throws huge boulders at his foes"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Easily duped), Mental Hang-Up (Can't remember his past)
Traits: Rocky Body 7, Massive Strength 7, Throwing Stuff 2, Childlike Charm 2, Clumsy 2X, Not Very Stealthy 2X, Gullible 1X, Emergency Strength Boost 4 [*Enhancer +2, One-Shot*], Climbing 2
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 7

Combato
"Robot Bodyguard"

Quick Bio: When the threat of Nekrottus's agents increased even within the Kingdom of Haven, the country's foremost scientist built a robotic bodyguard for himself and his friends. This scientist was Fliggitz the Wise, the greatest engineer and inventor in Iconia. In but a short time he constructed a humanoid-shaped machine, full of handy gadgets and functions, that was utterly loyal to him. But even this top-notch robot could not prevent being distracted by a foe one day, so another enemy could kidnap Fliggitz. He has been trying to find clues to his master's whereabouts ever since.

Appearance: Large and mechanical, with a sleek polished metal surface all over his body, Combato stands roughly one head taller than most men in Iconia. There is a large bull's eye-like screen in the middle of his chest plate which fires energy beams. The lower portion of Combato's face was crafted to be actually a bit more human-looking than the rest of his body. In the course of the series, he sometimes adds new gimmicks to his personal arsenal, like a jet-pack, various laser guns, a fire extinguisher, a metallic rope to capture bad guys, and more.

Factoids: "Outgoing", "Doesn't understand humor, but constantly tries to", "Extremely analytical"
Subplots: Vow (To find his missing friend/creator, Fliggitz)
Traits: More Agile Than He Looks 2, Robot Body 6, Logic 4, Arm-Mounted Mini-Gun 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Targeting System 4, Piloting 1, Observation Sensors 2, Retractable Roller Skates 4
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

Falcor
"King of the Sky Realm"

Quick Bio: Falcor is the rightful king of the Sky Realm, leader of the falcon men of Iconia, the latest in a long line of rulers who have governed this people since the beginning of recorded history on Iconia. He has established a benign and structured system of government after witnessing the failures of the previous four kings. A capable politician as well as a leader of flying warriors, he had to lead his troops in a terrible civil war to stop a coup attempt staged by his own brother, Falconus. The temporary victory he achieved was a narrow one.

Appearance: With his stern and serious facial expression, regal bearing, impressive wingspan, and Mohawk hairstyle on the otherwise bald head, Falcor looks every bit the part of a noble monarch. His long beard makes him appear older than he is. He has an enviably muscular upper body and well-defined arms and legs covered by very little clothing. His upper body is adorned only by a light vest. Like all birdmen, he has got large bird-like wings growing out of his back, with feathers that appear white on the upper rim but change into brown and ochre tones in the middle.

Factoids: "Solemn and serious", "Wants to reconcile with his

brother, Falconus"
Subplots: Vow (To serve his people well), Emotional Ties (To his friend, Kazgull)
Traits: Winged Flight 5, Quasar Pistol 2 [*Enhancer +1, Accessory*], Falcon Shield 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Athletics 3, Vicious Combatant 4, Politics 2, Command 4, Good Aim 3, Willpower 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Hawklady
"Flying Scout"

Quick Bio: Hawklady was once a regular, non-powered human girl named Crystaletta. Her scientist uncle had taken up the hobby of falconry, and in wartime, had started experimenting with a biological fluid that he hoped would have the power to transfer a hawk's abilities to a human: flight, improved eyesight, and uncanny agility. The experiment was in an early stage when suddenly, two of Nekrottus's minions, Serpentina and Monstro, struck and set the lab on fire. The strange bubbling liquid, once heated by the fire, inundated Crystaletta, as well as her pet hawk Chuka. Evidently, it had a range of side effects. While the bird did not survive the conflagration, part of his "essence" must have been fused with the young woman.

Appearance: In her clothing, hairstyle, as well as her manners and overall body language, Hawklady strongly emulates the bird people of the Sky Realm and has made many friends there. This has become especially obvious since she fell in love with Falcor and he officially proclaimed her his consort. In spite of all this, she doesn't blend in completely. She is not as martially oriented as the falcon folk, of a more delicate build, doesn't carry any weapons, and her wings look more like a swan's wings than a hawk's upon closer inspection.

Factoids: "Avoids fighting whenever possible", "Gentle soul", "Loyal to the Sky Realm", "Loves all animals"
Subplots: Emotional Ties (In love with Falcor), Stigma (Isn't one of the Bird People)
Traits: Winged Flight 5, Claws 2 [*Enhancer +1*], Defensive Fighter 3, Eyes of the Hawk 4 [*Enhancer +2 (to sight-based checks), Disadvantage (Must spend one full round concentrating before using this Trait), Has a duration*], Demoralizing Shriek 2 [*Trait Zap -2 (Target; willpower-based Traits), Area, One-Shot, Has a duration*], Nimble 4, Perception 4, Persuasion 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Kazgull
"Barbarian Warrior"

Quick Bio: Kazgull has been a hardened and enduring man all his life, and since he hails from the fabled Karmahn Steppes, this is almost expected. However, nothing could have prepared him for the singular challenge that took shape when his entire tribe was magically transformed into Goop Zombies by Nekrottus. He is the only member of his native barbarian people that was spared from this fate. He blames himself for this tragedy, and has put his mind to freeing his tribesmen and changing them all back to normal.

Appearance: A magnificent specimen of a muscle-bound barbarian warrior, with a full brown beard, shoulder-length locks, and a headband: That is Kazgull. Though haunted by his people's strange fate, he can appear cheerful and endearing at times. His only regular weapon is a double-sided axe attached to a long stick, longer than a man's entire height. He wields this archaic weapon with amazing aplomb and great precision, usually with both hands.

Factoids: "His beloved tribe was turned into Goop Zombies by Nekrottus", "Tormented by his people's fate", "Can be quiet and reserved… until entering combat situations"
Subplots: Archenemy (Monstro), Archenemy (Nekrottus), Emotional Ties (To his friend, Falcor)
Traits: Athletics 2, Savage Strength 4, Rugged 4, Riding Steppe Animals 1, Wilderness Survival 3, Willful 2, Fierce Fighter 4 [*Specialty*], Battle Axe 7 [*Enhancer +4, Accessory*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

Lorxan
"Chubby Gargoyle"

Quick Bio: The old city of Grimboldsburg used to have a special town guard made up only of gargoyles, nocturnal creatures that turned to stone at daybreak, but were fully alert at night. It was the best militia and law enforcement troop known on Iconia ~~an~~d Lorxan was a proud member. People used to say that a gargoyle cop would stop a burglar before the burglar put his sneaky shoes on ~~th~~e night before he was planning to commit the burglary. Lorxan enjoyed the benefit of belonging to a small group of his species known as the Mountain Gargoyles, that is, the freedom to roam around during the day. However, the Mountain Gargoyles were not seen as true equals by the mainstream gargoyle population of the town. Prejudice against them was commonplace. Eventually, Lorxan quit the police force to turn private eye, but that was also only a temporary job before he committed himself to the Guardians of Iconia. His mind is still basically the mindset of a crime fighter, and he views Nekrottus's empire and its large-scale ravaging of his world as the biggest crime of all.

Appearance: Lorxan is a jocund little fellow who's never averse to simple pleasures, especially food. He enjoys a good meal… well, he enjoys a double helping of it, a triple helping, and it's showing. Though he is definitely on the chubby side (and hates to be reminded of it), he can fly and fight like the best of heroes if need be. He never parts with his only weapon, a teleporting spear. Other than that, his ever-present grin and recurring goofiness only slightly mask his wild gargoyle heritage: pointy ears, horns, sharp teeth, claws, and bat-like wings all included.

Factoids: "Loves to eat," "Is a Mountain Gargoyle," "Can be kind of sarcastic", "Opinionated", "Suspicious of other Gargoyles", "Sensitive about his considerable girth"
Subplots: Stigma (Mountain Gargoyle)
Traits: Winged Flight 2, Fighting 2, Throwing 2, Stealth 1, Gargoyle Lore 3, Willpower 3, Piloting 2, Rock Skin 6, Sarcastic Taunts 2, Magical Spear 4 [*Enhancer+2*, *Advantage (Always returns after being thrown)*, *Accessory*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

Merlis

"Wise Elder Magician of Haven"

Quick Bio: When the wise elderly King Rastor was but a toddler, Merlis was already old. He has been roaming the hallways of the Magicians' Academy, the most prestigious part of Darshire's Divine College of Wizardry, for longer than anyone cares to remember. His knowledge of the magical arts is unmatched and his authority within the college unquestioned. The main burden that has come to plague him in recent years is not old age, but the fact that he used to be the master to a promising young magician who became Nekrottus. Most of the magic used by the evil leader can be traced back to training which has been passed down to him by none other than Merlis, only that Nekrottus uses it all for evil.

Appearance: The classic look of a gentle, well-meaning sorcerer was perfected by Merlis a long time ago. Heck, he probably even invented that look himself: large broad-rimmed hat, long robe or cape with crescents, stars, and other assorted symbols sewn onto it (including a four-leaf clover!), long white beard, leather pouch held in place by a strap, and a quarterstaff always at hand. His body seems bent and very skinny these days, but he can still jump to bursts of amazing energy when he unleashes his magic spells.

Factoids: "Eccentric", "Forgetful about a lot of things, but never about magic," "No longer goes out on missions," "Old as dirt"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Slightly senile), Mental Hang-Up (Blames himself for Nekrottus' existence)
Traits: Weak Old Man 2X, Wizard 8 [*Clusters (Attack/Defense and Miscellaneous)*], Knowledgeable About Myths and Fables 3, Strength of Mind 4, Charming Old Coot 2, Slow Moving 1X, Teleport Self 3 [*Disadvantage (May only teleport to memorized locations)*], Levitation 2, History 3
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8

Noblara

"Former Ruler of Shadestar"

Quick Bio: Noblara, though still young and a little bit vulnerable, has a wealth of political ability and experience to her credit. She wasn't just a queen she was a warrior queen! She ascended the throne of the small country Shadestar at an early age, and soon had to fight hard to protect her beloved kingdom. Nekrottus conquered her lands, took her captive, and even forced her to become his slave at the Fortress of Gloom. That was traumatic to say the least, but it couldn't break Noblara's will. She escaped the dark tyrant's clutches by herself and made her way to Questa, vowing to one day free her people and become queen again.

Appearance: Her face half-obscured by the hood of her dark blue cloak most of the time, Noblara always inspires deep feelings of admiration and respect in those that meet her. The cloak, a leathery bodice, and sleek thigh-length boots form the outfit always worn by this outstandingly beautiful woman. Her sword is crafted in a unique, mysterious design.

Factoids: "Great ruler," "Often appears to be deep in thought", "Performs creative battlefield attacks"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Hates Nekrottus), Vow (To reclaim Shadestar)
Traits: Sword of Shadows 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Amulet of Hypnosis 4 [*Accessory*, *One-Shot*], Cloak of Shadowy Invisibility 5 [*Accessory*, *Has a duration*], Athletics 3, Armed Combat 4, Strength 2, Perception 2, Leadership 4
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

Oshida

"Martial Arts Master"

Quick Bio: Bokaru is an island nation located to the far east of Haven, and a land of many mysteries. Yet even to the Bokaru locals, the small order of the Chosu monks rates as a mysterious, reticent lot. From what little can be gathered about them, they spend most of their time engaging in meditation exercises, broken up only by sleeping, washing, meals, and an austere physical regimen that makes them formidable unarmed fighters. Oshida would have loved to comply with the order's rules and customs, living a quiet life at the monastery, if it were not for an ancient prophecy. That prophecy said that the Chosu's best fighter had to confront the harbinger of the world's doom one on one, and Oshida is

convinced that this means Nekrottus.

Appearance: Oshida's highly traditional, yet simple martial arts uniform, made of cloth and some silk, is what he always wears. He has the "Oriental" look and prefers to walk around bare-footed. His robes are red and black, the "dragon colors" awarded only to high-ranking fighters of proven ability by his order. Sometimes he carries a simple, long staff as a melee weapon. Needless to say, he can do a wide range of tricks with it, too.

Factoids: "Never acts dishonestly", "Contemplative", "Is a Chosu monk from the remote island of Bokaru","Wants to live up to his destiny"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Unknowledgeable about the outside world)
Traits: Melee Combat 4 [*Specialty*], Athletics 4, Observant 3, Cool Under Pressure 4, Persuasive 3, Dodge 4, Wise 3, Bo Staff 2 [*Enhancer +1, Accessory*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Sure-Shot
"Pistol Packing Adventuress"

Quick Bio: Somewhere among the hardly civilized, sparsely populated areas of Iconia, there is a wide open land marked by canyons, rivers, rocks, and prairies. Folks commonly call it the Frontier Land, and Sure-Shot is one of its most famous daughters. In fact, she did such a lot of adventuring and exploring out there that she acquired the moniker "Queen of the Unknown" somewhere down the line. Rugged and used to doing things her way, she honed her skills as a gunslinger to hitherto unknown levels. She is also an accomplished scout, and she is said to have an unsurpassed knowledge of prairie wildlife.

Appearance: Patched-up breeches for riding, spurs on her heels, a long-slung belt with holsters holding two identical-looking laser pistols, a perky broad-rimmed hat she certainly sports the whole frontier-type kit. Sure-Shot enjoys chewing on a straw sometimes (even when at a palace or on a busy city street, she always has an extra straw). She also distinguishes herself acoustically: loud whistling and yelling are part of her repertoire, and when she talks, she does so with an unmistakable "cowgirl" drawl (think, e.g. Doris Day as "Calamity Jane").

Factoids: "Speaks with an 'Old West' drawl", "Peppers her speech with country-fried colloquialisms","Is something of a daredevil thrill seeker","Has a rough and tumble demeanor"
Subplots: Stigma (Uncouth)
Traits: Twin Laser Pistols 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory, Situational Setback –2 (when she's only able to use one pistol)*], Gunslinger 4 [*Specialty*], Brawlin' 3, Purty 1, Explorin' 4, Outdoorswoman 4, Ridin' Animals 2, Stubborn as a Mule 2, Athletics 3, Sneakin' 1
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

SECOND SEASON (1984)

Azlara
"Karztec Princess"

Short Bio: Even the dark jungles of Grakua aren't safe from the Blackskull Empire's grip. When Nekrottus began expanding into the southern continents, he came across the Karztec, a large, peaceful society of sun-worshippers. Being the evil soul that he is, he decided to enslave them all. The Karztec people fought valiantly, but the Empire's numbers and superior technology overwhelmed them quickly. Not wanting his daughter to be captured, King Azrann put her on a boat and sent her out to seek the fabled northern lands. She was to seek others who could help free their people from the despot. After much traveling, Princess Azlara came to shore and went northward on foot until she reached Haven. She was immediately brought into the Defenders of Iconia upon her arrival.

Appearance: Azlara is royalty… and she looks the part. With her raven-black hair, high cheekbones, and piercing eyes, it's impossible to think of her as anything *but* royalty. She wears a blue top that bares her mid-riff and a flowing loincloth of white silk. A mystic jewel is fastened to her forehead. Her arms and legs are adorned with leather straps and gold bands. She carries a spear and a curved short sword.

Factoids: "Has an unflinching code of honor", "Doesn't care for technology", "Extremely Decisive", "Has an intense personality"
Subplots: Vow (To free her people)
Traits: Spear 2 [*Enhancer +1, Accessory*], Curved Short Sword 3 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Mystical Jewel of Ayam 4 [*Allows her to see distant places; Disadvantage (Requires total concentration and a check using the jewel's rating versus a DN of 5), Accessory*], Lightning-Fast Reflexes 4, Versatile Combatant 3, Calmness 3, Observant 3, Strength 1, Animal Riding 2, Will of Iron 3, Wilderness Survival 4
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Full-Steam
"Rapid Machine Giant"

Short Bio: Fliggitz the Wise, the man that built Combato, was busy dreaming up a large new steam-powered vehicle when an envoy from King Rastor rushed to his workshop one day and asked him to develop a robotic defender instead, a machine whose main strengths were its fortitude and

endurance, but would also be so fearsome and massive that it could deter enemies to protect a small town. Fliggitz and his trusty assistants started to work, mostly cobbling together the parts he had already made for his new vehicle. They were in a rush, after all, and Nekrottus's army was approaching fast. At the heart of his construction, the inventor placed a shiny black furnace. In the android's iron head, he hid an amazingly advanced computer brain. Once he set this thing in motion, Full-Steam was born!

Appearance: Imagine a gray and brown steam locomotive that needs no tracks and walks on two crude legs. As a matter of fact, Full-Steam does not always walk on two legs. His body allows him to drop on his large forearms and sturdy wheels appear on the arms and knees that let him propel himself forward fast and carry another full-sized character on his back. Two vents are built into his shoulders and his eyes flicker and light up in an angry red.

Factoids: "A real happy-go-lucky personality," "His confidence borders on foolishness," "Feels less than challenged (by his friends and especially by most enemies)," "Likes racing"
Subplots: None
Traits: Make Locomotive Sounds 2, Puff Out Steam 4, Run Fast 6, Mighty Fists of Iron 4, Calculate Exact Path 3, Understand Machinery 2, Machine Body 4, Heavy 5 [*Enhancer +3*], Clunky 2X, Sneak 2X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Gro-D

"Odorific Muck Man Warrior"

Short Bio: The Muck People may not be the most desirable individuals to be in the presence of (due to the rancid odor that clings to them so heavily), but you would be hard-pressed to find anyone as caring or passionate. Even though Nekrottus hasn't even bothered to invade their land, the Gunk Marshes, they have agreed to send forth their best warrior to join the Guardians of Iconia. It was their wish to end the suffering of others. The warrior in question was Glopp-Quar-Blunk-Mah, one of the race's few individuals with the power to make their bodies grow with but a thought. The other Guardians have deemed his real name too hard to say and have taken to calling him Gro-D.

Appearance: Gro-D is a stout-looking humanoid with sewer-green skin covered with red and orange sores. He has no hair and his left eye is slightly larger than his right eye. He wears metal gauntlets, a brown loincloth and matching boots. His body can grow to a height of up to twelve feet, effectively doubling his normal height.

Factoids: "Has a good sense of humor," "Likes to tell stories about 'back home' that inevitably end up grossing the listeners out," "Enjoys having a nickname (i.e., Gro-D)," "Doesn't notice his own smell, since all members of his race smell that way"
Subplots: Physical Flaw (Stinks Badly), Stigma (Muck People are considered second-class citizens by many)
Traits: Morning Star 7 [*Enhancer +4*, *Advantage (Grows when he grows)*, *Accessory*, *Situational Setback (Rating of 5 when using the weapon one-handed)*], Instant Growth 7 [NOTE: This is used for strength and toughness-based checks while he's large; *Disadvantage (Can only grow if in contact with water)*, *Has a duration*], Stout 3, Close Combat 3, Good Personality 3, Swim 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

Maximarr

"Mysterious Warrior"

Short Bio: No one knows where he came from, nor do they know whom he is. All that is known is that he answers to the name "Maximarr" and he has pulled the Guardians' collective fat out of the fire on several occasions throughout the second season. He seems to appear out of nowhere, helps out, and then mysteriously pulls a disappearing act when the action has died down. He speaks very little and when he does, it's concise and to the point. He's not an official member of the Guardians, but he's a staunch ally nonetheless.

Appearance: Maximarr is a massively muscular man with tanned skin and long, flowing brown hair. His face is constantly in the shadow cast by the horned helmet that he wears. He wears a leather loincloth, leather boots, and a metal armor plate over his left shoulder. Maximarr wields a dagger and a gargantuan glowing axe.

Factoids: "No one knows who he is or why he helps the Guardians," "Man of few words," "Tends to disappear after the action is over"
Subplots: Mystery Complication
Traits: Dagger 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Glowing Battle Axe 8 [*Enhancer +4*, *Accessory*], Superhuman Strength 6, Fighter 4, Athletics 2, Toughness 3.
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8

Motor-Mouth

"Fast-Speaking Globbit Knight"

Short Bio: Deep in the Forest of Tranquility there lives a race of diminutive folk with more curiosity than common sense. These people are called Globbits and they, like every other

race on Iconia, have been affected by the Blackskull Empire's reign. In fact, the Globbits would have been enslaved had it not been for the fact that they dwelled in hard-to-find underground lairs. After nearly being caught by Nekrottus' forces, the Globbits sent forth their bravest knight to find allies to help them deal with the threat at hand. This knight is anything but brave, however in comparison to his kinfolk, he's the best they have to offer. Within a few days, this knight ran into Gatlyna, who pursued him. Fortunately, Noblara was nearby and was able to thwart the villain's attempt to capture the knight. He has since joined the Defenders of Iconia.

Appearance: Short (just shy of three feet tall) and slightly rotund, Motor-Mouth -- like all Globbits -- has light purple skin and two antennae protruding from his forehead. He has fluffy white hair with two distinct red streaks running through it in the front. He wears plate armor fashioned to look like traditional knight's armor, except that he doesn't have a helmet.

Factoids: "His name was given to him by Sure-Shot due to how fast and often he speaks", "His real name is Pliggut Ploo", "Prefers to be underground", "Gets homesick a lot"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Insanely Curious), Mental Hang-Up (Cowardly)
Traits: Knight's Armor 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Stubby Sword 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Faster Than He Looks 3, Fit into Small Places 3, Tough Skin 1, Insanely Fast Speaker 4, Brawl 1, Audio-Sensitive Antennae 8, Sword-Fighter 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 2

Prismor

"Crystal-like Hero with Beam Powers"

Quick Bio: Early in the second season of the show, when a few of the Guardians of Iconia had travelled to a remote island that seemed to consist mainly of rocks, Sure-Shot, Falcor, and Kazgull were ambushed in a cave by Turg warriors. The bad guys took them prisoner and locked them into another cave very deep in the interior of the island, at the bottom of a strange chasm. When the last torch on the wall went out, the room should have been pitch black, but it wasn't... instead, a sparkling, unreal glow entered the heroes' cell from a crack in the wall. It came from a crystal-like fellow, a being no one in Iconia had ever seen before. This was Prismor. He hails from a far-away world of crystal people and his "thinking ship" had crashed on the barren island a short while earlier. Prismor had spent some time in a slumber to heal himself, but awoke in time to free the three heroes and join them in their struggle against Nekrottus. Prismor gets on particularly well with Bouldarr, which gave the two of them some fantastic battle scenes together.

