

THE SHADOWRUN SUPPLEMENTAL

ISSUE #17

The Cutthroats

Why would the Yakuza be mingling with a typical Sprawl Gang?

MATRIX GANGS

The digital landscapes of the Matrix are a haven for pirates, crackers, virtual thugs, and data mavens.

Martial Arts Styles

More ways to beat people up than you can shake a rattan stick at!

PLUS:

A LITTLE LEARNING,

DAMAGE CONTROL,

SWIFTO ONE SPEAKS

AND THE DEBUT OF DATASTEAL!



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Origins Award Nomination!

For the second year in a row, The Shadowrun Supplemental has been nominated for an **Origins Award** in the category of Best Amateur Game Periodical! We're very proud to be nominated again, so thank you to all the people involved in the nomination process. If you think The Shadowrun Supplemental is the best, please vote for us!



Editorial Verbiage

Adam Jury [adamj@dumpshock.com]

What happens when the two primary editors of The Shadowrun Supplemental both get parts in an upcoming Shadowrun book? They sure as heck don't get much editing finished! What happens when a car crashes into an editor's house, doing enough damage to force her to live in a hotel for a month? She sure doesn't get a lot of editing finished! What happens when the other editor takes on a last minute assignment for another gaming company? He sure as heck doesn't get a lot of layout finished!

That was the theme for this issue; as soon as we started to make some good progress, something else came up and stopped it. Which is our explanation for why it's so late, something that I really hope to avoid in the future. The good news is that over the last few months we've had chance to pick and choose some other articles from our backlog, and we're a little bit more organized than in the past. Not as organized as I hoped to be, but more organized than this time last year.

You may have noticed a slight change in the organization of this magazine and official FanPro LLC Shadowrun products. Much of the material has been divided into two sections, one for pure in-character information, the second for game information such as character and gear statistics, rules and "the truth"—distilled briefly from the in-character material—so gamemasters have an easy reference that they know is factual without the possibly misleading shadowtalk.

This is the model that we're trying to follow from now on. Some articles do not need this treatment—for example, an article with new rules (Such as Shadowrun D8 from TSS-13, or Seven Samurai from TSS-15) but no in-character information doesn't need a separate Game Information section—it's **all** game information! Likewise, a short in-character article like the Soy Processing Units from TSS-16 doesn't need a Game Information section if there are no major rules or game information.

This new style is a slight change from the way things were previously organized, and it makes writing Shadowrun material slightly different from before. In some ways it makes it a bit more difficult, because the game information needs to be a bit more defined than the in character text—however, this gives you a strong base to write the in-character material from. That's the order I suggest when writing material in the new style: start with your outline, then move onto the game information, then once the game information is more or less finished, work on the in-character material. You'll probably have to revise some of the game information when you're finished with the in-character section, because the in-character text often prompts new ideas and interesting twists. Writing in this order helps ensure that you know where you're going with the in-character material, and helps prevent meandering digressions that don't add anything truly useful.

We encourage all authors to use the new format when submitting works—it will increase your chances of being featured in the magazine!

Submission Guidelines

Our submission guidelines are also available on the web at <http://tss.dumpshock.com/guidelines.html>

General Guidelines

The following guidelines apply for both written and artistic submissions. All submissions and submission inquiries should be sent by email to tss@dumpshock.com

1. All submissions should relate to Shadowrun in some way. Submissions that fit more generally in the 'cyberpunk' genre may also be accepted, but submissions that are oriented toward other cyberpunk genre roleplaying games are probably better submitted to a magazine or website devoted to them. We prefer that submissions are 'original' to The Shadowrun Supplemental—that is, that they haven't seen widespread distribution on another website already. We're flexible, though—if an article has been posted to a message board or mailing list so you can gather feedback on it, that's generally fine. When in doubt, ask us!
2. You must be the legal owner of the work to submit something, and you remain responsible for your work.
3. You retain all copyright to your material, but grant The Shadowrun Supplemental the right to edit your work before publication, and perpetual online rights to publish your work online and to edit/update it as necessary. You may republish any such material online, but we appreciate it if you give credit and provide a link to The Shadowrun Supplemental as the original place of publication.
4. All submissions should include the author's email address and real name. Neither of them need to be published, but we need to have them. If you wish to have your email address suppressed or your work credited to a handle, include that information in your email message.
5. No payment or compensation is available (unfortunately) for authors or artists.
6. All authors and artists should receive an email within 7 days about the status of the article. If you do not receive a reply within 14 days please send a follow-up email to us.

Written Submissions

1. All submissions should be sent by email - please put '[SUBMISSION] Name of Submission' in the subject line of your email. For example: '[SUBMISSION] Firearm Prices the Sensible Way'.
2. Submissions should be either included in the body of the email message, or attached as a .RTF, .DOC, or .TXT file. If you are unable to send a file in these formats, please email to ask for further instructions. If you have graphics that belong with the article - such as maps or character illustrations, please see the Art Submission guidelines.
3. Please keep formatting to your documents minimal—bold, italics, and simple tables are fine and is generally all that's necessary.
4. If possible, please follow our Style Sheet, available at <http://tss.dumpshock.com/style.html>

Art Submissions

1. All submissions should be sent by email - please put '[ART SUBMISSION] Name of Submission' in the subject line of your email. For example: '[ART SUBMISSION] Restaurant Maps'.
2. All forms of artwork are acceptable—hand drawn, computer generated, computer modified photographs, etc.
3. Images should be in at least 300DPI format, 150 minimum. .TIF format is preferred, but .GIF, .JPG, and .BMP are all acceptable. Please email to ask about other formats.
4. All graphics must include the artist's signature or other defining mark.

The Wantlist

Some semi-specific things that we would like to see submitted for future issues of The Shadowrun Supplemental include:

- **The Cluttered Datastore** — We're looking for gear of all kinds for this column!
- **Tai's Magical Goodies** — Our new/revived Magic column, home for spells, adept powers, totems, and other magical mayhem!
- **Organizations** — gangs, smuggling teams, initiatory groups, policlubs.
- **Adventures** — short adventures, especially focusing on **Year of the Comet** events.