Appearance: Prismor is bulky and tall, about a head taller than most of the male heroes on Iconia. His entire body is semi-transparent, hairless, and full of edges. His head is formed like a single big prism with yellow eyes. His ears are tiny and his nose is never seen. All the colors of a rainbow seem to permanently circulate through his upper body (he was probably the most intricate of the Warriors characters to draw in the cartoon), and when he uses any of his "Rainbow Powers", rays are emitted from his big hands, which are also prism-shaped.

Factoids: "Completely immune to sickness and poison", "Almost impervious to cold", "Appreciates light and cleanliness", "Cannot be hurt by lasers or other beam-firing weapons", "Distrusts characters with shadow and darkness-based abilities", "Taciturn", "Sometimes becomes transparent like glass"
Subplots: None
Traits: Crystalline Body 4, Great Strength 4, Rainbow Powers: Red Ray - Heat Beam 3, Orange Ray -- Paralyzing Effect 3 [*Snare*, *Disadvantage (Only functions as long as this character has not received one or more Setback Tokens)*], Yellow Ray - Clear Vision 3 [*Advantage (Can see through thin walls and curtains)*, *Disadvantage (Cannot use this ability without emitting bright yellow rays of light)*], Green Ray - Healing Ability 4 [*Advantage (Affects all living creatures, even those of a crystal or metal nature)*, *Disadvantage (Must stand still and fully concentrate to use this ability)*], Blue Ray - Freezing Effect 2, Purple Ray - Confusing Effect 2, Reflect Beams 3 [*Specialty*], Medical Knowledge 2, Cannot Swim 2X, Hide 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Sir Castic

"Sly Devil"

Short Bio: Sir Castic was left at the doorstep of a poor farm family when he was an infant. They gave him all the love and affection a child could ever want and raised him with steadfast morals. While he was always a good kid, his soul was that of an adventurer, savoring danger and risk like some would savor a fine meal. When he was old enough, he left home, promising to bring his family untold riches so that they would no longer have to struggle. He managed to bring back a great deal of jewels that he discovered deep in an ancient valley. Sadly, when he returned, his family was gone. Nekrottus had come for them, in search of his son: Sir Castic. The young man soon learned who his father was and that he had either slain or captured his loved ones. This was all it took to encourage him to join the Guardians of Iconia in an attempt to defeat his father and rescue his family.

Appearance: Sir Castic is a normal sized man with spiked brown hair and an ever-present devilish smile. He wears blue pants, a white shirt and a black vest. A blue headband completes his ensemble.

Factoids: "Doesn't always think things through", "Has a sarcastic sense of humor", "Is charming, but with a certain amount of cockiness","Connoisseur of laser pistols"
Subplots: Secret (Nekrottus is his father)
Traits: Double Hold-Out Blasters 3 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Gunslinger 2 [*Specialty*], Lightsword 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Swashbuckler 2, Dumb Luck 3, Trickery 3, Sneaky 2, Athletics 2, Stamina 2, Deception 2, Resourcefulness 3, Nobody's Fool 2 [*Situational Modifier (Rating of 0 versus Nekrottus)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

GUARDIANS OF ICONIA VEHICLES

Cloudblazer
Description: The Skyblazer is a small one-person airship designed to be nimble and fast… at the expense of packing much protective armor or offensive weaponry.

Traits: Quick 7, Maneuverability 6 [*Enhancer +3*], Photon Blaster 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Compact Frame 3
Subplots: Physical Problem (Cannot stop in mid-air)

Battle Skiff
Description: The battle skiff is a hovering barge used primarily for transporting the Guardians of Iconia to their destinations (wherever that may be). The entire vehicle is open-topped with only a rail to keep passengers from falling over the sides. The pilot is seated at a station located at the front.

Traits: Speed 5, Maneuverability 1 [*Enhancer +1*], Sturdy Construction 6, Makes Very Little Noise 3
Subplots: None

Tumble-Tank
Description: The Tumble-Tank is a large, relatively flat tank that can be flipped over to reveal different weaponry. That's right – the bottom of the tank has weapons too. The driver's pod is designed so that, when the tank flips over, the driver remains upright. One side is yellow and is fashioned to resemble the head of a dragon. It sports a flamethrower where the dragon's mouth is supposed to be. The other side is blue and is fashioned to look like an eagle. It fires lasers from where the eyes are supposed to be. The yellow side is considered the default.

Traits: Fast 3 [*Situational Boost (Rating of 5 when the blue side is up)*], Armored Structure 8 [*Situational Setback (Rating of 6 when the blue side is up)*], Flame Cannon 8 [*Enhancer +4*, *Disadvantage (Can only shoot at targets that are within about 15 feet of it)*, *Disadvantage (Can only be used when the yellow side is up)*], Laser Eyes 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Disadvantage (Can only be used when the blue side is up)*]
Subplots: None

THE BLACKSKULL EMPIRE

FIRST SEASON (1983)

Blobbor
"Blubbery Henchman"

Quick Bio: Blobbor's childhood was spent in an orphanage, where he quickly showed that he had a sadistic steak. Furthermore, he was much stronger and slower of wit than his peers. He eventually ran away and dwelled in the wilderness, attacking villages and stealing their food. Nekrottus soon heard of this hulking dullard and saw him as the ultimate minion. Blobbor's a big bully, plain and simple. When he's angry, he throws temper tantrums like a small child. Most of all, he's a compulsive liar. He never fesses up to his mistakes, preferring to fabricate outlandish stories to explain why he goofed up.

Appearance: Blobbor is a rotund man with a peculiar green tuft of hair on his head. He wears a black shirt and one-strap overalls. Shoes never adorn his feet.

Factoids: "Sadistic bully", "Foul tempered", "In denial about being overweight","Seldom questions orders"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Habitual liar)
Traits: Roughhousing 3, Superhumanly Strong 6, Flabby Resilience 7 [*Advantage (if an attack against Blobbor fails to deal a Setback Token, roll a die. On a 5 or higher, the attack or attacker is bounced off of him)*], Charging Attack 4 [*Enhancer +2*, *Disadvantage (After using this Trait, Blobbor may do nothing on his following turn; he's too out of breath)*], Dumb As a Stump 2X, Lumbering 1X, Bouncing Leap 5, Loyal 1
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

Buzzard Man
"Flying Commander"

Quick Bio: Buzzard Man is a Buzzardoid who flew to the Isle of Melancholy when he was very young and drank from the waters underneath the Sky-Rend. His mind ended up absorbing the past and future of the entire Sky Realm in a few seconds. He can barely remember a fraction of what he absorbed, but what he does recall gives him a strong understanding of the Sky Realm, as well as a little insight into

how people think and what they like to hear. Unfortunately, Buzzard Man is now very, very mad. He now seeks to cause chaos in the Sky-Rend, a place that (in his mind) made him go insane. While Buzzard Man may be a few trees short of a forest, he is one of Nekrottus' more loyal followers and is often used on solo missions rather than with other minions. Few people can stand to be around him and his unpredictable behavior.

Appearance: Not surprisingly, Buzzard Man looks like a hybrid of both a buzzard and (can you see it coming?) a man. He is muscular but oddly lanky and walks with a severe stoop. His neck is very long as are his digits, which end in sharp talons. His head is more buzzard than man and he has large, feathered wings.

Factoids: "Unpredictable", "Doesn't always speak in the present tense"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Insane), Mental Hang-Up (Hates the Sky Realm)
Traits: Winged Flight 4, Awkward-Looking Agility 2, Opportunistic Combatant 3, Claws 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Shooting 2, Buzzard Staff 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*, *Advantage (Can also shoot an energy ray at rating 4)*], Knowledge About The Sky Realm 4, Keen Eyesight 5, Piloting 1
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Gatlyna

"Tough Gal with a Big Gun"

Quick Bio: Gatlyna was born Rosiepoo Dimpleheimer. Due to her name, Rosiepoo was thoroughly teased and tormented by the other children. To make matters worse, she was something of a runt, standing two heads shorter than even the shortest children her age. As a result, she developed an inner rage that could not be satiated. She soon fled the area and wandered the countryside. During her travels, Rosiepoo met up with a marksman who called himself Shooter. Thinking she was a nice kid, he offered to teach her the art of marksmanship, at which she excelled. During this time, Rosiepoo did everything she could to conceal her wicked nature from the kindly Shooter. But once she became an expert shot, she betrayed his trust by stealing his prototype gun, the Super Gatling Blaster, and left.

Appearance: Gatlyna is a short woman with a "punk rock" look. She has short green hair and wears torn blue jeans. Her jacket is sleeveless and is adorned with zippers and spikes on one shoulder.

Factoids: "Bitter and resentful", "Has no sense of loyalty", "Explosive Temper","Loud","Mercenary attitude"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Sensitive about her short height)
Traits: Markswoman 4, Super Gatling Blaster 7 [*Enhancer +4*, *Accessory*, *Fickle*], Strong 2, Tough 3, Athletics 2, Drive Ground Vehicles 2, Spot Hidden 2, Willpower 2, Weapon Repair 3, Strong Mind 1
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

King Krab

"Ruler of the Krab People"

Quick Bio: King Krab wasn't born on the Island of the Krab people – his true birthplace remains unknown. Even *he* doesn't remember anything of his early years. His first memory is of waking up on one of the island's beaches as an adult. He was welcomed into Krab People society with open arms, as his mysterious appearance coincided with an ancient prophecy. The prophecy told of a great leader who would appear from nowhere and bring prosperity to the Krab People. Strangely, this prophecy tied precariously into the prophecy told by the Chosu (see Oshida's Background). King Krab was immediately placed on the throne, where he ruled for nearly a decade. While he wasn't a bad leader, he didn't appear to herald in a new age of greatness for his people. After awhile, the Krab People began losing faith in the prophecy and King Krab himself. This fact enraged him. He ordered his right-hand man, a scientific genius named Quilocrulu, to begin creating an army of robot warriors. A civil war was coming and King Krab was determined to be the victor. When the Krab People revolted against their king, the civil war began. King Krab's new robot legions clashed with hordes of Krab People and the war rapidly degenerated into a stand-still.

Then came Nekrottus.

Nekrottus and his henchmen arrived on the island and entered peaceful negotiations with King Krab to join his side. King Krab and Nekrottus walked side by side into the middle of the battlefield, making an announcement that was loud enough to reach everyone's ears. They spoke of the newly formed alliance and implored the Krab People to cease fighting. Once King Krab had their attention, he explained that he was indeed the great leader their prophecy spoke of and that he had just discovered the way to the promised prosperity, and that way was the Blackskull Empire. His people rejoiced and the war was over.

Since that time, Nekrottus and King Krab have developed a strong friendship. Nekrottus has said that King Krab is the only person on Iconia that he fully trusts and relies on him as his primary general.

Appearance: This imposing and regal-looking individual is a humanoid with coral green skin that is mostly obscured by his dark red and brown shell-like power armor. His left arm ends in a crab-like pincer and his right hand has two fingers and a thumb. He wears a coral green cape.

Factoids: "Prone to giving long-winded speeches", "Isn't actually one of the Krab People", "Has only recently begun garnering the respect of his subjects", "Doesn't boast often, but when he *does*, he holds nothing back", "Can live completely underwater"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Knows nothing about his own childhood)
Traits: Pincer 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Snare*], Shell Armor 4 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*], Energy Blade 4 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*], Skillful Fighter 3, Toughness 3, Strategic Mind 3, Superhuman Swimming 5, Willpower 3
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Monstro

"Cyclopean Hulk"

Quick Bio: Monstro was once a barbarian warlord known as the Destructor. In the arid Steppes of Karmahn, where the barbarian tribes dwelled, conflict was a way of life. The Destructor, though, was special. He possessed insight and ambition that so many other warlords lacked. Whereas they were content with keeping their wars contained within the Steppes, the Destructor had bigger aspirations. His plan was to forge an alliance with outsiders, having them fight by his side so he could conquer all the other tribes without breaking a sweat. With that in mind, the Destructor left his homeland in search of a powerful ally, and he found one in Nekrottus … or so he thought. Nekrottus' partnership came only with a price. Nekrottus demanded a favor at some point in the future, which the power-hungry warlord foolishly agreed to. Nekrottus held up to his end of the deal. In a short span of time, the other barbarian tribes had been conquered. The victorious Destructor barely had time to enjoy his triumph, though, before Nekrottus decided it was time to collect his favor. He demanded that all the barbarians (even the Destructor's tribe) would be turned into Goop Zombies. Destructor initially resisted, but his "ally" let it be known that he had no choice in the matter. In return for full cooperation, Nekrottus offered him a place in the Blackskull Empire. Knowing he was in no position to refuse, the Destructor accepted. But there was more to this deal than Nekrottus let on. With his dark magic, Nekrottus transformed the Destructor into a hulking one-eyed humanoid beast ... Monstro!

Appearance: Monstro is a massive humanoid with red skin and one eye. He has one bone-like spike protruding from each shoulder. The only hair on Monstro's body is the thick black hair found on his forearms and calves. His legs end in large black hooves.

Factoids: "Used to be a barbarian warlord named the Destructor", "Remembers what Nekrottus did to him", "Doesn't act like a bestial monster", "Ruthless beyond measure"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Hates Nekrottus with a burning passion)
Traits: Hypnotic Eye-Beam 5 [*Disadvantage (Not usable while in combat or while engaging in strenuous activity)*, *Has a duration*], Tough Skin 6, Athletics 2, Physical Power 7, Wilderness Survival 3, Willpower 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

Nekrottus

"Evil Overlord of the Blackskull Empire"

Quick Bio: Very little is known of Nekrottus' past. What *is* known, however, is that Nekrottus approached Merlis when the future-overlord was just a young man. He wanted the wise mage to teach him the ways of magic. Nekrottus learned everything Merlis could throw at him – his thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. Merlis tried to stress the importance of completely mastering the simpler aspects of magic before moving on to more advanced aspects, but this frustrated Nekrottus, who began to seek that knowledge elsewhere. Nekrottus eventually came across a sinister hermit who called himself S'groth. S'groth offered to teach Nekrottus every aspect of magic. This offer was too tempting for the young man, and for a time, he continued learning from Merlis as well, but Nekrottus learned so much more from S'groth than he did from Merlis, since dark magic is simpler to perform. Of course, he rationalized that Merlis was an inferior mentor to S'groth, and soon stopped attending sessions with Merlis altogether. Upon doing so, he devoted himself fully to practicing the dark magics. S'groth revealed himself to be a demon and offered Nekrottus more power than he could ever imagine. All he wanted in return was Nekrottus' soul – a small price to pay for ultimate power.

With his soul belonging to S'groth, Nekrottus started building an Empire of his own, hoping to conquer all of Iconia for himself. However, he knew that his master would never allow him to become the single most powerful being in the universe. He devised a cunning plan to rectify this problem once and for all, banishing S'groth to the Nether Realms where he belonged! Now that the demon was no longer inhibiting his rise to power and cramping his style, Nekrottus continued building his Empire and managed to conquer most of Iconia ... just like he had planned to all along.

Appearance: Nekrottus appears to be a floating skeleton with no legs and a skull that burns eternally with hellish red and orange flames. He wears a ragged, purple robe-like

article of clothing, along with a blue cape and a red sash that hangs down his torso.

Factoids: "Has no human compassion", "Speaks in a low, raspy voice", "Imposing", "Doesn't hesitate to flee when things go sour"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Completely power mad), Vow (To finally conquer Haven)
Traits: Dark Sorcerer 10 [*Clusters (Attack/Defense, Transformation, Manipulation, Movement)*], Staff of G'hotak 8 [*Enhancer +4, Situational Boost (+2 versus metal), Accessory, Disadvantage (Fragile and can't be used in close combat)*], Infernal Sword 6 [*Enhancer +3, Trait Zap (Target; -2 to strength-based and athletics-based Traits if the target suffers a Setback Token; this effect has a duration), Advantage (Can only be wielded by Nekrottus), Accessory*], Onyx Orb 4 [*A huge crystal ball that allows Nekrottus to see anywhere in Iconia; One-Shot, Disadvantage (Cannot be moved from the Fortress of Gloom)*], Magic Armor 6 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Air Chariot 9 [*TRAITS: Armored Hull 4, Maneuverable 8 (Enhancer +4), Fast 8, Stealthy 3*], Floating 3 [*Disadvantage (Cannot float higher than a few feet off the ground/surface he would normally be standing on)*], Athletics 4, Piloting 3, Aiming 5, Melee Combat 5, Hard to Damage 4, Dark Charisma 6, Strategy & Tactics 4, Indomitable Will 8, Strength 2
Stats: Threshold 12, Battle Rating 10

Serpentina
"Sinister Snake Warrior"

Quick Bio: Serpentina belongs to a nearly extinct race of snake people called the Reptilars. So near extinction, in fact, that Serpentina has only ever met two: her mother and father. Most Reptilars are peace-loving and reclusive. Serpentina, on the other hand, is anything but peace-loving and reclusive. After her mother and father were killed in a rockslide in the Silverwick Mines (when Haven owned the land), she vowed revenge on all of Iconia for what she perceived as the injustice of being made the last of her race. She became as destructive as her parents were peaceful. She traveled from distant land to distant land, attacking Turgs, Havenites, Yupor'uh … whoever crossed her path. She learned how to fight well with what she had, which was her hands and a vicious bite. When she stumbled upon Nekrottus' forces, she felt she had found kindred spirits in violence. The Shadow Queen fashioned the Serpent Sword for Serpentina, but something in the sword's make has caused Serpentina to be more susceptible to the Shadow Queen's whims. Nekrottus either has not noticed this, or doesn't care.

Appearance: Serpentina is not pleasant to look at. Her body bends in unusual ways, more like a snake than a human, which gives her an unnerving aura. She is a humanoid with scaly green skin and a gaping mouth with fangs and a snake tongue, with eyes to match. She has long black hair, pulled into a ponytail. She wears scant clothing fashioned to look like a snake's belly, colored pale yellow and deep red.

Factoids: "Belongs to a normally-peaceful race called Reptilars… she is the sole exception", "Her Serpent Sword was fashioned for her by Shadow Queen", "Has a very focused and precise style of rage; not blind rage at all"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Fear of rodents [this is demonstrated in the show's second season])
Traits: Poisonous Bite 2 [*Enhancer +1, Trait Zap (Target; -1 to all checks involving balance or agility if the target suffers a Setback Token; this effect has a duration), One-Shot*], Serpent Sword 4 [*Enhancer +2, Advantage (ignores Traits that have the "Enhancer" Bonus and protect against damage, such as armor), Accessory, Disadvantage (While within close proximity of this sword, Serpentina is completely unable to refuse suggestions/orders from Shadow Queen)*], Inhumanly Flexible 6, Scaly Reptile-Like Skin 2, Jungle Survival 3, Rapid Fighter 6, Silent Movement 2, Lack of Strength 1X,
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

Shadow Queen
"Cunning Mage"

Quick Bio: Shadow Queen comes from another dimension called The Onyx Realm. At the time, Darella Jogar (as she was known) was the leader of a rebellion against the evil Dread Legion. The Dread Legion had ruled the galaxy for hundreds of years by means of fear and military might. Looking for allies to join her cause, the heroic rebel traveled to another dimension via a newly created warp portal. Stepping through this portal had an immediate and disastrous effect on Darella. It twisted and contorted her mind, turning her into an evil megalomaniac. To make matters even more unusual, the dimensional journey bestowed magic abilities upon her. Darella was no more. She had become the Shadow Queen. And she had decided to stay on Iconia. It wasn't long before she met and joined up with Nekrottus.

Appearance: Shadow Queen can best be summarized by the color that dominates her appearance: black. Her relatively short hair is black, her bodysuit is black, her gloves are black and her eye glasses are black.

Factoids: "Seeks to usurp Nekrottus' throne", "Absolutely untrustworthy", "Uses people to get what she wants", "Dangerously attractive"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Hates Nekrottus)
Traits: Vile Spellcaster 5 [*Clusters (Transformation), Disadvantage (Must make hand gestures)*], Teleport Self 3 [*Disadvantage (Must make hand gestures), One-Shot*], Lightning Blast 5 [*Enhancer +3*], Manipulative 5, Good Aim 3, Sneaky 4, Willpower 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2X,

Somewhat Unsturdy 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Spydar
"Creepy Infiltrator"

Quick Bio: Nekrottus had plenty of brute force in his group of unsavory cretins, but what he needed was someone who could perform infiltration, guerilla warfare and other stealth-dependent evil deeds. So, it was decided that Nekrottus would create such a minion, born of arcane magic and dark science. Spydar was everything Nekrottus wanted him to be – loyal, single-minded and easily controlled. In other words, the perfect henchman.

Appearance: Spydar is an oddly proportioned humanoid who always seems to look like he's trying to be sneaky. He has dark blue skin with purple highlights, narrow eyes, and a thin mouth that opens up with a sinister, fang-laden smile. His black hair is kept in a severe crew cut. His body is partially covered by what looks like a tight black singlet.

Factoids: "Speaks with a distinct clicking noise that accompanies his voice", "Created by Nekrottus", "Creeps people out"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Cannot disobey Nekrottus)
Traits: Wall-Crawling 4, Webbing 4 [*Snare, has a duration*], Bite of the Spider 2 [*Enhancer +1, Trait Zap (Target; -1 to all physical Traits if the target suffers a Setback Token; has a duration)*], Inhuman Agility 6, Willpower 2, Strength 1, Ruggedness 2, Brawling 2, Observation 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

Volcanus
"Molten Fiend"

Quick Bio: As long as Iconia has existed, so has Volcanus. He has dwelled in the Tuatua Volcano, only able to leave the molten lava pools once every decade to terrorize the populace by destroying villages, leveling castles and torching forests. Nekrottus wanted this ancient beast for his own arsenal. With that goal in mind, he sought Volcanus out and promised him that he could create a spell that would enable him to leave the volcano forever and roam about as he pleased. The only thing he wanted in return was total subservience. Wishing nothing more than to be free at last, Volcanus swore his loyalty.

Appearance: Ever seen a volcano? Well, if you put arms, legs and a face on one, then you have a good mental image of what Volcanus looks like. He has black and brown rocky armor-skin with red magma seething just beneath; you can see it through the rock plating. The top of his head is an active mini-volcano with black smoke constantly churning out from it.

Factoids: "Nekrottus' personal bodyguard", "Ancient creature", "Thankful for being freed by Nekrottus", "Enjoys rampaging and causing terror", "Booming voice"
Subplots: Vow (To serve and protect Nekrottus)
Traits: Magma Skin 8 [*Advantage (Whenever someone touches him, they gain a Setback Token unless they roll a 9+ on the roll of a die)*], Gargantuan Strength 7, Generate And Hurl Lava Balls 5 [*Area, Advantage (May set things – not characters – on fire after hitting), Disadvantage (Not usable when Volcanus is even partially in water)*], Strong Willed 2, Slow And Plodding 2X, Athletics 1X, Not A Big Thinker 2X, Coordination 1X
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 8

SECOND SEASON (1984)

Assyd Reign
"Dark Master of Toxins"

Short Bio: If a chemical disaster had legs and started walking around as a sentient organism, you would probably get something like Assyd Reign. This villain is a genuine living scourge, a malevolent and destructive force that can equally damage animals, plants, humanoids, even metal objects and machinery. According to the reports gathered about Assyd Reign so far, he must be far older than Nekrottus, Merlis, and the Blackskull Empire. He was probably first seen about 200 years ago on the northern coast of a peninsula near Haven, while some workers were erecting a factory complex to carry out an order by their country's king, an ancestor of King Rastor. Assyd Reign can remain hidden in a secret spot for long periods at a time, can turn himself into a liquid form, thus making himself extremely hard to find. He feeds on mud, algae, dirty air, and a mix of strange substances and pieces of garbage that would be highly toxic to every normal humanoid on Iconia. In addition, he himself does not know for certain when and how he first came into the world. Nekrottus was made aware of Assyd Reign by accident one day, when his advancing Blackskull Empire troops were not able to cross a vast swamp territory. Nothing living or edible was left there, all the trees had died, and the water had been turned into poison. This swamp was the hideaway of Assyd Reign. Nekrottus was able, by way of his sorcery, but also due to his many promises, to get this archfiend to join his side.

Appearance: A huge misshapen, shambling mass of vaguely humanoid proportions, a body mostly in a swampy dark green with spots of a lighter green in between - that's the look of Assyd Reign's dominant form when he is not liquid, or fusing with various toxic substances. His billiard-ball-sized eyes open vertically and glow in an eerie orange-yellow. Lips, eyebrows, and stripes around his shoulders are black. He has no need for clothing or armor. Instead the surface of

his muddy body sports some thicker and more deliberately structured portions in the middle, where a human would wear a shirt and pants.

Factoids: "Doesn't know when and why he first came to be", "Under Nekrottus's control, but will not willingly destroy other beings without a reason", "Likes to demonstrate his power", "The other Leaders are afraid of him", "Never eats conventional food"
Traits: Spray Target with Acid 3, Secrete Poisonous Liquid onto His Skin 2 [*Disadvantage (Does not work if he has taken at least one Setback Token)*], Make Plants Wither 3, Pollute Water 2, Turn Water into Aggressive Acid 2 [*Fickle*], Turn Himself into Liquid Form 2, Mud-like Body 4, Sticky 2 [*Enhancer +1*], Make Metal Objects Rust 2 [*Disadvantage (Works only with direct skin contact and when concentrating on it)*], Hatch Nefarious Plan 2, Trickery 2 [*Enhancer +1*], Blackskull Empire Knowledge 3, Eerie Aura 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Chillout

"Frosty Minion of the Blackskull Empire"

Quick Bio: Nekrottus' Turg scouts stumbled upon a village of humanoids in the frozen lands of Frigydonia. When they approached, the village champion, a man known as Chillout, sent them packing. Impressed by this, Nekrottus traveled north to recruit him, promising great riches and protection for his village. The vile overlord took a genuine liking to the noble man and held true to his word. Of course, Nekrottus knew that Chillout would never do anything that he thought was evil. As such, he convinced him that the Blackskull Empire was on the side of good and the Havenites were evil. So far, he has taken great care to protect this lie so that Chillout would still serve him.

Appearance: Chillout is an athletic-looking man with pale purple skin that shows hints of an icy sheen. He's completely bald and has intense, pupilless eyes. He wears partial purple armor, with icy blades jutting out from the shoulder plates and forearm plates. He carries a peculiar sword constructed of the same kind of super-strong ice.

Factoids: "Noble", "Thinks that the Blackskull Empire is a force of good", "Radiates a slight aura of cold"
Subplots: Emotional Ties (To Frostina, a commoner in his village whom he is secretly in love with), Vow (To protect his people)
Traits: Ice Sword 5 [*Enhancer +3, 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*], Armor 3 [*Enhancer +2, Advantage (Has several ice-blades jutting from the shoulders and forearms), Accessory*] Masterful Combatant 4, Athletics 3, Physical Power 2, Hardened Toughness 4, Sharp Mind 2, Arctic Survival 4
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Eye-Catcher

"Three-Eyed Bounty Hunter"

Quick Bio: Very little has been revealed about Eye-Catcher's past… which is precisely how she likes it. What *is* known, however, is that she has been tracking down people for money for a long time and has gained a solid reputation for it. When Nekrottus secured himself as the dominant power on Iconia, she hit him up for work. Unsurprisingly, he gave her plenty of it.

Appearance: Eye-Catcher is a beautiful woman with a detached look in her eyes (all three of them!) at any given time. She wears silver armor with red trim over a blue bodysuit. The "eye" motif can be seen all over her attire. Eye-Catcher also carries around a weapon known as a man-catcher, which is a pole-arm with a sharp trapping appendage at the end.

Factoids: "She has loyalty only to one side… her *own* side", "Covets money above all else", "Never betrays an employer until his money runs out", "Enigmatic", "Exudes a quiet confidence"
Subplots: Susceptible (To bright light; suffers a –2 penalty to all physical Traits), Weakness (To light-based attacks; treat her Threshold as 8 versus such attacks)
Traits: Man-Catcher 3 [*Enhancer +2, Snare, Accessory*], Armor 3 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Enhanced Vision 5 [*Advantage (Can see through objects that are less than a foot thick)*], Skilled Fighter 4 [*Specialty*], Tracking 4, Rugged 3, Willpower 1, Athletics 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Falconus

"Falcor's Demented Brother"

Quick Bio: Falconus was always jealous of his brother, Falcor. But after Falcor became King of the Sky-Realm, this jealously enveloped Falconus completely. He decided that he would stop at nothing to seize the throne. He gathered supporters and staged a coup. This culminated in a one-on-one battle between the brothers, with Falcor coming out victorious. Falconus and his followers fled the Sky-Realm to lick their wounds and plan their next course of action. The news of this war in the sky reached far and wide, eventually falling onto Nekrottus' ears. A deal was struck and Falconus is now allied with the conqueror due to the promise that the Blackskull

Empire will help him oust his brother once and for all.

Appearance: Falconus is a stocky individual with a very impressive musculature. He has two mohawks on top of his head -- both of them dark brown -- and no facial hair. His eyes are narrow and leering and his face is always contorted into a hateful scowl. He wears two-toned gray pants and a brown fur vest. Like all birdmen, he has got large bird-like wings growing out of his back, with feathers that appear white on the upper rim but change into brown and ochre tones in the middle.

Factoids: "Never smiles", "Often angers Nekrottus due to his superiority complex (only Nekrottus is allowed to have such an ego)", "Has no sense of loyalty"
Subplots: Vow (To unseat Falconus as King of the Sky-Realm)
Traits: Winged Flight 4, Spiked Mace 5 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Athletics 3, Melee Combatant 3, Command 2, Strong 3, Egotistical Will 3, Conniving 3, Strategy 3
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Vileheart

"Corrupted King of Galloway"

Quick Bio: Vileheart wasn't always twisted and evil. Quite the contrary. He was once known as the noble King Vander of Galloway, a great friend of King Rastor. When Nekrottus and his minions took Galloway, Vander was captured. Despite the numerous attempts by the Guardians of Iconia to rescue him, he remained in custody of the despot. Furthermore, he was subjected to magical reprogramming by Nekrottus, turning him into a bitter and hateful being who is loyal to the Blackskull Empire.

Appearance: Vileheart's body is entirely covered by onyx metal armor with dark purple trim. It is fashioned to look like a high-tech version of knight's armor. The full helmet has two menacing horns, giving him a demonic visage.

Factoids: "Was once a noble man", "Has a twisted memory of the events that transpired", "Feels that King Rastor failed him by not rescuing him", "Speaks very formally"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Hates King Rastor)
Traits: Energy Sword 5 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Powered Knight's Armor 5 [*Enhancer +3, Advantage (Enclosed helmet with breathing apparatus), Accessory*], Horse 1 [*"Stillwind"; TRAITS: Animal Intelligence 2X, Move Quickly 5, Can Be Ridden 2, Jump 2, Hardy 2*], Sturdy 3, Quiet Charisma 2, Swordmaster 4, Riding 2, Brawling 1
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 5

Weezlor

"Feared Forest Dweller"

Short Bio: When annexing the warm and pleasant kingdom of Beechoakia, Nekrottus, accompanied by Monstro, Buzzard Man and other underlings, came upon a dense forest that locals had apparently stayed away from for a long time. Nekrottus used a little "gentle persuasion" to question peasants about this tree-covered land. He learned that the area was secretly governed not by humans, but by a tribe of savage humanoids more akin to the predators of the forest. The leader of this stealthy, but toughened tribe was Weezlor. In fact, he had swiftly tricked the former leader Grand Minkus Mox into a trap in an obstacle race and taken his position. Not too surprisingly, no one had challenged Weezlor's chieftainship since. It didn't take long before Nekrottus made him an imperial commander.

Appearance: Weezlor has a lean, wiry frame, and is marked by a soft beige fur all over, except for his belly, which is white. He always wears a pentagonal "Robin Hood" style hunter cap made of dark leather, with cutouts for the ears, and a tight-fitting harness over his torso and thighs. Cap and harness are in the same color. On the front side and both shoulder flaps of said harness is a carved pattern that resembles a stylized "WW". This symbol also reappears on the hilt of his longsword, a unique serrated weapon that variously acts as a saw or a machete. His face features the snout, fangs and ears of a large weasel, and could be considered quite attractive, if not for his crooked smile and stern expression.

Factoids: "Can be exceedingly cautious", "Doesn't spend a long time in a fight or direct confrontation", "Close friend and adviser to Spydar", "Animals are easily scared of him", "Likes to sabotage his opponents' vehicles or machines"
Traits: Astounding Reflexes 3 [*Enhancer +2*], Evade Attack 4 [*Specialty*], Climb Over Obstacle 2, Running 3, Sense of Smell 4, Wilderness Scout 3, Knowledge About Forests 1, Knowledge About Predators 2, Unscrupulous Attitude 2, Irritable 1X, Competitive 1X, Serrated Sword 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

GOONS OF THE BLACKSKULL EMPIRE

Unlike many series, *The Warriors of the Cosmos* didn't rely heavily on goons for purposes of fighting the heroes.. They were mostly used as backdrops, where the viewer would see them taking over a village or what not. Still, in case you want to implement them, here are the game stats.

Blackskull Empire Troops: Soldiers in shiny black power armor -- BR 2
Turgs: Squat, ugly, brown humanoids -- BR 0 [*Natural-Born Followers*]
Goop Zombies: Zombies with slime dripping from them -- BR 1 [*Rugged*]
Krab-Bots: Gray robots with pincers -- BR 1 [*Special Attack (laser beams from the eyes)*]

BLACKSKULL EMPIRE VEHICLES

Skyhammer

Description: The Skyhammer is a very large transport ship, capable of carrying lots of Blackskull Empire troopers at a time. It's also heavily armed and armored, making it the most potent air vehicle on Iconia.

Traits: Massive Hull 10, Hammer Missiles 7 [*Enhancer +4*], Laser Cannons 4 [*Enhancer +2*, *Big Gun*], Cargo Space 6
Subplots: None

Fright Strider

Description: These two-legged walking tanks lack the extreme armor of most tanks, but they compensate with superior maneuverability and offensive capabilities that put other tanks to shame. The main body of the walker is fashioned to look like a grimacing face with glowing yellow eyes and lots of teeth.

Traits: Speed 4, Maneuverability 6 [*Enhancer +3*], Armor 4, Bomb Cannon 10 [*Enhancer +5*, *Situational Setback (Rating of 8 when firing at targets within ten feet of it)*]
Subplots: Physical Flaw (Can be tripped)

EPISODE SEEDS

"To Save King Vander"

The single-city kingdom of Galloway has always been a staunch ally of Haven, due in part because of the steadfast friendship between King Vander and King Rastor. The kingdoms' alliance can also be credited to the fact that Galloway is situated a scant few miles to the east of Haven. It was this close proximity to Haven that made Galloway such a tempting target for Nekrottus. While it may be a minor kingdom, Nekrottus knew that conquering it would give him a strategic stronghold in his effort to overtake its much larger neighbor. Without warning, the Blackskull Empire converged on Galloway and attacked it mercilessly. The city's militia stood no chance against Nekrottus' might. It fell within the hour and King Vander was taken prisoner.

Naturally, King Rastor organized numerous rescue missions, each of which was doomed to failure. Now, though, Rastor has been made aware of an ancient network of tunnels that run beneath the city; a perfect way past the heavy defenses Nekrottus has set up along the borders. Little do they know, however, that King Vander is no longer the just and noble man he once was. Due to the dark magic of Nekrottus, he has become twisted and evil… and is now known as Vileheart. So, the PCs will be in for a not-so-nice surprise when they turn up to rescue him.

"Falconus Returns"

After his attempt to wrest control of the Sky Realm from his brother Falcor, Falconus fled the area to lick his wounds. Shortly thereafter, he began amassing a sizable army in an effort to do what he failed to do the first time. He encountered the Pteradakks, a race of flying humanoids reminiscent of pterodactyls, which he recruited to form his rank and file. But before he made his move on Falcor, he wanted to ensure his victory by finding the fabled Lost Shards of Zarkan. Legend has it that the person who wields all three pieces of the shard will have the power to rule the Sky Realm forevermore. So far, Falconus has located two of the pieces. The last one, though, has eluded him.

That's where Nekrottus comes in. He approached Falconus and told him that he knows the general vicinity of the shard. However, he would only share this knowledge with him if he swore his loyalty to the Blackskull Empire. Once Falconus agreed, Nekrottus revealed that the shard is somewhere deep in Dino Valley, a jungle-ridden hole in the ground where dinosaurs roam freely about.

Recently, word of this ploy has reached the ears of King Rastor, who plans to send out a team to retrieve the last shard so that Falconus cannot defeat Falcor. That team is the group of PCs. But Falconus and his Pteradakks are on the hunt as well.

"Lord of the Turgs"

Trouble is brewing in the Craggs, a massive expanse of rocky, barren land far to the west of Haven. When Nekrottus rose to power, the Turgs joined up with him without hesitation. However, a mysterious Turg spellcaster named Argok has appeared recently, speaking to the Turg tribes about dominance and self-unity. Needless to say, his smooth words have earned him the trust of his brethren. He tells them that they shouldn't follow a non-Turg such as Nekrottus. Rather, the tribes should band together and take Iconia for themselves. So far, roughly half the tribes have joined his cause and are preparing to launch an assault on both Haven and the Fortress of Gloom.

This has, of course, raised the ire of Nekrottus himself. He sent Shadow Queen and his own Turgs to hunt Argok down. Unfortunately for him, Argok swayed his Turgs to his side and Shadow Queen quickly found herself on her own.

King Rastor has summoned the Guardians of Iconia to the Star Chamber and asks them to neutralize the Turg threat. He realizes that if all the tribes unite under one banner, the world will stand no chance whatsoever. He also realizes the grim truth that even as mighty as Haven is, they're going to need the help of Nekrottus if they hope to survive the oncoming war. The other alternative is to use subtlety to defuse the situation, a much better solution overall. How will the heroes handle the situation?

STRIKEFORCE FREEDOM

PC CREATION GUIDELINES

Proof of Purchase Points: PCs are created using 30 PoPPs.
Maximum Trait Ratings (Regular Traits): 4
Maximum Trait Ratings (Action Features): 8
Miscellaneous:

- The characters must be members of Strikeforce Freedom, therefore a military background is required.
- Most Action Features should be derived from technology. Very few "weird powers" exist in the series.
- Members of Strikeforce Freedom have a code name that they primarily go by in the series.

BACKSTORY

It all started with the idea to make a comicbook series that would foster patriotism in children. This idea was the brainchild of Zell Comics then-president Gabriel Martin in 1981. He assigned the project to scripter Joseph Farney, a trusty hand who had a reputation for uncompromising professionalism. Martin developed the individual characters himself and then handed them off to Farney, who then tweaked them to match his story ideas. Strikeforce Freedom was about to be born!

Shortly before the series was to be launched, however, Martin was caught skimming off the top and was subsequently removed from the company. Taking his place was an ambitious marketing whiz named Augustus Merle. Merle saw a lot of potential for Strikeforce Freedom and wasted no time setting up meetings with animation and toy companies. At the time, though, a law was in place that prevented a cartoon from having an associated line of action figures. Merle had a tough decision to make. Should he go through with a cartoon or a line of toys? Ultimately, he opted for the cartoon and hooked up with Arbor-Wilson Productions, a moderately successful animation company out of Boston. The collaboration went smoothly and the cartoon and comicbook series debuted on the same day in October of 1982. Sadly, neither venture garnered much success. They limped along, barely managing to remain profitable enough to continue production. By mid '83, the law regarding cartoons and action figures had been essentially lifted. This opened up a window of opportunity for the desperate Merle. He needed a miracle and he needed it quickly. He soon found out that a property based on a low-rated cartoon and comicbook was a hard sell for toy manufacturers. Just when it looked like all was lost, Merle received a phone call from Benner, a toy company from Los Angeles, who agreed to produce the toys with the condition that Zell Comics invested some cash into the venture as well. Eager for a success, Merle agreed and production began shortly thereafter.

This move saved the Strikeforce Freedom brand and even Zell Comics itself. With the added visibility afforded to the property by the toys, sales rapidly skyrocketed on all fronts. Kids began to take notice in a big way.

The remainder of the 1980s was profitable for Strikeforce Freedom, though the comic went through a sales slump in late '86 and early '87. One thing heralded the end of this prosperity. Well, *four* things, actually. A quartet of cartoon martial arts turtles became immensely popular and the kids seemed to forget all about Strikeforce Freedom. By 1990, the property had run its course. The cartoon was cancelled in August and the comicbook followed suit in November. Without any manner of fiction to accompany it, the toy line ceased production by Christmas.

THE GENRE

Strikeforce Freedom is essentially military sci-fi. It contains all the trappings of the military genre while mixing in some elements of sci-fi. It foregoes a realistic approach by introducing vehicles, weapons and gear that don't yet exist (especially not in the '80s).

THE SERIES

When the cold war was in full swing, an evil terrorist organization known as SPIDER formed. Their goals were to spread tyranny and terror, but most of all to put their leader, a vile man known only as General Arachnid, in control of the world. They use high technology and experimental devices to achieve this end, usually raiding laboratories, kidnapping scientists, and building vast bases all over the world to exploit a variety of resources.

To combat this, the United States formed a paramilitary organization called Strikeforce Freedom. The ranks were filled out by the military's best soldiers and specialists. Only the most elite individuals were asked to join the team, ensuring that it would be the premiere group of anti-terrorists in the world.

Technology

Technology plays a large role in Strikeforce Freedom, as the team is equipped with cutting edge equipment and vehicles. As such, the technology level is higher than what was available in the 1980s by a long shot. However, such technology isn't commonplace in the setting. Normal citizens don't fly around in jet packs or have access to laser-guided weapons. Outside of Strikeforce Freedom and SPIDER, that level of technology just isn't to be found. Since this is the case, the following sub-sections are only aimed at these two organizations.

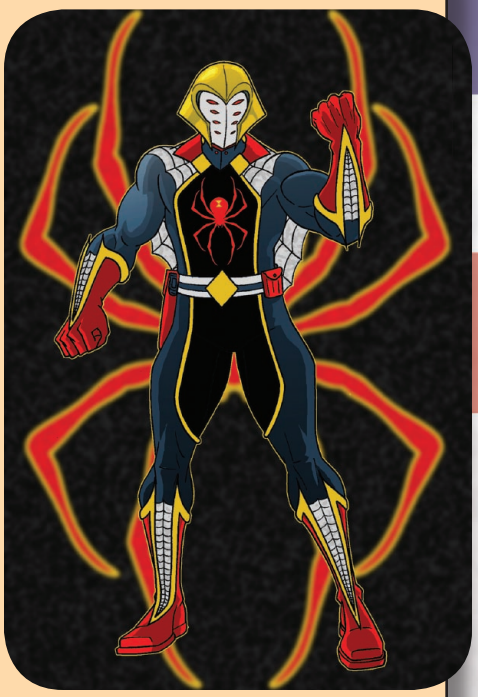
Transportation

For the most part, vehicles are slightly exaggerated versions of actual military vehicles, at least for mundane travel. Simple jeeps and motorcycles are the most common forms of transportation for Strikeforce Freedom members. Battlefield vehicles, on the other hand, are far more advanced than their normal 1980s counterparts. In fact, many of these vehicles have a stark sci-fi look to them, except for the military coloring and such.

Communications

In many episodes, team members were depicted as having a small device that would allow them to communicate verbally with one another while on missions. The GM may allow these to be used whenever he feels the mission warrants it.

Aside from that, communication technology is the same as it was in the real world of the era.



Warfare

Traditional military weapons are the default weapon types in the series. It wasn't uncommon, though, for certain characters to possess a weapon of a higher technology level.

FACTIONS

The following groups play an important role in Strikeforce Freedom.

Strikeforce Freedom

As mentioned previously, Strikeforce Freedom is comprised of the best the military has to offer. They are the elite few selected to play a role in thwarting the threat posed by SPIDER. Despite being a military-based series, very little attention is paid to ranks, with the exception to the muckety-mucks.

The public is aware of the existence of Strikeforce Freedom, but the name and what the group does is about all that John Q Public knows.

The group's headquarters is nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. The base itself, known simply as "the Compound", is a highly fortified series of buildings, some of which are built right into the mountainside.

SPIDER

Founded by the mysterious man known only as General Arachnid, this terrorist organization has made a global impact due to its over-the-top plans to rule the world. During the first season of the series, the location of SPIDER's headquarters was not addressed. On the first episode of Season 2, SPIDER took over a large island off the coast of Brazil and renamed it "Spider Island". Through legal trickery, it was turned into a sovereign nation.

At the center of the island lies the Web, a sprawling fortress made of high-tech material and protected by an untold number of cannons and missile systems. The Web also stretches beneath the surface itself, and it is within these lower levels that SPIDER's most important activities are conducted. It's also where General Arachnid's elaborate throne room is located.

STRIKEFORCE FREEDOM

FIRST SEASON (1982)

Bullethole

"Commando"

Quick Bio: Bullethole (File Name: Alex Hess) is a fourth-generation soldier, a heritage he's more than a little proud of. From the time he was a child, there was little doubt as to what he would do with his life. He spent much of his childhood "playing army" with his friends, using toy pellet guns. Needless to say, he always led his team to victory due to his tactics, patience and tremendous aim. These skills are a large part of why he's so successful as a soldier in Strikeforce Freedom.

Appearance: Bullethole is a stern-faced man with dark brown hair and an intense look in his eyes. He also has a neatly trimmed beard and mustache. He wears black pants and a dark green shirt with the sleeves rolled up. A beret is almost always sitting atop his head.

Factoids: "Nicer than he looks", "Proud of his lineage", "Thinks strategically in every situation", "Often acts as mission leader"
Subplots: None
Traits: Uzi 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Athletics 3, Sneaking 2, Demolitions 2, Shooting 3, Strategy and Tactics 4, Grim Determination 3, Up-Close Combatant 3, Patient 2
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 4

Hairtrigger

"Heavy Machine Gunner"

Quick Bio: You've heard the old cliché of someone being "big and dumb", haven't you? Well, that cliché certainly doesn't apply to Hairtrigger (File Name: Joseph "Joey" Moricelli), a Marine who is both strong as an ox and highly intelligent. His intelligence serves him remarkably well, manifesting as the ability to think fast, even while under pressure. Of course, he *is* prone to having a temper, which has gotten him into trouble more often than he'd care to admit.

Appearance: Hairtrigger is a broad-shouldered bull of a man with black hair and a large Fu Manchu mustache. He wears camouflage pants, an olive green shirt and a dark green protective vest. He packs around a massive heavy machine gun that no one else could even attempt to fire without a tripod.

Factoids: "Often makes references to his old neighborhood back in Brooklyn", "Has a thick New York accent", "Likes to talk about such deep subjects as philosophy and history"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Hot-tempered)
Traits: Heavy Machine Gun 7 [*Enhancer +4, Accessory*], Protective Vest 1 [*Enhancer +1, Accessory*], Brute Strength 4, Toughness 4, Intelligent 3, Good Aim 4, Street Smart 2, Strong Mind 2, Quick Thinker 2, Agility 1X, Sneaking 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

Hardcore

"Commanding Officer"

Quick Bio: They don't call him "Mr. By-The-Book" for nothing. Hardcore (File Name: Gray Stern) is a tough, no-nonsense general who's not afraid to get down in the trenches with the soldiers he leads. This is why he's respected by his subordinates, but not loved by them. The man doesn't exactly exude warmness.

Appearance: Hardcore is a muscular man with a stout chin and a black crew cut. He has a scar that runs down his left cheek, though nobody's brave enough to ask him how he received it.

Factoids: "Notorious hard ass", "Something of a cold fish", "Never talks about his past"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (never asks his soldiers to do anything that he won't do himself), Vow (to rid the world of SPIDER)
Traits: Machine Gun 5 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Operate Ground Vehicles 1, Fisticuffs 3, Stout 3, Shooting 3, Command 4, Strategic Thinking 4, Athletics 2
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 5

Jumping Jack
"Jetpack Trooper"

Quick Bio: Jumping Jack (File Name: J.J. Ellis) was a natural stuntman, which earned him a lot of jobs in Hollywood. Eventually, he began to feel as if he wasn't doing anything meaningful with his life, which led him to join the US Air Force. With his daring, often foolhardy, style of doing things, he became a wonderful asset to the military. When approached about joining Strikeforce Freedom, Jack saw an opportunity to carry out even bolder operations.

Appearance: Jumping Jack is a red-haired Irishman with a devilishly sly smile and a twinkle in his eye. He wears a red-orange bodysuit with yellow and blue trim. A yellow helmet protects his head. Lastly is his large, silver jetpack on his back.

Factoids: "Affable", "Daring", "Known to be a practical joker", "Has an Irish accent", "Drives Hardcore nuts by doing foolishly risky stunts during combat"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Takes unnecessary risks)
Traits: Jetpack 3 [*Vehicle*; TRAITS*: Maneuverable 7 (Enhancer +4)*, *Fast 6*], Pistol 1 [*Enhancer* +1, *Accessory*], Piloting Aircraft 4, Great Personality 3, Daredevil Stunts 4, Shooting 3, Fighting 2, Endurance 3, Strong 2
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 3

Kayo
"Close Combat Expert"

Quick Bio: Quiet, enigmatic and alert. These three words sum Kayo (File Name: Connor Randall) up perfectly. Oh, and one other word should be added to that list: butt-kicking! When it comes to up-close combat, there's no one better. His past is more or less a mystery. In fact, the only team member who knows about his personal history is his protégé, Tight-Squeeze. He is an expert in nine forms of martial arts.

Appearance: Kayo is a good-looking man with short, brown hair and eyes that radiate intensity. He wears a martial arts dogi (or gi), the top of which is white and the bottom of which is black. His forearms are wrapped in white bandages and his hands are adorned with black fingerless gloves.

Factoids: "Man of few words", "Avoids fights whenever possible", "Always helps others"
Subplots: Emotional Ties (To Tight-Squeeze), Mental Hang-Up (Doesn't talk about his past)
Traits: Martial Artist 4 [*Specialty x2*], Stealth 4, Always Calm 2, Athletics 4, Martial Art Weapons 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Cunning 2, Willpower 4, Handsome 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Mayday
"Computer Specialist"

Quick Bio: Mayday (File Name: Bridgett Weiss) was a nerd in high school. You know the type – thick glasses, geeky laugh, pimple-pocked face, out-of-date clothes and an undying love of science fiction. In college, though, she blossomed into a fine-looking young woman, though she still maintained her personality and interests. One of these interests was electronics and computers. She excelled at using, repairing and even building electronic devices, which led to a successful military career.

Appearance: This blonde-haired, blue-eyed beauty wears a light gray bodysuit with dark gray boots and gloves, and red trim. Her hair is usually kept pulled back into a ponytail for convenience.

Factoids: "Has no idea that she's pretty", "A nerd at heart", "Has a dorky laugh", "Loves all electronics"
Subplots: Stigma (Nerd)
Traits: Pistol 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Grenades 5 [*Enhancer +3*, *Area*, *Accessory*], Toolkit 3 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*], Good Shot 2, Electronics 4, Computers 4, Athletics 2, Attractive 3, Smart 3, Dodging 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Tight-Squeeze
"Infiltration Expert"

Quick Bio: Tight-Squeeze (File Name: Amanda Carr) is one of those people who can slip into any facility without being noticed. This is partly because she was a skilled burglar in her youth. Of course, she straightened up with the help of her mentor, Kayo, and joined the Army. She quickly showed great aptitude, especially in covert operations and was eventually recruited by Strikeforce Freedom.

Appearance: Tight-Squeeze is an attractive woman with longish brown hair. She usually wears a dark blue shirt and pants with a black vest over it. She's very seldom seen without her crossbow on hand.

Factoids: "Slightly introverted but can be brought out of her shell by her teammates", "Former burglar", "Gets a kick out of sneaking around"
Subplots: Emotional Ties (To Kayo)
Traits: Crossbow 3 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*, *Advantage (Can fire grappling hook bolt with strong cord attached)*], Stealthy 4, Martial Artist 2, Security Systems 4, Athletics 3, Disguise 2, Contortionist 4, Attractive 2, Aim 3, Fast Runner 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

SECOND SEASON (1983)

Big Bang
"Bazooka Soldier"

Quick Bio: They say that big things come in small packages and Big Bang (File Name: Morris Monfrey) is proof of that. Big Bang is rather diminutive in stature, but make no mistake about it: he's stronger than he looks. Strong enough, in fact, to lug around and fire a bazooka like it was a sidearm. Big Bang has one problem, however. His vision is terrible. This almost kept him out of Strikeforce Freedom, but he put on vision-enhancing goggles that he designed himself and wowed his peers with his uncanny accuracy with large weapons.

Appearance: Big Bang stands barely over 5 feet, but is extremely muscular. He has crew cut black hair and deep-set blue eyes. As for clothing, Big Bang wears camouflage pants and an olive green tank-top shirt that says "Kaboom" on it in white letters.

Factoids: "Sensitive about his height", "Pampers his blue-colored bazooka (which he has dubbed 'Grace')", "Is not humorless, but doesn't get most jokes", "Is about as subtle as a nuclear bomb"
Subplots: Physical Flaw (Poor eyesight without his goggles)
Traits: Bazooka 8 [*Area*, *Big Gun*, *Enhancer +4*, *Accessory*, *Disadvantage (big and unwieldy)*], Goggles 4 [*Enhancer +2 (to sight-based checks)*, *Accessory*], Bazooka Expertise 4, Scrappy Fighter 3, Inventor 2, Stout 3, Likeable 2, Poor Eyesight 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8

Lonestar
"Pilot"

Quick Bio: There's not an air vehicle that Lonestar (File Name: Darren Colt) can't operate efficiently. He claims to have driven his first single-engine plane by the time he was ten years old, though he's known for tell tall tales for the sake of entertaining others. He enlisted in the US Army the day he turned 18, where he found his niche for driving and piloting military vehicles right away. When the Strikeforce Freedom team was assembled, the brass knew they would need an unshakable pilot… and Lonestar was the ideal candidate.

Appearance: Lonestar is a Texan and proud of it. This pride manifests itself in his appearance as well. He looks like he stepped right out of the Wild West. He sports a large handlebar mustache and wears clothes that match the image, usually consisting of a white shirt with a brown leather vest over it, cowboy boots and a cowboy hat.

Factoids: "Loves Texas and references it often", "Extraordinarily friendly", "Stretches the truth for the sake of a good story", "Raised on the Triple Q Ranch"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Hates being in/on water-based vehicles)
Traits: Shotgun 3 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*], Pistols 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Jawbonin' 2, Piloting Helicopters 4 [*Specialty*], Piloting Airplanes/Jets 4 [*Specialty*], Vehicle Repair 2, Shootin' 2, Fist Fightin' 2, Athletics 2, Get Out of Harm's Way 3, Swimming 2X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

Wild Ride
"Vehicle Driver"

Quick Bio: Since the day he was born, Wild Ride (File Name: Todd Grater) was obsessed with vehicles, particularly fast ones. Unlike most young boys, he never "grew out of it" and went on to drive racecars professionally before joining the

Army. It was there that his affinity was noticed by Jumping Jack, who had much in common with him. Jumping Jack pulled some strings in order to get Wild Ride on the team, where he has continually impressed his teammates with his flawless driving skills.

Appearance: Wild Ride is a very handsome man with slightly shaggy blonde hair and a roguish smile. He often has five o'clock shadow on his face, as he has better things to do than shave every day. He wears green army pants and a black tank top with a green jacket over it.

Factoids: "Is a bit girl-crazy", "Obsessed with fast vehicles", "Is known to be a practical joker", "Doesn't take things too seriously", "Often tells tall tales about his Aunt Gracie, who (according to him) is outrageously tough, smart, clever, and influential"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Addicted to high-speed vehicles)
Traits: Pistol 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Fast-Deploy Motorcycle (F.A.D.E.) 7 [*Vehicle*; TRAITS: *Maneuverable 6 (Enhancer +4)*, *Fast 7*, *Sturdy Frame 4*, *Laser Blaster 3 {Enhancer +2*, *Disadvantage (Rigidly fixed position – forward)}*], Operate Ground Vehicles 4 [*Specialty*], Shoot Gun 2, Physical Activities 2, Brawl 2, Handsome 4, Clever Remarks 1
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 2

Wolfheart

"Ranger"

Quick Bio: Nothing pleases Wolfheart (File Name: Thomas Wolfheart) more than traipsing around the wilderness, dealing with bad guys and protecting his country in the process. He's a very formidable fighter, but it's his traditional Native American wisdom that makes him truly unique. He has a way of looking at things that often saves the day for the team.

Appearance: Wolfheart is a tall Native American with long, black hair and wide shoulders. He wears tan pants with fringe running down the sides and a dark brown shirt, usually kept partly buttoned.

Factoids: "Believes in Native American spirits", "Often speaks in riddles that only become apparent later on", "Is an environmentalist", "Never loses his temper"
Subplots: Vow (To protect the earth)
Traits: Hunting Knife 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Machine Gun 5 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Set Traps 4, Wise 4, Good Fighter 3, Marksman 3, Athletics 3, Confusing Riddle-Speak 4, Strong 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

STRIKEFORCE FREEDOM VEHICLES

Heavy Ordnance Command Tank (H.O.C.T.)

Description: The HOCT is a gargantuan tank that forms the heavy support role of the team. It's not maneuverable, but it's durable, faster than it looks, and packs one heck of an offensive punch, thanks to its huge turret cannon.

Traits: Fast 3, Armored Structure 9, Turret Cannon 8 [*Enhancer +4*, *Big Gun*]
Subplots: None

Rapid Attack Bike (R.A.B.)

Description: When the team needs speed and maneuverability, they break out the RABs to get the job done. These motorcycles go light on armament, as heavy weapons would only serve to slow them down. Instead, they are armed with twin lasers mounted on side sponsons.

Traits: Maneuverability 7 [*Enhancer +4*], Fast 7, Lightly Armored Frame 3, Twin Lasers 2 [*Enhancer +1*]
Subplots: None

All-Purpose Assault Vehicle (A.P.A.V.)

Description: This military jeep is a truly versatile vehicle in that it's armored enough to stand up to a heavy pounding and yet fast enough to get the heck out of Dodge when the need arises. It boasts a turreted dual-barrel laser cannon on its back portion.

Traits: Maneuverability 3 [*Enhancer +2*], Fast 5, Sturdy Frame 5, Dual-Barreled Laser Cannon 4 [*Enhancer +2*]
Subplots: None

Skyrazor

Description: The Skyrazor fighter jet is the king of the skies and is the primary air vehicle of Strikeforce Freedom. It's armed with a laser cannon as well as a rack of missiles.

Traits: Maneuverability 3 [*Enhancer +2*], Fast 8, Hull Strength 6, Integrated Computer System 2, Laser Cannon 4 [*Enhancer +2*, *Big Gun*], Missiles 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Area*]
Subplots: Physical Problem (Cannot stop in mid-air)

Sea Striker

Description: The Sea Striker is a small watercraft that has enough space for a pilot, a gunner (in a turret) and up to three passengers. Its cutting edge engine enables it to go at a high rate of speed while making a minimal amount of waves for stealth purposes. It mounts a turret-mounted heavy machine gun and two racks of torpedoes.

Traits: Maneuverability 5 [*Enhancer +3*], Fast 5, Sturdy Frame 5, Stealthy 3, Heavy Machine Gun 7 [*Enhancer +4*, *Accessory*], Torpedoes 4 [*Enhancer +3*, *Area*, *Big Gun*]
Subplots: None

SPIDER OPERATIVES

FIRST SEASON (1982)

Baron Vile
"Heartless Mercenary"

Quick Bio: Baron Vile is all business. His loyalty lies with whoever pads his Swiss bank account with the most money. But there is another side to him. Not a *good* side, mind you, but a *different* side nonetheless. You see, he actually enjoys it when SPIDER hires him, as he thrives on causing pain and misery. He's not just an impartial mercenary after all. He's more inclined to work for those who allow him to create the most pandemonium.

Appearance: Baron Vile is a sleekly built man with black hair and muttonchops. His clothes consist of a brown jumpsuit and black armor plates on his chest and shoulders. This is topped off by black gloves and boots. His most notable appearance trait is his WWI-era German helmet.

Factoids: "Speaks in an Austrian accent", "Is a true mercenary", "Enjoys his work when it involves anti-social behavior", "Doesn't trust the Widow"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Greedy)
Traits: Needle Pistol 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Sniper Rifle 3 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*, *Advantage (Can shoot very long distances)*], Armor Plating/Helmet 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Marksman 4 [*Specialty*], Sneaking 2, Athletics 2, Operate Vehicles 2, Resilient 2, Opportunist 4, Hard Nut to Crack 3, Melee Combat 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

General Arachnid
"Commander of SPIDER"

Quick Bio: General Arachnid is a complete mystery. Nobody knows who he is, nor has anyone ever seen his face. What *is* known, however, is that he forged the vilest terrorist organization to ever plague the world and rules over it with an iron first. His diabolical plans to conquer the world have been nearly successful on multiple occasions. Only the bravery of Strikeforce Freedom has kept SPIDER at bay.

Appearance: General Arachnid is a muscular man who favors a colorful approach to costuming. He wears a tight-fitting, spider-themed bodysuit. Its primary coloration is dark blue with black and yellow trim. His gloves and boots are red with gold trim. The costume also consists of a gold battle helmet with a silver faceplate that has eight "spider eyes" for effect.

Factoids: "Tyrannical", "Loses temper when his underlings fail him", "Speaks with a low voice that seems slightly mechanical in nature", "Isn't a coward, but has no problem with cutting and running when necessary"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Megalomaniac), Secret (His entire identity is secret)
Traits: Phaser Pistol 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Battle Helmet 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Advantage (Can't be forcibly taken off his head without triggering an explosive device)*, *Disadvantage (Only protects against attacks to the head)*, *Accessory*], Scheming 4, Shooting 2, Fighting 2, Strong 2, Resourceful 4, Athletics 2, Charismatic 4, Dodging 1
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

SPIDER Troopers
"Frontline Lackeys"

Quick Bio: These soldiers are the standard, all-purpose henchmen of the SPIDER organization. They aren't terribly competent, but there's enough of them around that they can still pose a threat to their enemies.

Appearance: SPIDER Troopers wear black bodysuits with yellow and gray trim. They also wear helmets with faceplates that cover everything except for their eyes. They carry pistols and machine guns.

Battle Rating: -1
Goon Modifiers: None

Tarantula
"Brutish Lackey"

Quick Bio: General Arachnid didn't hire this behemoth because of his brains; he hired him for his freakish strength and stamina. Tarantula has had many jobs during his life –street thug, biker, petty crook, bodyguard and pit fighter. Each of these things suited him well, but as an agent of SPIDER, he gets to be all of those things. And the pay's better too.

Appearance: Tarantula is a hulking man who stands at least a head taller than anyone else in the SPIDER organization. He wears a black mask with red trim that fully covers his face. The red trim is fashioned to make the mask look a bit like a tarantula's face. He wears tight black pants and a matching sleeveless shirt. The last adornment is a pair of half-gloves and wristbands that cover most of his forearms.

Factoids: "Speaks in a low, rumbling voice", "Likes to hurt people","Has been in prison several times","Has a crush on the Widow"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Cruel)
Traits: Monkey Wrench 3 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Freakish Strength 5, Hard To Hurt 5, Brawling 4, Stubborn 3, Athletics 2, Drive Motorcycle 3, Chopper Cycle 3 [*Vehicle*; TRAITS*: Maneuverable 6 (Enhancer +4), Fast 6, Sturdy Frame 4*], Not Too Bright 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

The Widow
"Espionage Agent"

Quick Bio: This deadly woman has been involved in the world of espionage since she was a teenager. She specialized in disguising herself and slipping into highly restricted locations for her employers. She became a major player in her field. Shortly thereafter, she was approached by General Arachnid to become a permanent member of SPIDER. He promised her a high-tech mask that was capable of making her face replicate any face she could imagine. This was enough to make the decision an easy one.

Appearance: The Widow is a blonde-haired beauty with cruelty written all over her face. She wears a blue, red and black bodysuit fashioned to look like a black widow.

Factoids: "Cold and calculating", "Cares for no one but herself","Isn't terribly brave","Has no sense of humor","Enjoys manipulating people"
Subplots: Secret (She used to be very weak and co-dependent as a child)
Traits: Electroid Mask 5 [*Enhancer +3 (usually to her "Mistress of Disguise" Trait), Accessory*], Silenced Pistol 1 [*Enhancer +1, Advantage (Doesn't make noise), Accessory*], Mistress of Disguise 4, Manipulative 4, Dead-Shot 3, Judo 2, Agile 3, Stealthy 3, Intelligent 3
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

SECOND SEASON (1983)

Dr. Thoraxx
"Evil Inventor"

Quick Bio: Dr. Thoraxx is a man without scruples. He has no moral issues when it comes to experimentation, exploitation or, well, anything else for that matter. He is completely loyal to General Arachnid and is known to be something of a snitch. Dr. Thoraxx isn't much help to SPIDER in physical situations, but is invaluable to them nevertheless due to his talent for inventing their unique vehicles, armaments and other gadgets.

Appearance: Dr. Thoraxx appears to be in his late forties and sports a completely bald head and a thin mustache. He wears a stylized white lab coat seemingly at all times with black pants and gray shirt with the SPIDER symbol emblazoned across its front. On his finger is an ornate ring that can shoot a highly concentrated laser beam.

Factoids: "Speaks with a thick Russian accent", "Often puts his fingertips together with those on the other hand when thinking devious thoughts", "Only General Arachnid trusts him","Rumored to be much, much older than he looks"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Snitch)
Traits: Laser Ring 6 [*Enhancer +3, Advantage (Doesn't need line of sight on targets), Accessory*], Aim 1, Inventor 4 [*Specialty*], Scientist 4, Highly Intelligent 4, Dodge 3, Underworld Connections 4, Weakling 1X, Weak-Willed 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

SPIDER Huntsmen
"Elite Lackeys"

Quick Bio: These soldiers are higher up on the food chain than the standard SPIDER Troopers, but they really aren't much different in terms of function; they're just more highly

trained and equipped.

Appearance: SPIDER Troopers wear brown bodysuits with yellow and gray trim. They also wear helmets with faceplates that cover everything except for their eyes. They carry pistols and heavy machine guns.

Battle Rating: 0
Goon Modifiers: Mob Tactics

Redback
"Task Leader"

Quick Bio: Since his introduction in Season 2 of the series, Redback has been used as General Arachnid's right-hand man, leading missions and carrying out important tasks. Prior to coming aboard SPIDER, Redback (aka Sam Brogan) was an international criminal of much renown. His services were sought after by nearly every criminal organization in the world because of his ability to get the job done.

Appearance: Redback wears a dark blue bodysuit adorned with pouches, straps, and bandolier belts. Over this is a gray vest with a red SPIDER symbol on the back. He has a collection of oval pods on his belt. These pods fold out to become boomerangs that perform various functions. He also wears a dark blue helmet with chrome trim that covers his entire face.

Factoids: "Has an Australian accent", "Is a smart-alec", "Likes to talk trash on his enemies"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Overconfident)
Traits: Specialty Boomerangs 4 [*Clusters (Attack/Defense and Manipulation)*, *Enhancer +2*, *Advantage (The boomerangs return to him)*, *Accessory*], Battle Helmet 2 [*Enhancer +1*, *Disadvantage (Only protects against attacks to the head)*, *Accessory*], Master Marksman 4, Athletics 2, Command 2, Skilled Fighter 2, Resilient to Damage 2, Criminal 4, Notice 2
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

Shadowstalker
"Cyber-Ninja"

Quick Bio: Shadowstalker is a mysterious ninja from the Harashika Clan. He tends to remove himself from social situations, standing back to assess everyone. This behavior makes others nervous (except General Arachnid), as they feel as if they are being studied or analyzed… which actually is the case. Shadowstalker is cautious and observant, always looking to learn about his environment before moving in for the kill.

Appearance: Shadowstalker wears a variation of traditional ninja attire. He foregoes the dark colors that his brethren prefer, opting for a more flamboyant color scheme of blue and gold with red trim. His most distinctive feature is his array of cybernetics; the entire left half of his body is mechanical in nature. He usually carries two swords and a selection of odd-shaped shuriken.

Factoids: "Analytical", "Cautious", "Never loses his temper", "Speaks little"
Subplots: Secret (He required cybernetics due to losing a fight against an unknown assassin), Vow (To learn the identity of the man who defeated him)
Traits: Metal Body 5 [*Enhancer +3*, *Disadvantage (Only on the left side of his body)*], Dual Swords 3 [*Enhancer +2*, *Advantage (If the swords cause a Setback Token, roll a die; if you get a 10-12, it deals another Setback Token)*, *Accessory*], Ninjitsu 4, Astounding Agility 4, Strength 2, Observant 3, Impenetrable Will 3, Shuriken 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Stealth 3
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Slimeball
"Saboteur"

Quick Bio: It astounds everyone that the normally loud and obnoxious Slimeball is so adept at sneaking around and planting explosives undetected. He's good at his job. So good, in fact, that General Arachnid puts up with his repugnant personality and hideous odor in order to retain his services.

Appearance: Slimeball is a slightly muscular man with tangled and matted black hair, a scraggly beard and rotten, yellow teeth… all due to his poor hygiene. He wears dull gray pants, a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and a toque/stocking cap.

Factoids: "Speaks in a slightly slurred, lazy manner", "Has rancid body odor", "Is known for his repulsive and overbearing personality", "Usually says 'Question!' immediately before making a query", "No one likes to be around him", "Loves to drive vehicles"
Subplots: Stigma (Due to foul personality and body odor), Mental Hang-Up (Fear of water)
Traits: Machine Gun 5 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Hunting Knife 1 [*Enhancer +1*, *Accessory*], Infiltration Kit 3 [*Enhancer +2*, *Accessory*], Good Shot 2, Capable Combatant 3, Stealth 4, Demolitions 4 [*Specialty*], Breaking In 4, Toughness 2, Strong 1, Athletics 1, Terrible Driver 2X, Unlikable 2X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

SPIDER VEHICLES

Venom Tank

Description: The Venom is a high-tech tank designed (like most of SPIDER's vehicles) by Dr. Thoraxx. Its shape is constructed to look intimidating, eschewing traditional tank designs altogether. The coloration is black with green and blue trim, and it sports a gargantuan turret-mounted laser cannon on top.

Traits: Fast 2, Armored Structure 8, Turret Cannon 10 [*Enhancer +5*, *Big Gun*]
Subplots: Physical Problem (Physical attacks targeting the tank's rear gain a +2 rating bonus)

Wasp

Description: The Wasp is a 2-person helicopter that focuses more on offensive capability than speed or durability. It is black with yellow stripe patterns (similar to that of a Yellow Jacket wasp) and is bristling with weaponry. Its armament includes a nose-mounted gatling cannon, a turret-mounted heavy machine gun and a rack of missiles.

Traits: Maneuverability 3 [*Enhancer +2*], Fast 5, Structural Integrity 4, Gatling Cannon 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Big Gun*], Missiles 7 [*Enhancer +4*, *Area*], Heavy Machine Gun 7 [*Enhancer +4*]
Subplots: None

Black Beetle

Description: This 2-person watercraft primarily floats on water like a normal boat but can also seal itself up and dive beneath the waves. It is black with red trim and has a shape reminiscent of its namesake. Its large laser can shoot both while afloat and while submerged.

Traits: Maneuverability 7 [*Enhancer +4*], Fast 6, Underwater Movement 4, Structure Strength 4, Large Laser 6 [*Enhancer +3*]
Subplots: None

EPISODE SEEDS

"Distress Call"

A distress call is coming from an unknown source in the jungles of South America and Hardcore assembles a group of characters (i.e, the PCs) to track it down. They are given a locater device that shows them the precise location the distress call originated from.

The PCs are dropped from Skyrazors directly over the jungle, a little more than two miles from the beacon's source. They are ordered to meet back up with the Skyrazors at a nearby village after the signal is investigated.

The players will most likely think it's a trap, but likely to their surprise, it isn't. The individual sending out the distress signal is a pilot whose plane was shot down by SPIDER Wasps. His name is Rico Hernandez and he was transporting electronic devices from a mysterious man who paid him well to do so. As soon as this is explained, several squads of SPIDER Troopers hit the scene (one for each PC).

Once the troopers are dealt with, the PCs will almost certainly try to get Rico back to the Skyrazors (along with his cargo). This gives you an opportunity to throw in all manner of fun jungle-based encounters and hazards at them (hostile tribal natives, a river with piranhas, huge snakes, and so forth). Of course, before they can reach safety, more SPIDER agents will show up to rain on the PCs' parade.

The bonus of this episode is that it leaves a few unanswered questions that can be used in later episodes (Who is the mysterious man who hired Rico? What are the devices for? Why does SPIDER want them so badly?

"The Takeover"

The PCs have been out on a routine training mission all day and come back to find that the Compound has been taken over by SPIDER forces. The heroes are on their own and must sneak or fight their way into the various buildings of the Compound in order to free their comrades and retake the headquarters.

This is a highly freeform episode in which the players are in the driver's seat. Let them concoct a plan and attempt to carry it out. Don't make it a cakewalk, however. The heroes should be in for a big challenge, regardless of what approach they take. For an operation this big, General Arachnid is certain to have deployed all of his best agents.

An underlying sub-plot could be for the PCs to find out how the takeover happened. As it turns out, treachery is involved.

The Widow has recently been in deep cover as a new recruit for Strikeforce Freedom (using the code name of Jaguar). She utilized the air circulation systems in the buildings to disperse paralysis gas, giving her enough time to imprison the team members in the brig. To really add some meaning to this, the opening scene of the episode could involve Jaguar interacting with the PCs. This gives the players a chance to bond with their supposed new teammate.

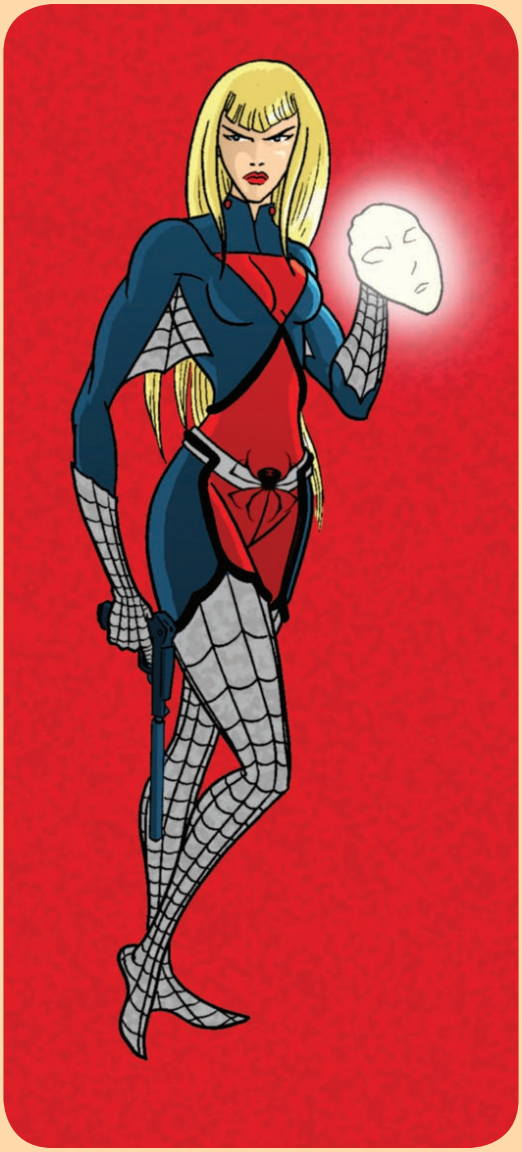
"The Doomsday Comet"

Dr. Thoraxx has developed a new device that is capable of triggering a collision course between a huge comet and Earth itself, eradicating all life on the planet upon impact. General Arachnid has issued a demand to every nation. Either they surrender to him or there will be an apocalypse. Should they all comply, he promises to turn the machine off. He informs the leaders of the nations that the collision will occur in three days if they refuse to give in to his demands.

Needless to say, Strikeforce Freedom is on the case. The team has been split into several groups (with the PCs being one of them). They must figure out a way to avert the disaster at all cost. This can be done any number of ways, but the most probable plan will be to locate and destroy Dr. Thoraxx's room-sized device.

General Arachnid's no dummy. He knows good and well that everyone under the sun will be seeking the device. To these ends, Dr. Thoraxx has made the device modular and split it up into three different segments. In order to stop the machine, all three pieces must be destroyed or deactivated.

The device segments are hidden in a subterranean cave in Antarctica, in a hidden base within the Great Sphinx of Giza in Egypt, and in a secret outpost in the forests of Russia.



TRANSBOTS

PC CREATION GUIDELINES

Proof of Purchase Points: PCs are created using 70 PoPPs.
Maximum Trait Ratings (Regular Traits): 12
Maximum Trait Ratings (Action Features): 12
Miscellaneous:

- The characters must be Transbots.
- Most Action Features should be derived from technology (they *are* robots, after all). There are no "weird powers" in the series.
- All alternate forms must be vehicular in nature unless the GM gives the player special permission.
- When Traits representing weapons and similar things are given the "Retained Trait" Bonus, the name of the Trait may be slightly renamed in the alternate form. For example, Lightblade's Double-Barreled Laser Rifle splits into two separate guns when he transforms into a helicopter, so the Trait is retained but is renamed "Laser Rifles". It's the same game effect, just with a different name.
- Physical Traits do not carry over to the alternate form unless the "Retained Trait" Bonus is taken.
- The "Big Gun" Bonus is modified significantly for the series. Here is the new write-up: This Bonus should be given to Traits that represent a weapon designed mostly to deal damage to extremely large targets (mountains, skyscrapers, gestalt robots, space stations, etc.). In order to be given this Bonus, the Trait must also have the "Enhancer" Bonus. When used against human-sized or smaller targets, subtract 2 from the bonus given by the Enhancer; if the Enhancer normally only provides a +1 boost, then this will cause a –1 penalty to the Trait being enhanced. When used against a vehicle or most giant transforming robots, use the normal bonus given by the Enhancer. If used against massive targets (see the examples above), add 3 to the bonus given by the Enhancer.

BACKSTORY

Risingstar Animation Studios (widely known as RAS) was anything but a "rising star." During the 1970s, the company produced numerous hit cartoons such as *Space Justice*, *Darkstone and the Questers*, *Little Big Guys* and *Tom Iron*, but as the 1980s rolled around, the business was changing. Cartoons that didn't readily lend themselves to toy lines were falling by the wayside, and increasingly cartoons were being seen as nothing but half-hour toy commercials. For years, the owner of RAS, Richard Barger, staunchly refused to give in to "blatant commercialism." He plodded along, doing what he had been doing since he founded the company in 1972, without the aid of toy lines. Unfortunately for him, it was an uphill battle.

Not only had the business changed drastically, but Barger himself lost touch with his audience. He seemed to no longer understand what kids wanted to see, and that the toy lines he rejected as a marketing cash cow were as much an economic response to a demand by the grade-school audience for an increased level of interactivity. By 1983, RAS was in dire straits. Barger was ready to go bankrupt, when he finally decided to cave in and contact a toy company. But first, he needed to create a brand new series.

Barger contacted Bruce Hoy, a Japanese American with a knack for coming up with fresh new ideas. He had done a great deal of work for animation studios abroad, and his creations impressed Barger. Together, they developed the idea of robots that could transform into vehicles. With such an incredible concept in hand, the rest was a piece of cake. Within a month or two, the entire series premise was complete. They were ready to make proposals to toy companies.

The first four companies they approached turned down the property, for various reasons. One company said it would cost too much to make such detailed action figures, but the others merely thought it was a silly idea and that it would never sell. The fifth company, Plasco, was more willing to gamble on this bold series. They signed a short-term contract to produce a single wave of action figures. If it flopped, they would cease production. If it took off, they would agree to sign a long-term contract.

Transbots first hit the small screen in the fall of 1984, to rave reviews. Likewise, the action figures flew off the shelves as kids everywhere rushed to purchase all of them. This created a holiday sales frenzy not unlike the *Stork Babies* debacle a couple of years earlier. The mainstream press picked up on the craze and *Transbots* took on a life of its own.

In early '85, KC Comics made RAS an extremely profitable offer that would enable them to produce a *Transbots* comic book. Strangely enough, though, KC didn't want to do a straight adaptation of the cartoon. Instead, they wanted to aim for a slightly older audience by tinkering with the concepts and characters from the show. While this made Barger and Hoy uncomfortable, they relented and green-lighted the comic book series, which was to be called *War of the Transbots*. The comic proved to be a successful venture in its own right. Just as all concerned had hoped, it attracted the teenage to adult crowds, further increasing the property's sky-rocketing popularity.

Naturally, this success brought about countless imitators. Only two cartoon wanna-be's surfaced (*Carbots* and *Quest of the Roar-bots*), but more than a dozen toy knock-offs competed for aisle space in stores. As was to be expected, none of them were truly able to compete with the original giant transforming robots, but it did cause a number of legal battles, both with the knock-off manufacturers and with Japanese companies that were trying to import their own toys into the American market. In fact, the reason that Spectre was never introduced into the comic book series was due to a particularly nasty legal battle with Nekochan Toys, as the company claimed that Spectre too closely resembled one of their own toys.

On April 20th, 1988, the aging Richard Barger passed away due to liver failure. His shiftless slacker of a son, Barry, ended up with RAS and quickly ran it into the ground. Convinced that the future was in animated comedy shorts, Barry canned the *Transbots* in favor of producing such aimless cartoons as *Quirky Pig*, *Doofus Duck*, and *Lars the Bunny*. These shows were panned by critics and kids alike. Within one year, RAS was no more.

Fortunately, KC Comics' contract stipulated that they would be able to produce the still-hot *War of the Transbots* series until 1992. Bruce Hoy jumped on board to lend a hand with the comic, boosting its popularity even further. When '92 rolled around, the comic book series ended in a climactic finale, but the Transbots fever never really died down for long. In 1995, Hoy licensed the movie rights from Barry Barger to produce *Transbots: The Movie*, which was a stylistic mesh of the cartoon and comic book. Although it featured some of the best Japanese animation and a number of big name stars as voice actors, it was not the box office smash Hoy expected it would be, and it went to moderate video sales.

In 2002, KC Comics worked with Hoy to buy all of the remaining Transbots rights from Barger. Barry was strapped for cash, and quickly agreed to the sale. KC relaunched the license, carried by a unified cartoon and comic release, called *Transbots 2: Metal Wars*, which detailed the conflict between the Transbots and Warbots after the movie. A new toy line followed, in hopes of helping to draw in the kid market as well as the nostalgia market. Sadly, the relaunch did not catch on due to some drastic alterations to the franchise's characters and plots. Both the cartoon and comicbook were dead within a year's time. Thus far, there has been no talk of a further revival of the property.

THE GENRE

Transbots is science fiction. The setting is 1980s-era Earth. Aside freom two episodes in which the action took place on the moon, the series keeps its feet grounded on Earth.

THE SERIES

On May 10, 1984, Tech-Corp finished its most ambitious endeavor to date... Project: Transbot, a series of sentient combat robots that were capable of transforming into vehicles. The president of Tech-Corp at the time, Trevor Hasting, planned to sell these war machines to the U.S. government for their military defense forces. Unfortunately, this plan was not to be – Hasting was removed as president, and replaced by Maximillian Mercy, a cutthroat businessman with a passion for power. He ordered the technicians to start reprogramming the Transbots to help take over the world. As the technicians reprogrammed half the bots, the other half saw what was going on and rebelled! The valiant Transbots fought their way past their evil ex-comrades and managed to escape to freedom. Luckily, they met up with Trevor Hasting, who was struggling to found a new company, High-Tech Concepts. After hearing about Mercy's machinations, Trevor agreed to assist them in their battle as well as offer them shelter and repairs. Now the Transbots, along with Trevor Hastings, must defend the planet against the maniacal man-machine Maximillian Mercy and his tyrannical Warbots, while protecting themselves against the ever-growing anti-robot hysteria that is gripping the public.

Technology

In a series that features giant transforming robots, there's no way to deny that technology plays a massive role. The Transbots and Warbots were created with the best, most advanced technology the world has ever seen. By and large, though, the world's technology level is similar to that of the world during the 1980s. Only corporations and the government have access to bleeding-edge tech.

FACTIONS

The following groups play an important role in Transbots.

The Transbots and High-Tech Concepts

When Maximillian Mercy began reprogramming the robots, about half of them became aware of his motives and promptly rebelled. Those robots are known as the Transbots, the name their creator, Trevor Hasting, gave them in the first place.

Once again allied with Hasting and his new company, High-Tech Concepts, the noble Transbots wage war against their erstwhile comrades, the WarBots of Max Mercy's TechCorp. This is a painful battle for the Transbots, as their most dangerous enemies are warped reflections of themselves. To them, it's much like having to do battle with your own sibling. Not an enviable situation, to be certain.

As for High-Tech Concepts, it is still a small fish in a big pond, but it is one of the most promising technology-based companies in the world. They don't have the astronomical budget of TechCorp, but their president and founder, Trevor Hasting, makes good use of the funds they *do* have. Not a penny is wasted, nor a dime spared.

High-Tech Concepts operates from a complex of buildings some ten miles outside Atlanta, Georgia. The architecture reflects the cutting-edge technology the company produces. Made of gleaming steel and reflective glass, the compound looks not unlike a tiny city of the future. The central structure stands twenty stories tall and looms over the smaller buildings like a sentry guarding them from danger. None of the other buildings reach more than five stories.

With the Metal Wars in full swing, Hasting knew he couldn't leave his company unprotected, nor could he expect the Transbots to be present at all times. It just wouldn't be possible. To that end, he has designed and installed numerous defenses, including a massive battle cannon that deploys from the top of the main building.

The Warbots and TechCorp

The Warbots are manifestations of Maximillian Mercy's own twisted dreams of conquest and power. He re-programmed them to lust after all the things that he does. Unfortunately for him, when the robots gained complete sentience, these goals and ideals became muddled and soon mingled with their newly formed personalities. This meant that, while they still maintained Mercy's original programming, these mental characteristics became personalized. Such is the price of sentience and Mercy was more than willing to pay it.

TechCorp was founded in 1980 by Cornelius Bennett, who conveniently disappeared in 1984 -- exactly one week before Maximillian Mercy took over. Of course, Bennett had very little direct contact with his multinational company, preferring to let Trevor Hasting run the show. Once Mercy came into power, Hasting was out on the street, so to speak.

Although Tech-Corp has branches all over the world, the main headquarters is located in Manhattan, New York. The building itself is among the tallest in the city and is without a doubt the most intimidating. Constructed of jet black steel, the architecture shows a very strong gothic flavor, with gargoyles perched atop its four corners, contoured windows and huge arched doorways. It's rather ironic that such a high tech corporation would utilize an architectural style that hasn't been in prominence in over one hundred years.

Unlike the High-Tech Concepts compound, the TechCorp HQ doesn't have any overt defense weapons. It's located in a densely populated area and Mercy knows that any attack on the building would result in many lost civilian lives. That alone is protection enough, as Hasting and the Transbots would never risk such a thing. Still, the building has plenty of interior defenses -- force fields, alarms and even hundreds of highly equipped troops in light power armor.

TRANSBOT CHARACTERS

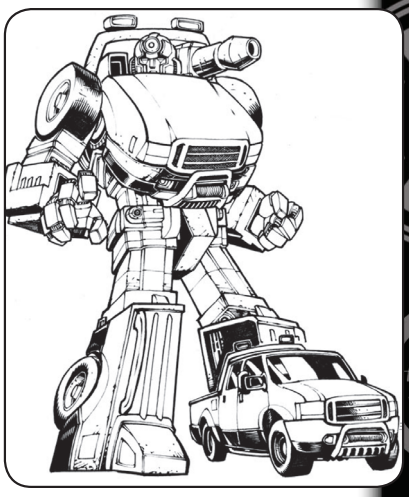
FIRST SEASON (1984)

Crusader

"Adventurous Geologist"

Quick Bio: Built for land exploration in even the most hazardous of climates, Crusader was fitted with rugged tires and suspension to his vehicle frame to make rough terrain easily passable, while a Cryogenic armament was added to secure flora and fauna specimens and to "discourage" threats. He was one of the last of the Transbots to rebel. Crusader is a true adventurer - the more daunting the task, the more he loves it. He has a methodical mentality and sharp eye for detail. Crusader is very conscious of the planet's ecology and the natural environment, and often tries to convince the other Transbots to be aware of it as well.

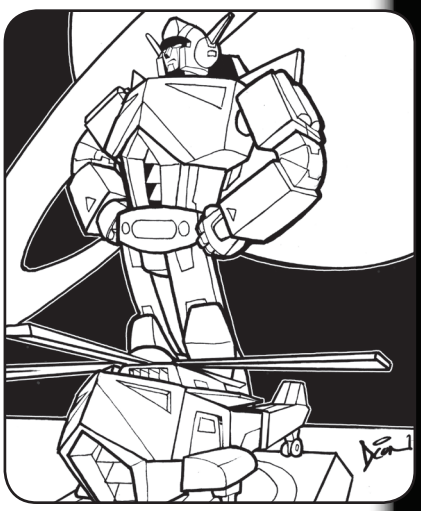
Factoids: "Staunch environmentalist", "Hungry for adventure", "Loves the countryside"



Subplots: Special (Lectures others on biology and environmental protection)
Traits: Travel on Any Terrain 6, Rugged Body 7, Fire Ranged Weapon 3, Pragmatic Fighter 4, Observe 5, Expert in Life Sciences 5 [*Specialty*], Scanners with Scientific Database 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Outdoors Knowledge 4, Shoulder-Mounted Cryo-Cannon 7 [*Enhancer +4, Trait Zap (Target, -3 to an opponent's quickness, athletics, or reflex-based Trait), has a Duration*], Land Rover Form 4 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Cryo-Cannon), Retained Trait (Travel on Any Terrain)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7
Land Rover Form: Cryo-Cannon 7 [*Enhancer +4, Trait Zap (Target, -3 to an opponent's quickness, athletics, or reflex-based Trait), has a Duration*], Travel on Any Terrain 6, Smooth Handling 2 [*Enhancer +1*], Pretty Tough 5, Go Fast 4, Haul Weight 4 [*Specialty*], Noisy Engine 1X

Lightblade

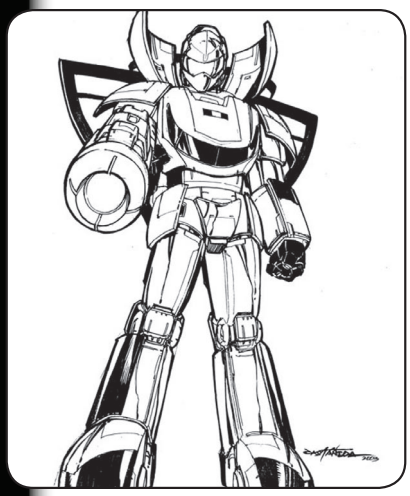
"Heroic Transbot Leader"



Quick Bio: Lightblade was one of the first designs that Trevor Hasting developed for TechCorp, a combination troop transport and extraction vehicle for wounded soldiers. When Maximillian Mercy took over, he had Lightblade reconstructed as an attack chopper. Lightblade gained sentience, but before the insidious "darkness code" programming could take effect, he escaped and sought out his true creator. He leads his fellow rebels, now called the Transbots, to fight for the protection of humanity against the evil Warbots. Lightblade is always calm in tense situations, helping him to rise to the leadership of the Transbots. His cool logic sometimes causes him to misunderstand his more emotional human companions, but when the Warbots attack, his nobility and strength make the Transbots thankful to have him on their side. He believes very

strongly that all life has a right to exist, whether it is human or mechanical, and is willing to sacrifice himself for that ideal.

Factoids: "Noble," "Easily confused by human logic," "Believes that all life has the right to exist"
Subplots: Archenemy (Vandal)
Traits: Double-Barreled Laser Rifle 5 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Vibro-Sword 5 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Armor 6, Aim 9, Close Combat 5, Leadership 4, Strong 7, Notice 1, Helicopter Form 7 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Double-Barrelled Laser Rifle – slightly renamed in other form)*]
Stats: Threshold 12, Battle Rating 9
Helicopter Form: Maneuverable 3, Fast 6, Sturdy Frame 5, Cargo Space 2, Twin-Mounted Laser Rifles 5 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Gas Cloud 3 [*Area, Trait Zap (-1 to sight-based Traits), Trait Zap (-1 to movement-based Traits), One-Shot, has a duration*]



Quasar
"Inquisitive Scientist"

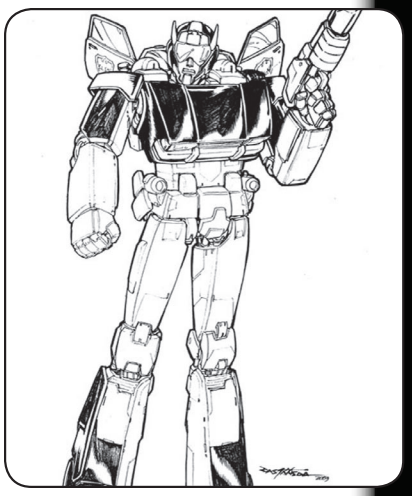
Quick Bio: The most sophisticated and complex of the original Transbot designs, Quasar was designed to take space exploration to a new level. Freed from the need to support a human crew, Quasar's programming was to explore nearby planets, extract samples of the local soil and flora, and return without any danger to humans. Quasar became self-aware and rebelled when he learned of the evil intentions of the Warbots. Curious almost to a fault, Quasar always wants to know the "who," "what," and "why" of any situation, even if it means bending the rules. This odd behavior has gotten him into trouble more than once, but he is often much more aware of current situations and surroundings than his teammates.

Factoids: "Overly inquisitive", "Not averse to breaking rules", "Seeks to protect all life"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (obsessed with thorough exploration)
Traits: Evasive Moves 7, Physical Strength 6, Swift 6 [*Specialty*], Clobbering 3, Alert 3, Space Scientist 7, Judge Behavior 2, Mental Strength 3, Fire Rayguns 4, Pulse Laser Rifle 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Space Shuttle Form 6 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Swift – slightly renamed in other form), Retained Trait (Fire Rayguns), Retained Trait (Pulse Laser Rifle – slightly renamed in other form)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7

Space Shuttle Form: Orbital Flight 5, Travel Through Atmosphere 4, Aerial Maneuvering 6 [*Specialty*], Solid Structure 6, Heat Shields 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Fire Rayguns 4, Pulse Laser Cannons 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*]

Sentinel
"Security Officer and Soldier"

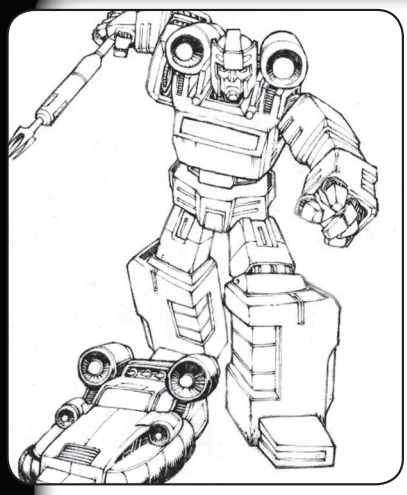
Quick Bio: Sentinel was originally designed to transport and protect police officers en route to dangerous situations, as well as provide backup. Designed with the capture of malcontents in mind, Sentinel was equipped with non-lethal weaponry and protection capabilities. Maximillian Mercy had his tasers permanently affixed to his doors and increased their power, but he rebelled before further weaponry could be installed. Sentinel has a rigid personality. He is loyal, incredibly brave, always the first into battle and the last to leave, but his tendency to be extremely literal when following his orders leaves him appearing unimaginative and inflexible. Although he is very martially focused in his job as head of security, the protection of humans is at the core of his programming.



Factoids: "Always follows orders", "In love with discipline and protocol", "Cool under fire"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (has trouble improvising or changing plans)
Traits: Armored 7, Swerve 6, Amazing Shot 4 [*Specialty*], Law Enforcement 3, Forensic Knowledge 3, Diligent 2, Super-Strong Grip 6, Shockwave Tasers 7 [*Enhancer +4, Accessory*], Project Force Field 4 [*Area, Defend, has a Duration*], Police Squad Car Form 7 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Shockwave Tasers), Retained Trait (Force Field)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7
Police Squad Car Form: Land Travel 7, Police Siren 2, Searchlight 2, Maneuverable 4, Enduring on the Road 6, Shockwave Tasers 7 [*Enhancer +4, Accessory*], Project Force Field 4 [*Area, Defend, has a Duration*]

Skimmer
"Upbeat Scout"

Quick Bio: Skimmer was originally designed for use with the Coast Guard and other naval rescue teams to rescue sailors, boaters, or lost cargo from the depths of the ocean. He is highly adaptable and efficient in any wetlands or coastal setting,



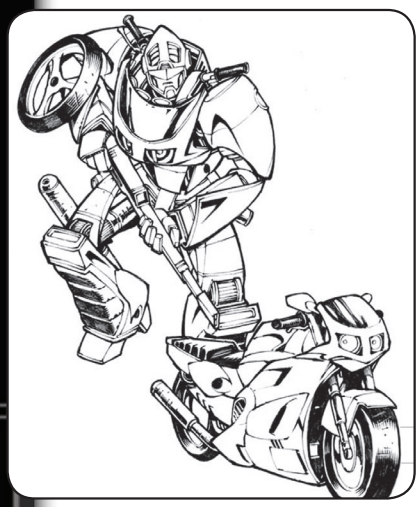
as well as functioning for miles underwater. Skimmer is the "little brother" of the Transbot team. Although his ambition can make him short-sighted, his upbeat personality and determination makes him a welcome addition to any Transbot mission. He loves to explore Earth's oceans, and can be found spending weeks at a time just swimming around.

Factoids: "Charismatic", "Brimming with ambition", "Makes witty remarks"
Subplots: Special (inexperienced, younger than other Transbots)
Traits: Agile Maneuvering 6, Wield Long Weapons 4, Massive 7, Fire Ranged Weapons 5, Raw Speed 4, Move Silently 4, Nautical Knowledge 3, Transbot Repairs 2, Persuasive 4, Strong-Willed 2, Lightning Spear 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Off-Shore Diving 5, Hovercraft Form 6 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Agile Maneuvering), Retained Trait (Massive – slightly renamed in other form), Retained Trait (Fire Ranged Weapon), Retained Trait (Move Silently – slightly renamed in other form)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6
Hovercraft Form: Amphibian Speed 6 [*Specialty*], Harpoon Gun 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Agile Maneuvering 6, Resilient Structure 7, Fire Ranged Weapon 5, Hover Quietly 4, Far-Reaching Radar 3

Spectre

"Nervous Spy"

Quick Bio: Spectre was developed to act as an espionage agent in dangerous situations, eliminating the need to risk human agents in the field. He was never refitted with vehicular weaponry by Maximillian Mercy, but it's not likely he'd make very much use of them in any case. Spectre is a coward, plain and simple. Like all Transbots, he believes in the sanctity of life (mainly his), but the main reason he rebelled was because the Warbots terrified him. He understands his duty to the Transbot cause, and his sense of duty often conflicts with his natural cowardice.



Factoids: "Always nervous", "Driven by Duty", "Security freak"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (overcome by obvious cowardice)
Traits: Sturdy Frame 2, Fine Manipulation 3, Sniper 5, Sneaky 8, Quick Escape 5, Race Like Crazy 8 [*Specialty*], Detective Work 4, Transbot Repairs 3, Close-Range Fighting 3, Easily Persuaded 1X, Laser Rifle 4 [*Big Gun, Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Smoke Grenades 4 [*Area, Trait Zap Target (-3 to visual perception-based Traits), Trait Zap Target (-2 to aiming or ranged combat-related Traits), Trait Zap Target (-2 to melee combat-related Traits); Trait Zap Self (-2 to ranged combat Traits), Trait Zap Self (-2 to melee combat-related Traits), Accessory, Oomph Powered, has a Duration*], Motorcycle Form 2 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Quick Escape), Retained Trait (Race Like Crazy – slightly renamed in other form), Retained Trait (Smoke Grenades – slightly renamed in other form)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5
Motorcycle Form: Sneaky 6, Insane Motorcycle Jump 2 [*Oomph Powered*], Precise Audiovisual Perception 2, Sturdy Frame 4, Get Away Against Odds 5, Speed of a Road Rocket 8 [*Specialty*], Smokescreen Machine 4 [*Area, Trait Zap Target (-3 to visual perception-based Traits), Trait Zap Target (-2 to aiming or ranged combat-related Traits), Trait Zap Target (-2 to melee combat-related Traits); Trait Zap Self (-2 to ranged combat Traits), Trait Zap Self (-2 to melee combat-related Traits), Accessory, Oomph Powered, has a Duration*]

Titanos

"Egotistical Warrior"

Quick Bio: Using an undeveloped design to transport armed troops or military vehicles into hostile urban areas for immediate deployment, Titanos was one of the first Transbots to be built by Trevor Hastings after the revolt, as the other Transbots needed a strong warrior and protector to help them against the Warbots. Titanos has proven to be an enthusiastic warrior. His own biggest fan, Titanos is a legend in his own mind. The fact that it is often Titanos who retrieves, repairs, and transports his damaged comrades to safety does nothing to discourage his megalomania. Due to his heavy armor and massive body, Titanos has no fear wading into battle with most any Warbot, but his cockiness has sometimes caused him to end up in Trevor's repair bay. Secretly, Titanos is wondering what's so great about protecting life, and is starting to wonder if he is on the wrong side.

Factoids: "Subject to his own vanity", "Knows no fear", "Quick-tempered"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (his massive ego), Mental Hang-up (tends to get overenthusiastic and careless)
Traits: Fighting Spirit 4, Frighteningly Strong 8 [*Enhancer +4, Specialty*], Smash and Crush 6, Aim 5, Evasive Moves 4, Tough Armor Plating 9 [*Enhancer +5*], Persistent 3, Mechanical Repairs 2, Bulky 1X, Slow 1X, Flamethrower 4 [*Advantage: fire/heat; if the target hit has no armor and no Traits that can be used to directly oppose fire, they take 2 Setback Tokens instead of one, Area, Big Gun, Enhancer +2, Accessory*], Semi-Truck Form 2 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Frighteningly Strong), Retained Trait (Tough Armor Plating), Retained Trait (Aim – renamed in other form), Retained Trait (Flamethrower – renamed in other form, same effect)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8
Semi-Truck Form: Road Speed 4, Extra Storage Space 2, Universal Intercom-System 3, Solid Build 7, Frighteningly Strong 8 [*Enhancer +4, Specialty*], Tough Armor Plating [*Enhancer +5*], Fire Ranged Weapon 5, Twin Heat Lasers 4 [*Advantage: fire/heat; if the target hit has no armor and no Traits that can be used to directly oppose fire, they take 2 Setback Tokens instead of one, Area, Big Gun, Enhancer +2, Accessory*]

TRANSBOT ALLIES

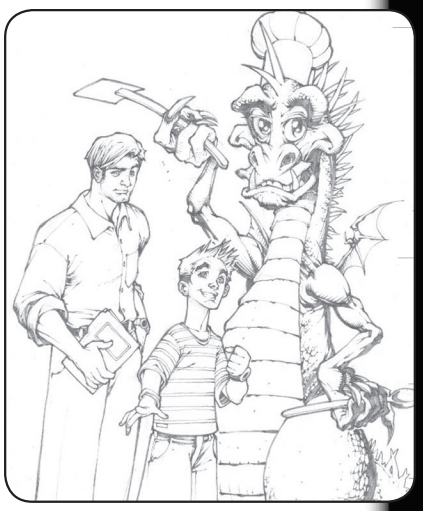
Billy Hasting
"Adventurous Kid"

Quick Bio: Unlike his father, Billy never enjoyed scientific pursuits. Not that he isn't a thinker, mind you - it's just that his mind functions in a more deductive, intuitive way. He'd rather solve a mystery than figure out chemistry. Fortunately, Trevor supports him in this and feeds him plenty of detective novels, which Billy has taken to like a fish to water. Billy loves a good mystery, or any mystery, for that matter. He's also quite a talker, chatting up a storm any chance he gets. He chatters about anything and everything, which tends to get on some people's nerves. Billy likes to hang around the compound, which suits his father just fine, as he enjoys spending quality time with his son. Billy knows that action and adventure is never far away for the Transbots, and he seems to always get himself mixed up in it all. This is something Trevor doesn't approve of. It's too dangerous for a ten year old boy, yet Billy is persistent, often sneaking off to "lend a hand" to his metallic pals.

Factoids: "Only son of Trevor Hasting", "Unbelievably curious", "Enjoys his detective fiction a little too much", "Exceedingly talkative"
Subplots: Little Boy (must obey his father, etc.)
Traits: Motormouth 3, Grate On Adults' Nerves 3, Childlike Charms 1, Sneak Around 4, Evaluate People 2, Dig Up Mystery 2, Knowledge from Detective Novels 3, No Talent for Hard Science 1X, Frail 1X, Draggy the Dragon 6 [*Companion; see companion stats below*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

Trevor Hasting
"Creator of the Transbots"

Quick Bio: Trevor Hasting was always a wizkid when it came to science and building things. He was known as a nerd throughout school, but "blossomed" when he became an adult, shedding the geeky look for something more suave. He attended college and did incredibly well, eventually landing a job with TechCorp. Once there, he rose through the ranks due to his charisma, drive, and knowledge. When the insidious Maximillian Mercy forcibly took over the company (and the Transbots project), Trevor found himself without a job. He managed to invest his money into starting a brand new company known as High-Tech Concepts. Shortly thereafter, a handful of the Transbots located him and told him of Mercy's plot to take over the United States, and eventually the world itself. Without hesitation, Trevor agreed to help them thwart Mercy and his evil robots, offering them sanctuary and use of his facilities. Trevor Hasting is always very poised, never losing his cool, even in the tensest situations. He's a strong leader and has a keen mind, especially when it comes to science and technology. Trevor is quick with a smile and truly believes that robots are sentient and thus deserve all the rights afforded to humans.



Factoids: "Comfortably rich", "Head of his own company, High-Tech Concepts", "Instrumental in making the original designs of the Transbots", "Passionate about the equality of humans and robots", "Friends with Lightblade"
Subplots: Archenemy (Maximillian Mercy)
Traits: Brilliant Robot Inventor 4, Robot Engineering 4, Computer Science 3, Perceptive 3, Business Sense 2, Negotiating 3, Handsome Gentleman 3, Drive Car 1, Manual Dexterity 2, Self-Defense Tricks 3, Phase Rifle 5 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun, Accessory, Disadvantage: Never Does Any Damage to Targets Other Than Robots, Disadvantage: Limited Range Only, One-Shot*], Weak Build 1X

Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

Draggy the Dragon (Companion)

This character, while usable as a legitimate NPC with a little bit of tweaking, was built as a Companion to Billy Hastings. We have included a short separate write-up for Draggy as a normal, full-scale NPC, too.

Factoids: "A dragon from another dimension", "Permanent house guest of the Hastings", "Master of fumbles", "Watches cooking shows on TV all the time"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Always nervous and fidgety); Stigma (he's a dragon!)
Traits: Fly About 3, Can Be Ridden 2, Funny Antics 3, Culinary Art 3, Flame Breath 4, Clobber 'n Bite 1, Bumbler 2X
Stats: Threshold 9, Battle Rating 4

Draggy the Dragon (NPC)

"Silly Dragon Chef"

Here are Draggy's game stats again, in a version written up as a normal NPC rather than as a companion.

Quick Bio: During one of Trevor Hasting's stranger experiments, he opened up a gateway to another reality. When the portal came into existence, it sucked several things from that reality into our own. Most of these things were mundane - trees, rocks, boulders and so forth. One thing, on the other hand, was anything but mundane. It was a full-grown dragon, of all things. He turned out to be very friendly and immediately took to Trevor, his son and the Transbots. He's been here ever since. Draggy is a doofus. A well-meaning doofus, but a doofus just the same. He often tries to help the group out, but somehow it usually backfires. The fact that he speaks in a goofy, nasal voice doesn't help detract from him coming off like a doofus either. Draggy is an ironic character. He's a very powerful dragon, yet he's constantly a nervous wreck. Not a coward, mind you...just extremely high strung. Furthermore, Draggy is one heck of a cook and watches cooking shows on television religiously. In fact, he's often seen wearing an apron and chef's hat.

Factoids: "A dragon from another dimension", "Permanent house guest of the Hastings", "Master of fumbles", "Watches cooking shows on TV all the time"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Always nervous and fidgety); Stigma (he's a dragon!)
Traits: Fly About 3, Carry Riders 2, Funny Antics 3, Culinary Art 3, Flame Breath 4, Clobber 'n Bite 3, Dragon Hide 4 (Advantage: Trait Rating counts double against heat-based attacks), Rugged 3, Cool Dragon Maneuver 3 (Defend, One-Shot, Situational Setback: rating decreased when not airborne), Generally Clumsy 2X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4

SECOND SEASON (1985)

Slapdash

"Reckless Ground Trooper"

Quick Bio: Slapdash was designed as a general infantry trooper. In his muscle car form, he is fast and rugged, and in his robot form, he is extremely versatile. Slapdash hit the scene after Trevor Hasting realized that he needed to create other Transbots to counter the growing number of Warbots. He was the first Transbot to be created as part of what was essentially an arms race. Slapdash acts a lot like a hotheaded teenager with a mile-long wild streak. He's always willing to dive right into whatever danger lurks ahead, no matter the odds... which often gets him (and his fellow Transbots) into deep trouble. This rash behavior aggravates the cantankerous Rumbleseat. and commonly leads to verbal conflict.

Factoids: "Hasty", "Can be slightly cocky at times", "Acts like a teenage rebel", "Knows no fear", "Is more of a team player than he lets on"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Ups (Careless)
Traits: Has Luck on His Side 2, Use Guns 3, Stout 7, Shrug Off Damage 7, Nimble 3, Plasma Rifle 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Fast Runner 4, Hand To Hand Fighting 5, Rambunctious Courage 6, Muscle Car Form 6 [Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Plasma Cannon), Retained Trait (Shrug Off Damage), Retained Trait (Use Guns - slightly renamed)]
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 7
Muscle Car Form: Speedfreak 7 [*Specialty*], Plasma Cannon 6 [*Enhancer +3*, *Accessory*], Shrug Off Damage 7, Targeters 3, Loud Engine 1X, Maneuvering 5

Rumbleseat

"Cranky Strategist"

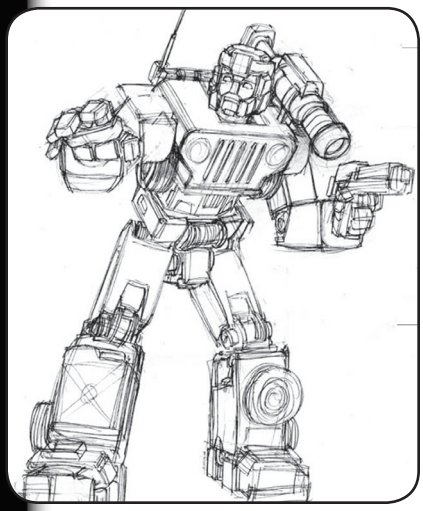
Quick Bio: Ever heard someone described as an "old soul"? Well, that sums up Rumbleseat perfectly. Even though he's not one of the original Transbots, you would think that he has been around since the dawn of time. In other words, he acts like a crabby old man (and how perfect is it that his vehicle form is that of an old roadster from the 1930s?)! As annoying as that can be, however, there's no denying that he's masterful at his job as a strategist. He can predict what an enemy is going to do and the offer about a dozen ways to tactically counter it every time. That's why the other Transbots put up with his crankiness.

Factoids: "Grumpy", "Has acquired the nickname 'Old-Timer', which he abhores", "Uses the terms 'whippersnapper', 'hooligan' and 'pesky kids' a lot"
Subplots: Mental Hang-Ups (Grouchy)

Traits: Crafty 4, Knowledgeable 4, Crafty 4, Set In His Ways 4, Built Tough 5, Observer of Detail 6, Antiquated Targeting Sensors 2 [*Fickle*], Strong 5, Hard To Hit 5, Strategy and Tactics 9, Air Blaster 5 [*Enhancer +3, Accessory*], Roadster Form 7 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Built Tough), Fickle*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 7
Muscle Car Form: Built Tough 5, Ground Speed 5 [*Situational Setback (Rating 3 when off-road)*], X-Ray Headlights 2, Maneuverability 1, Wind Cannon 7 [Enhancer +4]

WARBOT CHARACTERS

FIRST SEASON (1984)

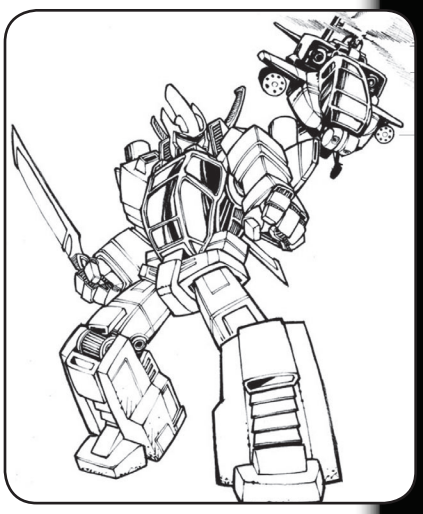


Backfire
"Cowardly Trooper"

Quick Bio: Backfire was originally conceived to carry military officers to strategic battlefield positions and protect them with back-up support fire as needed. When he was given sentience by the Warbots, though, the "protection" section of his programming was wiped out, leaving his continued existence as his primary goal. Backfire is a witless coward, plain and simple. Even when facing an opponent on equal odds in battle, he will usually turn tail and run. This causes his fellow Warbots to hold him in contempt (especially since he's the only Warbot who isn't part of Firestorm, outside of Vandal), but his gatling cannon and repair skills have proven too valuable so far to scrap him permanently. He always seeks to avoid the wrath of Vandal, and Backfire uses every bit of whining and pleading to avoid it, even though he secretly resents Vandal. He is always towards the back of the group in a firefight.

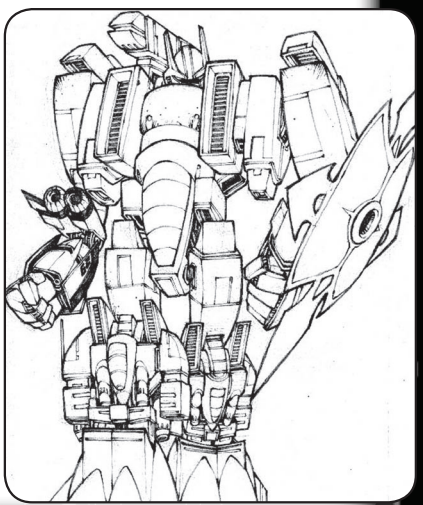
Factoids: "Resentful of Vandal and Firestorm gestalt", "Begs and pleads not to be punished for cowardice"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Coward)
Traits: Armor Body 6, Avoid Attack 8 (Specialty) , Speed 4, Aim 4, Brawling 2, Stealth 4, Strong 6, Sensors 4, Fast Talk 5, Repair 4, Will 2X, Shoulder-Mounted Gatling Cannon 6 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun, Accessory*], Jeep Form 2 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait(Shoulder-Mounted Gatling Cannon slightly renamed)*]
Stats: Threshold , Battle Rating
Jeep Form:
Armor Body 5, Maneuverability 5, Fast 5, Cargo Capacity 1, Gatling Cannon 6 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun, Accessory*]

Dead Air
"Silent Assassin"



Quick Bio: Dead Air was created by Maximillian Mercy as a necessary component to Firestorm, and to provide interference and close combat devastation between ground and air combat. No one seems to know why Dead Air never speaks. Perhaps his vocal mechanism failed, or maybe he simply has nothing to say. What is known is that Dead Air is a ruthless killer, as remorseless as he is silent. Accepting orders with a simple nod, he carries out his mayhem in a manner that speaks much louder than words.

Factoids: "Part of Firestorm, Left Arm", "Assassin"
Subplots: Physical Flaw (Mute)
Traits: Gestalt – Firestorm 10, Armed Combat 8, Agility 5, Armored Body 5, Strength 5, Aim 4, Running 7, Electron-Blade Sword 3 [*Enhancer +2, Big Gun, Accessory*], Helicopter Form 4 [*Transformation (Vehicle, Self), Retained Trait (Agility renamed Slightly)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8
Helicopter Form:
Armored Frame 6, Heli-flight 7, Maneuverability 5, Mini Railguns 5 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun, Accessory*]



Firestorm
"Giant Warbot Gestalt"

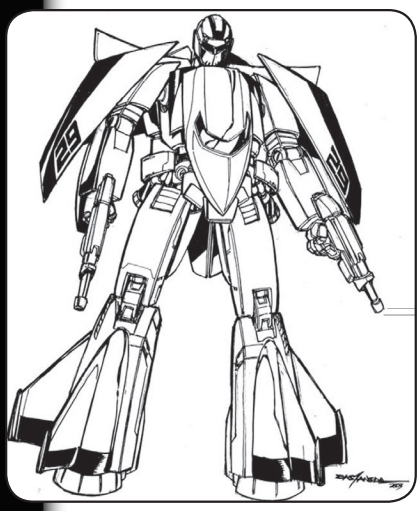
Quick Bio: [*See the individual members of the gestalt*]

Factoids: "Gestalt unit", "Massive and Large", "Powerful and destructive"
Subplots: None

Traits: Gargantuan 4 [*Enhancer +2*], Armored Body 9, Martial Arts 8, Jet Flight 9, Aim 8,, Strength 9, Willpower 3, Intimidation 7, Inferno Cannon 7 [*Enhancer +4, Big Gun, Accessory*], Wing Blade Shield 7 [*Enhancer +4, Big Gun, Accessory*], Stealth 2X, Perception 1X, Appearance 2X
Stats: Threshold 14, Battle Rating 9

Freefall

"Bullying Warbot Fire Support"



Quick Bio: Freefall was created by Maximillian Mercy as a necessary component to Firestorm, and to provide heavy support fire from a distance. Petty, cruel, and vindictive, Freefall is a classic bully. The screams of those weaker than him (especially humans) are music to his ears. In fact, Freefall will often waste valuable time and neglect important duties to torture or frighten any smaller creature unlucky enough to be seen by him. However, in combat he prefers to deal his damage at a distance, lobbing mortar shells and fleeing before they realize they're under attack, or else firing on Transbots in heavy combat with his own comrades, followed by vigorous protests that he couldn't possibly have meant to hit so close to his own allies.

Factoids: "Part of Firestorm, Right Arm","Likes to attack from a distance"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Bully)
Traits: Gestalt – Firestorm 10, Body 6, Strength 5, Ranged Combat 4, Speed 6, Unarmed Combat 3, Intimidation 2, Mortar Rifle 7 [*Enhancer +4, Big Gun, Accessory*], Robot Flight 2, Vtol Jet Form 4 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait(Mortar Rifle slightly renamed)*]
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating
Vtol Jet Form:
Reinforced Frame 6, Flight 8, Maneuverability 4, Mortar Cannon 5 [*Enhancer +4, Big Gun, Accessory*]

Jetlag

"Arrogant Warrior Twin"

Quick Bio: Turbulence was created by Maximillian Mercy as a necessary component to Firestorm, and to quickly secure enemy locations. He was developed from the same body frame as Turbulence, and much of the same programming was used in both Warbots, making them twins in both appearance and attitude. Much like his twin, Turbulence, Jetlag has a notable penchant for shooting off his mouth before his artillery. He is full of himself, and will be sure to tell anyone within earshot of his greatness as a warrior. While he is capable enough in battle, his defeats usually come as a result of Jetlag underestimating his opponents.

Factoids: "Part of Firestorm, Left Leg","Brother to Turbulence"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Braggart)
Traits: Gestalt – Firestorm 10, Body 6, Aim 4, Speed 7, Brawling 4, Braggart 3, Arm-Mounted Auto Guns 3 [*Enhancer +2, Big Gun, Accessory*], Fighter Jet Form 12 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4
Fighter Jet Form:
Body 9, Flight 7, Maneuverability 3, Incendiary Auto-guns 4 [*Enhancer +2, Big Gun, Advantage (Starts Fires)*]

Turbulence

"Loud-Mouth Warrior Twin"

Quick Bio: Jetlag was created by Maximillian Mercy as a necessary component to Firestorm, and to blanket enemy locations in super-hot plasma. He was developed from the same body frame as Jetlag, and much of the same programming was used in both Warbots, making them twins in both appearance and attitude. Turbulence is a trash-talking, loud-mouth whose endless tirade of threats and boasts make him incredibly annoying. His voice is the most distracting thing on the battlefield, and his trash talk can sometimes get him out of (and into) uncomfortable situations.

Factoids: "Part of Firestorm, Right Leg","Brother to Jetlag"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Loudmouth)
Traits: Gestalt – Firestorm 10, Body 6, Aim 4, Speed 7, Brawling 4, Fast-talk 3, Arm-Mounted Missile Launcher 3 [*Enhancer +2, Big Gun, Accessory*], Fighter Jet Form 12 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4
Fighter Jet Form:
Body 9, Flight 7, Maneuverability 3, Plasma Missiles 3 [*Enhancer +2, Big Gun, Area, Advantage (Starts Fires)*]

Stormbolt

"Calculating Air Commander"

Quick Bio: Stormbolt was designed as a scout, using his advanced stealth technology to avoid any detection. He was the first to be fitted with the new gestalt process, and thus quickly claimed leadership of the group. The ultimate shady character, Stormbolt prefers to use his stealth abilities to hide himself and attack from behind while the enemy is distracted by his Warbot comrades. However, do not mistake this strategy for cowardice - Stormbolt possesses a strategic mind, and will use it to find any possible success in combat, even

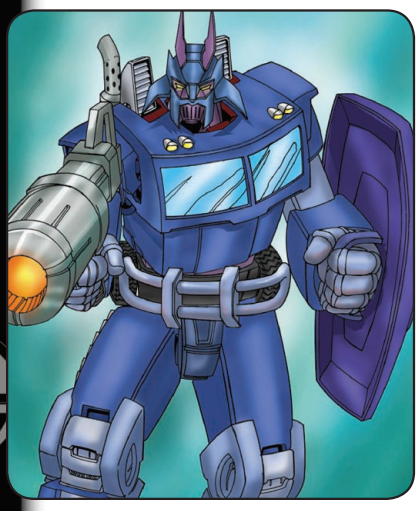
if it means sacrificing his own troops! Cold and calculating, not even Vandal knows what Stormbolt's true thoughts or intentions are, but Stormbolt's success speaks for itself.

Factoids: "Part of Firestorm, head and chest", "Good strategic mind"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Untrustworthy), Mental Hang-up (Merciless and cruel)
Traits: Gestalt – Firestorm 10, Armored Body 5, Strength 5, Athletics 5, Aim 3, Speed 8, Stealth 4 [*Specialty*], Strategy 2, Command 2, Laser Repeater Pistol 5 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun Accessory*], Robot Flight 1, Stealth Jet Form 3 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait(Shoulder-Laser Repeater pistol slightly renamed), Retrained Trait (Athletics slightly renamed)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5
Stealth Jet Form:
Armored Hull 5, Vtol Flight 7, Stealth System 5 [*Enhancer +3*], Maneuverability 5, Light Laser Cannons 5 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun, Accessory*]

Vandal

"Resentful Warbot Commander"

Quick Bio: Vandal was Maximillian Mercy's first Warbot conversion. When Lightblade gained sentience, Mercy had Lightblade's programming copied over and placed into his own creation, Vandal! Vandal is, in many ways, Lightblade's "brother," but Lightblade doesn't know this yet. However, Vandal does know that he is just a copy of Lightblade's mind, and is resentful of this fact. He goes out of his way to make trouble for Lightblade and the rest of the Transbots. Much like his "brother," Lightblade, Vandal is usually calm in tense situations, but his coldness isn't masking a heart of gold - Vandal is heartless through and through. He rules the Warbots with an iron fist, and doesn't tolerate failure. Like Lightblade, Vandal doesn't understand humans, but he's not particularly interested in learning about them anyways.



Factoids: "Has an inferiority complex and feels like a 'copy'", "Can't understand human (il)logic","Punishes those who fail"
Subplots: Archenemy (Lightblade)
Traits: Damage Resistant 6, Fighting 4, Physical Powerhouse 8, Marksmanship 5, Notice 4, Athletics 4, Always Keeps Composure 5, Command Warbots 5, Ramshield 4 [*Enhancer +2, Accessory, Disadvantage (Can't use without left arm)*], Rocket Rifle 8 [*Area, Enhancer +4, Accessory*], Armored Van Form 11 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Damage Resistant)*]
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 10
Armored Van Form: Damage Resistant 6, Fast 6, Cumbersome 1X, Loud 1X, Rocket Blaster [*Enhancer +4, Big Gun*]

WARBOT ALLIES

Maximillian Mercy

"Powermad Master of the Warbots"

Quick Bio: Born to a filthy rich family, Maximillian Mercy never knew hardship, never knew struggle, and never knew disappointment. In essence, he was spoiled rotten, and his appetite for material gain knew no bounds. It just grew and grew until all he could think about was ruling the world! Every action he's taken in the last 15 years has been aimed at his ultimate goal in one way or another. His final and most crucial step was acquiring TechCorp and creating his own army of robots, which would become his instruments of destruction in his war with the rest of the world. Now, he sits poised, ready to take his rightful place as king of the world. But first, he has to get rid of those annoying Transbots, who had escaped his reprogramming. Once they're out of the way, Mercy is bound for conquest! Maximillian Mercy is a traditional megalomaniacal madman. He thirsts for power and cannot go even a single minute without obsessing about taking over the world. That said, he's remarkably persuasive, using his natural charm to make others cooperate with him. Mercy is the kind of guy no one would suspect of any wrong-doings. He seems genuine and pleasant... until he becomes angry. At that point, his explosive temper consumes him in full.

Factoids: "Obsessed with conquest", "Controls TechCorp", "Explosive Temper","Really Rich"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Impatient)
Traits: Athletics 2, Body 1X, Coordination 2, Driving 1, Aim 3, Computers 4, Inventing and Repairing 4, Perception 3, Science 2, Willpower 4, Persuasion 4, Stealth 2

Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 3

Ms. Dannica
"Maximillian's Assistant"

Quick Bio: Very little is known about Ms. Dannica's past. Mercy has mentioned once that he found her when she was but a teenaged runaway and took her under his wing. Beyond that, though, her past remains a mystery. Ms. Dannica is a very rigid woman who never seems to relax. She's always on guard and she trusts no one except Maximillian Mercy. She's his highly loyal servant/bodyguard who would give her life for him without so much as a second thought. She's also an incredibly attractive young lady, with her long blonde hair and exotic blue eyes. Ms. Dannica is always dressed in a tight black skirt and business blouse as well as high heeled shoes. All in all, her appearance, while beautiful, matches her ice cold demeanor.

Factoids: "Maximillian Mercy's bodyguard and servant", "Never relaxes","Brave to a fault"
Subplots: Emotional Tie (Maximillian Mercy)
Traits: Armed Combat 4, Athletics 3, Coordination 2, Driving 1, Range Combat 2, Unarmed Combat 1, Appearance 3, Psychology 1, Computers 2X, Repair 2X, Transducer Pistol 1 [*Enhancer +1, Trait Zap (-3 Body based traits), Trait Zap (-2 Agility based traits), Disadvantage (only works on robots), has duration*], Molecular Blade 5 [*Enhancer +3, Big Gun, Accessory*]
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 4

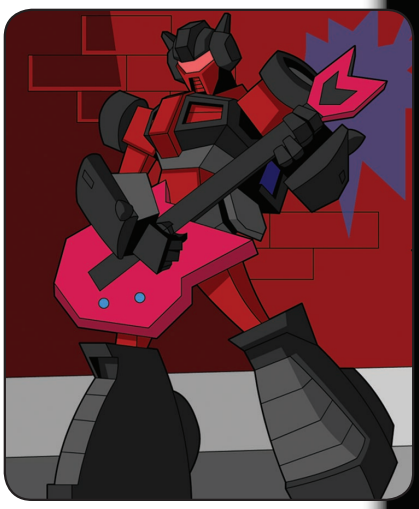
SECOND SEASON (1985)

Deepsea
"Serious-Minded Underwater Saboteur"

Quick Bio: When a rival corporation devised an undersea research facility on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, Maximillian endeavored to have it destroyed. Unfortunately for him, none of his Warbots were equipped to do the job. That being the case, he set out to construct a new Warbot especially for the job. That Warbot was the female-looking Deepsea, who could transform into a submarine. Even though the attempt to destroy the facility was unsuccessful, Deepsea has proved herself to be a worthy member of the group on other occasions. She's single-mindedly driven toward whatever goal she's given by Vandal or Mercy and sees it to completion without fail. She is definitely an outsider among the Warbot ranks, as she is very quiet and not prone to socializing with the others. Vandal sometimes wonders how loyal she is and keeps a close eye on her. Time will tell if she will betray her fellow Warbots.

Factoids: "Isn't fond of the other Warbots","Has doubts about the Warbot cause","Is female-looking","Vandal distrusts her"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Unsociable)
Traits: Determination 5, Finesse 7, Strong 6, Demolitions Expert 5, Hardened Armor 6, Running 1, Aiming 4, Bomb Launcher 8 [*Enhancer +4, Area, Big Gun*], Submarine Form [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Bomb Launcher), Retained Trait (Hardened Armor), Retained Trait (Aiming)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8
Submarine Form: Bomb Launcher 8 [*Enhancer +4, Area, Big Gun*], Hardened Armor 6, Aiming 4, Underwater Speed 8, Maneuver 2, Underwater Vision 4

Shockrock
"Cruel Sonic Warrior"



Quick Bio: Shockrock is the result of Maximillian Mercy's experiments to create a weapon that can bypass the armor of even the most protected Transbot. The answer was simpler than one might expect: a sonic attack. To facilitate this new idea, Mercy developed a Warbot with a guitar that could produce an audio blast that temporarily scrambles circuitry, causing immense pain to whatever robot it's aimed at. He knew that such a weapon could not be used effectively by a Warbot with even an ounce of compassion, as it is a sadistic way to inflict extreme agony. Needless to say, he created the right robot for the job. Shockrock delights in causing pain and suffering and has no remorse about it whatsoever.

Factoids: "Sadistic","Talks in a low, raspy voice that oozes cruelty", "Has an unnervingly evil laugh","Greatly admires Vandal"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Easily Distracted)
Traits: Sonic Guitar Blaster 7 [*Enhancer +4, Advantage (Bypasses physical armor/force fields), Trait Zap - Target (Robots damaged by this suffer -3 to athetics-based Traits; this effect is not cumulative but does have a duration), Accessory, Disadvantage (Only works on robots)*] Sleek Armor 6, Acrobatics 4, Good Shot 6, Psyche 6, Strong 7, Fisticuffs 5, Intimidate 4, Sportscar Form 2 [*Transform (Self, Vehicle), Retained Trait (Sonic Guitar Blaster, slightly renamed), Retained Trait (Sleek Armor)*]
Stats: Threshold 11, Battle Rating 8
Sportscar Form: Sonic Guitar Blaster 7 [*Enhancer +4, Advantage (Bypasses physical armor/force fields), Trait Zap - Target (Robots damaged by this suffer -3 to athetics-based Traits; this effect is not cumulative but does have a duration), Accessory, Disadvantage (Only works on robots)*] Sleek Armor 6, Maneuverable 6, Roaring Speed 7

EPISODE SEEDS

"Mass Production of Destruction"

Maximillian Mercy captured Trevor Hasting and has used his new machine, the Brain Scanner, on him to search through his mind and obtain all of his knowledge. He has stored the knowledge on a computer and is currently sifting through it all. There is something specific he's looking for and he is determined to find it at all cost. You see, a few days prior to the abduction, Mercy stumbled across an old journal of Hasting's. In that journal, Hasting vaguely suggested that he found an economical and practical way to mass produce Transbots.

Mercy is now fired up about creating an entire army of Warbots using this method of Hasting. Unfortunately for him, it's going to take some time to search Hasting's memories for it. In the meantime, the megalomaniac has begun designing the blueprints for these new robots.

This general set-up gives you, the GM, a lot of paths you can take to flesh the episode out for the players:

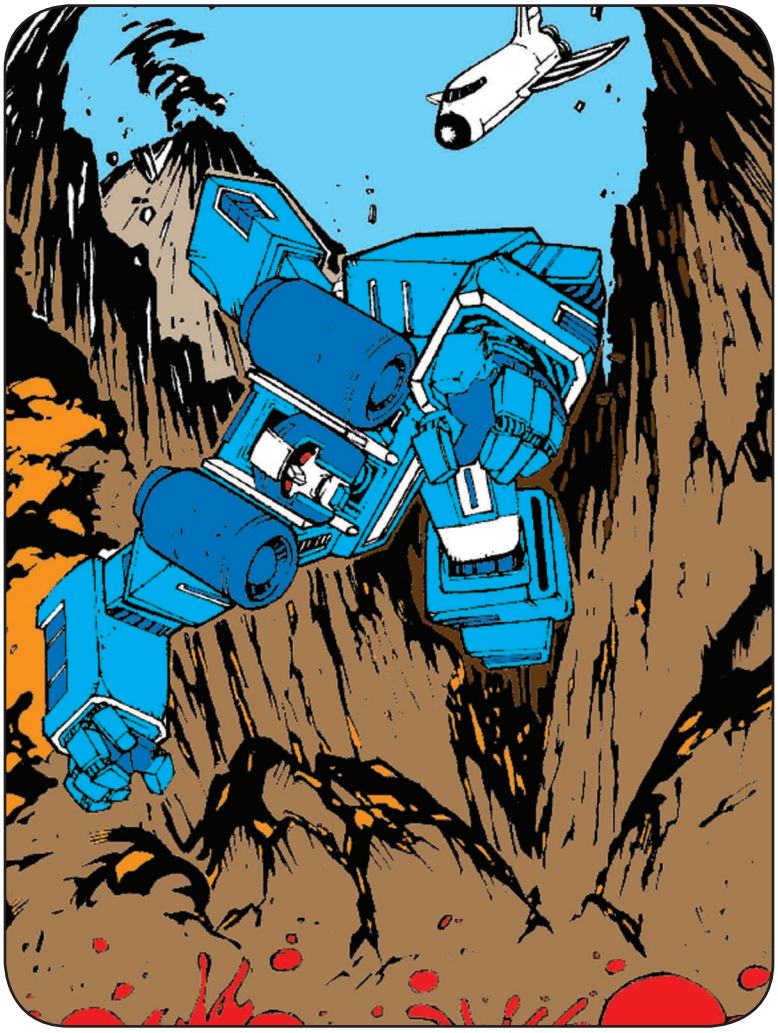
The first route would be to allow Mercy to find the information he so desperately wants and immediately starts the manufacturing process. The PCs would have to devise a way to stop production. This could be as straightforward as blowing up the factory they're being built at (after clearing out any innocents, of course) or as complicated as infiltrating the factory and stealing the plans and replacing them with faulty ones. This would be a great chance to let the players set the pace of the episode, giving them a good amount of control.

Another route would be to let Mercy build his metal army and try to take over the world with them. The PCs and their fellow Transbots would be forced to dream up a way to halt the invasion, possibly with the help of the world's governments (just be sure that the PCs don't get lost in the shuffle; they are the stars after all). Perhaps Trevor Hasting (if rescued in time) has to create his own army of robots to counteract the threat. This is probably too ambitious for a single episode, but it would be fantastic if you want to run a mini-series or animated movie. The story has the potential to be quite epic in scope.

"The Invisible Foe"

Transbots have been coming up missing, one after another in recent days. Yet after a disappearance, there's no enemy to be found. It's as if they are vanishing into thin air. Now, the PCs are the only Transbots remaining. Can they get to the bottom of what's going on before they, too, are gone?

The truth of the matter is that Maximillian Mercy has been approached by a ninja armed with the art of invisibility and a weapon that can paralyze robots before teleporting them away to a holding cell.



There could be other explanations for the disappearances if you want some alternatives.

One idea doesn't even directly involve the Warbots, which could make for an interesting change of pace for the PCs. In this alternate explanation, the problem is being caused by the equivalent of a computer virus that afflicts robots and turns them into a spectral form. While in this form, robots can't interact with the world or its inhabitants. So, they quite literally become like ghosts that cannot even be seen. The PCs will have to solve this elaborate mystery and then find a way to reverse the virus so that the "missing" Transbots will be able to return to their normal selves.

"One Nation"

The Warbots have wrested control of a South African nation (you can use a real nation or a fictitious one) from a despotic ruler. The people of that country are thankful and revere the Warbots as heroes. The problem is that Maximillian Mercy has his own plans...plans that don't necessarily include the welfare of his subjects. He has found a previously undiscovered type of fuel called Jadex in the nation and plans to exploit it, using the citizens as slave labor. Being the smart guy that he is, however, he spins it so that it looks to his subjects like he's trying to make the nation prosperous.

The PCs will have one heck of a time undoing Mercy's plan, especially considering that the people of the nation revere him and his Warbots and will do anything to protect them.

The PCs could try to expose Mercy for the villain that he is, but it's going to take quite a lot of solid evidence to sway the people. After all, Mercy freed them from the iron rule of the tyrant that came before him. Or at least that's how they see it.

The PCs could always take a stealthy approach, deftly sneaking around to thwart the Warbots without the citizens finding out about their activity. That won't be an easy task.

In the end, there should be a perfect "moral of the story" sequence, where the message is that you shouldn't just automatically trust people without viewing them analytically. The whole "don't judge a book by its cover" bit seems appropriate here.

Appendix 2

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

CONVERSIONS FROM CAH:S1

Courtesy of Norbert Franz

As we explained briefly in the opening section of this book, this work is in fact the *second edition* of the *Cartoon Action Hour* game, and many things have been changed and rewritten completely from scratch when compared with the older edition, i.e. the rulebook released in 2003 in cooperation with another publisher.

Whenever a roleplaying game goes into a new edition, this begs the unavoidable question of how to "convert" existing characters from the earlier edition to the new one. After all, if you haven't discovered *Cartoon Action Hour* with this current book, but also played or GM'ed its precursor (either with the hardcopy book edition or the PDF), it's actually likely that you have some characters, companion, vehicles and plotlines, maybe even entire series write-ups written for the earlier version of the game. Maybe you don't want to scrap those.

To put it plain and simple: What happens if you want to keep playing those old characters, but use the Season 2 rules with them? What if you have previously read an older version of *Cartoon Action Hour*, but now you are going to join a gaming group whose GM is running Season 2? What do you do? Do you have to put a lot of work into comparing new and old rules, mixing and matching, finding a compromise between old stuff and new, discarding what doesn't fit? Do you have to spend long afternoons re-calculating your character points, stats, and so forth?

Those are legitimate concerns. Something we would like to address in this short section. First of all, fear not! You don't have to agonize over the new rules. You don't have to do a lot of calculations and you don't have to refer to a "conversion chart" or something of the kind. After all, the Season 2 rules and guidelines are so radically different from what we used to have in the earlier incarnation of the game that it's almost impossible to convert things directly.

Instead, you could follow these guidelines:

Oomph and Stunt Points

Season 2 no longer uses "Stunt Points"! Whatever game effect those had has been wholly integrated into the way Oomph now works in the game. In fact, you could say that "Oomph" in the current edition is a lot more similar to the first edition's Stunt Points than anything else, and Oomph no longer functions like a static "popularity rating" or a measure of "star power" as it did some of the time in the first edition. As a result, if your *Cartoon Action Hour* character previously had 0 or 1 Stunt Point, you should give them 2 Base Oomph as a default; if they had 2 Stunt Points, make their Base Oomph 3, and if they had 3 Stunt Points, make their Base Oomph 4, the usual maximum in that stat. Do not add any points from first edition Oomph on top of that, as this would just inflate Oomph too much for most characters. Just ignore the first edition's version of Oomph for the purpose of converting.

Basic Remarks about Trait Ratings

Traits and their ratings exist in both editions of this RPG and may easily be seen as the centerpiece of the rules system. However, the earlier edition still used a set of pre-defined Traits to express competence in a skill, talent, or inborn ability, and those Traits were quite inflexible, come to think of it—one was *always* used for melee weapon fighting, one was for firing firearms, one for sneaking, one for driving vehicles, and others indicated e.g. how perceptive or how beautiful your character was, how strong their willpower was, and so on. In Season 2, the player defines pretty much all the Traits himself, and names them accordingly. The easiest way to reconcile this would be to look at the most defining Traits that a given character had in the old edition—the ones that really made the character stand out or gave them their special knack. Very often those core Traits would be the ones with the highest overall ratings in them. You should rename those Traits for Season 2, but then continue using them. As always, come up with spectacular and heroic sounding names, and give them an individual touch. A player-character shouldn't just have bland stuff like "Combat" or "Demolitions". But what does "Fight with Uncanny Precision" or "Expert for Defusing Military Explosives" sound like? Instead of saying that a character was "kind of good in Willpower", give them a "Will of Pure Iron". Instead of "Healthy", go with a "Rock-Solid Constitution", for example.

Character Points vs. Proof of Purchase Points

Now comes a slightly trickier part—comparing the old edition's usual currency of "Character Points" or "CPs" with our new PoPPs currency, at least to some extent. A new starting character with 30 PoPPs in Season 2 can do at least as much as a first edition character with a full 100 CPs. For ease of calculation, you could use the rule of thumb that roughly 4 CPs correspond to 1 PoPP, so a character with 25 PoPPs is an equal of an old 100-point player-character. I find it much easier to divide the number 100 by 4 than to divide it by 3, and I did not want to give you something that leaves fractions.

To get a feel for accurately rewriting player-characters from the old edition, you can also have a look at the write-ups of the Guardians of Iconia in the *Warriors of the Cosmos* section of the Season 2 book, and match them against the stat blocks those characters were given in the old edition. Those heroes' power levels and defining characteristics were not changed from what they were originally like. Of course, it goes without saying that any and all Special Abilities from the old edition are now also "Traits", and almost always belong in the "Action

Feature" subcategory of Traits.

All the ratings from 1 to 4 can be taken over unmodified into Season 2. They will still be defined as 1 through 4. Period! On the other hand, "Super-Ratings" no longer exist in the present edition. If your first edition character had a rating of "4(2)" in something so far, you can give him an equivalent Trait at 5. Equally, a 4(3) becomes a 6, a 4(4) becomes a 7, and so on. If you really insist on having something far above average and your GM allows the character an exceptional edge in an ability, you can translate both 4(2) and 4(3) ratings as a rating (usually 4) with a Specialty, and 4(4) and 4(5) as a rating with a *double* Specialty attached to it (two Benefit Dice). By the way, if this would cause your total number of PoPPs to go over 30 for a starting character, don't worry about it, at all. If you are using characters that you have played for quite some time in the old edition, chances are they will have built up and trained several of their Traits far beyond their starting levels. So, they would have more points in the old currency, too.

A Note on Negative Ratings

The rules of the old edition included negative ratings, which the Season 2 rules do not use. Converting is actually a piece of cake. A negative rating at -1 or -2 neatly corresponds to 1X in our new rules, and both -3 and -4 correspond to 2X. In most cases, however, you won't even need the specific "lowered" ratings from the first edition. They can be seen as Traits that the character actually has a "0" rating in, and a Detrimental Trait Rating should only be used where that incompetence plays a part in the overall story and makes the player-character more interesting and entertaining to play.

Components

The first edition of *Cartoon Action Hour* placed a big emphasis on the concept of "Components"—building blocks of effects or features that could be combined to define special abilities of all kinds (e.g. magic, extra-sensory perception, comicbook superpowers, gadgets, weapons, artifacts, and so forth…). If you have familiarized yourself with the Trait system in Season 2, you will know for certain that all those neat things and special abilities now work according to the basic Trait system. There is no need to give a Special Ability "Components" anymore. Ditto for the first edition's "Power Levels", which every Special Ability needed. Duration and Range now emerge purely from story-telling and the definition of the Trait in question. Trait Modification is a special case since it has been moved into the Modifiers section and divided into both Bonuses and Restrictions: "Trait Modification A" now corresponds to the "Trait Boost (Self)" and "Trait Zap (Self)" modifiers; "Trait Modification B" is equivalent to "Trait Zap (Target)" and "Trait Boost (Target)" modifiers, respectively. Some players feel that a very high level of damage, or "Damage Rating", was too easily available in the first edition. While I cannot give you a stringent guideline for this, you should probably divide most DRs by two to get an appropriate weapon Trait Rating for Season 2. Most DRs from 1 to 4 can, however, be left intact.

Bonuses and Restrictions

These were originally quite elaborate trappings that you attached to Special Abilities in the old edition. Most Bonuses and Restrictions still exist in some form or other, and can now be applied to *Traits* (see Channel 3). Some Bonuses and Restrictions are mutually exclusive. Some have been renamed. Some that were seen frequently in the first edition have been dropped to meet this edition's main design goals (see the introduction in Channel 1). Other Bonuses and Restrictions have been newly added to Season 2—without having any direct ancestors in the earlier publications. Most of those new modifiers stem from our detailed playtesting discussions, from individual fans' suggestions and house rules. If you absolutely want to keep using a Bonus or a Restriction that your ability had in the old edition, please do so—either use them unchanged with your GM's permission, or pick one from this edition's list that comes closest to the effect that the original Bonus or Restriction had.

For example, "Charges, One Shot" combined with the "Rare Recharge" option could now be expressed by taking the "One-Shot" Restriction in Season 2. The other forms of "Charges", like "Minor" or "Moderate", do not make sense in a Season 2 context and should be avoided. Just give the character the regular Trait. For an easy example, "Fickle" from the first edition rules would still be "Fickle" now. As always, the first edition's point costs must be ignored.

Vehicles and Animal Companions

The rules for those have been entirely rewritten and re-organized for Season 2. You're advised to use whatever comes closest to the original intention. You don't have to transfer or convert any SCPs from the old rules. Most importantly here, so-called "Animal Companions" are now simply called "Companions". The rules for them can also be utilized for small androids, robots, mythical beings, and even subordinate human characters where that fits the story and the series setting somehow.

CARTOON ACTION HOUR

SERIES GUIDE

SERIES INFORMATION

Series Name:

Tagline:

Premise:

RULES INFORMATION

New Rules:

Modified Rules:

PC CREATION GUIDELINES

Proof of Purchase Points (PoPPs): _____

Maximum Trait Rating:

Regular Traits: _____

Action Features: _____

Miscellaneous:

CAST INFORMATION

Primary Cast:

Supporting Cast:

CARTOON ACTION HOUR

CHARACTER SHEET

GENERAL INFORMATION

Character Name:

Player Name:

Series:

Group Affiliation:

Appearance:

Factoids:

TRAITS

- Place modifiers in brackets next to the Trait itself.
- If the Trait is an Action Feature, place "AF" inside the brackets.

SUBPLOTS

STATS

Oomph

Base Oomph: _____

Current Oomph: _____

Threshold *(8 + Base Oomph)*: _____

Battle Rating *(= to best attack/defend Trait)*: _____

MISCELLANEOUS

Experience Points: _____

Number of Appearances: _____

DESIGNER'S NOTES
AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

"Twenty-Two Minute Toy Commercials."

That's what many detractors have called the cartoons of the 1980s over the years. I would be lying if I tried to tell you that there's no truth to that derisive label. Let's face it, there is a strong link between the action figures and the retro-toons that spawned them. The production companies and toy companies worked hand in hand to develop properties that would make the kids salivate and beg their parents to spend their hard earned money on the toys. I'll even go one step further and say that this goal dictated what the characters, vehicles and locales looked like. After all, they wanted to ensure that it all translated to visually stimulating action figures. Otherwise, kids would pass them by in favor of more interesting toys.

Despite all this, however, there was something much deeper going on with the retro-toons; something more meaningful than even the production companies knew. They weren't just creating twenty-two minute toy commercials… they were creating mythology for my generation, served up every Saturday morning or every weekday afternoon. He-Man was our Heracles, Teela was our Athena and Skeletor was, of course, our Hades. The parallels are all there and the symbolism is strong. This can be said of most, if not all, the cartoons of the era.

This wasn't apparent to me as a young girl, of course. All I knew was that I enjoyed watching the episodic thrill rides presented by the retro-toons. I loved the edge-of-your-seat action sequences, the heroic derring-do of the protagonists and, yes, the vile schemes of the antagonists. I was enthralled with it all and lapped it up like a hound dog lapping up cold water on a hot summer day. I had no idea that these shows were affecting me on a deeper level. I adored the whole package.

I *still* adore the whole package.

Nostalgia... or Something More?

One might think that this is just nostalgia talking, and I'm sure that accounts for a portion of my continual enjoyment of the retro-toons. I have fond and vivid memories of watching those old cartoons with my grandfather while playing with my toys. But this is more than nostalgia; much more, in fact. It's an appreciation of good story-telling and colorful characters, coupled with an affinity for innocent morality plays. It's the love of larger-than-life heroes and irredeemably evil villains. It's the good-natured, optimistic tone and the cheesiness that pervaded so many aspects of these shows. It's all this and much more besides. There's no denying it: I am just as fascinated by the cartoons of the 1980s as I was when I was young, and I'm not ashamed to admit it.

This fascination is what drove me to co-design the original *Cartoon Action Hour* and it's what drives me to create the second edition of that game now, some six and a half years later. My goal for *Cartoon Action Hour* has always been to design a role-playing game that brings to life all the things that captivate me about the retro-toons. It is my opinion that the original *Cartoon Action Hour* did a decent job meeting this goal. As time went on, however, I began to feel that I didn't go far enough in terms of genre emulation. I didn't push that extra mile to reach an even greater immersion level, nor did I think enough outside the box. Needless to say, I aimed to correct this with *Cartoon Action Hour: Season 2*… and I'm confident that I did just that.

The Development of *CAH:S2*

Developing the new edition was painstaking and arduous at times, though I enjoyed it at every turn. Every bump, roadblock or obstacle that I had to get around made me more determined to get it right. This is why the system was redesigned from the ground up several times during the process. The early drafts were mostly stripped down, simplified versions of the original *CAH*. While these takes weren't bad by any means, I knew that it wasn't enough to satisfy my desire to make the perfect game for emulating the retro-toons.

The final draft was a very drastic departure from what had come before. For this, I have to credit one of our playtesters, Tim Kirk. At first, his radical ideas about a highly stylized version of *CAH* scared the hell out of me and I stupidly refused to truly listen to what he was saying. Deep down inside of me, though, I was indeed listening. Then, one day, it became frightening clear to me that Tim was right. A game about cartoons didn't need detailed rules for combat maneuvers or size differences between characters. It didn't need a lot of things that still lingered in the game. So, using his seemingly blasphemous words as a guideline, I forged ahead to rethink every nuance, every facet of the *Cartoon Action Hour: Season 2* system. I thusly decided that nothing was sacred and that I would ditch anything that stood in the way of my design goal.

What followed was major "house cleaning". I tossed out mainstay *CAH* concepts such as Trait lists, Special Abilities and

Super-Ratings like last week's garbage. I stripped the system down to its core essentials and then built it all back up again, but this time with a finer eye for staying true to the source material and for making the game more intuitive to play.

One of the biggest changes was the character creation system. In the first edition of the game, creating characters was a laborious process that involved intensive points juggling and a lot of tables and charts. The act of creating a single character could take hours, which didn't seem right for a genre that tends to be fast and breezy in nature. Obviously, this had to go! I wanted to make it possible for a player to create a character in fifteen minutes or so. Furthermore, I wanted to minimize the amount of record keeping required. This mission was not easy to accomplish, but the end result was worth the effort. Once you've made a few characters, you will be able to whip up new ones without having to reference the book much… or at all.

The other massive alteration was the combat system. The old combat system bothered me perhaps more than any other portion of the game. This was because cartoon combat works so much differently than standard RPG combat, yet the old version played very much like standard RPG combat. For this, I watched more hours of retro-toons than is probably healthy, studying the combat scenes like a boxing manager studies old matches. I kept a log for recording such things as how many attacks were made by each side, how often an attack actually hit, how many attacks were non-violent in nature, how long each sequence lasted and so on. When it was all said and done, I had learned a great deal about how cartoon combat functioned and I set out to create a combat system that mirrored all the things I learned. While correlating all my data, I had a strange revelation: cartoon combat featured very few attacks in the traditional sense. Most "attacks" were intended to distract, confuse, delay or otherwise hinder the enemy rather than actually cause true damage. This was something that I had not taken into consideration with the first version of *CAH*. I would not make that mistake again. This gave rise to the concept of Setback Tokens and after that, the combat system was never the same again.

There are numerous other changes to the game, but the ones listed above are the most encompassing. *CAH* veterans will no doubt notice these alterations as they read through this rulebook. I won't bore you with them here.

Parting Comments

Cartoon Action Hour: Season 2 has been an exciting, yet profoundly work-intensive, game to design. I put more of myself into this product than any other product before it. A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into the creation process, which makes it all the more pleasing to finally get it out the door and into your capable hands. *CAH:S2* is now your sandbox in which to play. So, go forth and create a new mythology for you and your friends to enjoy!

Cynthia Celeste Miller

October 27th, 2008

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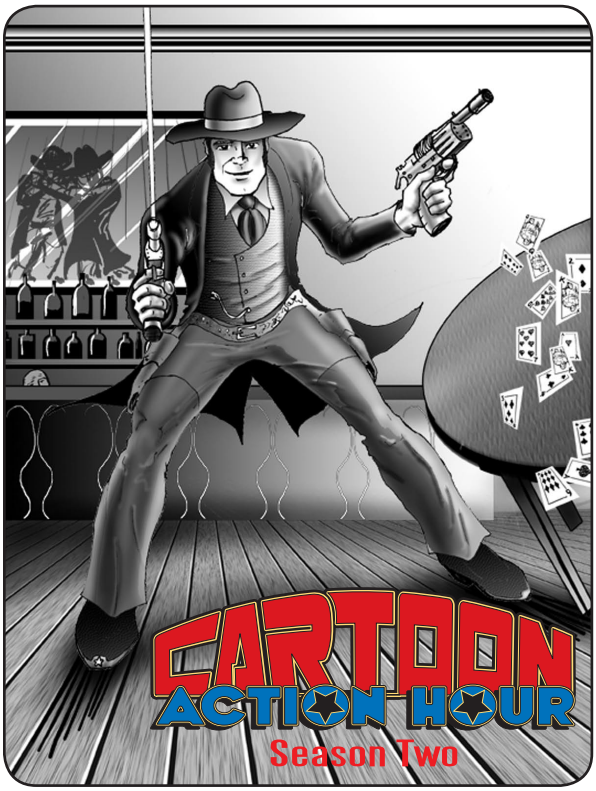
AFTER THESE MESSAGES...



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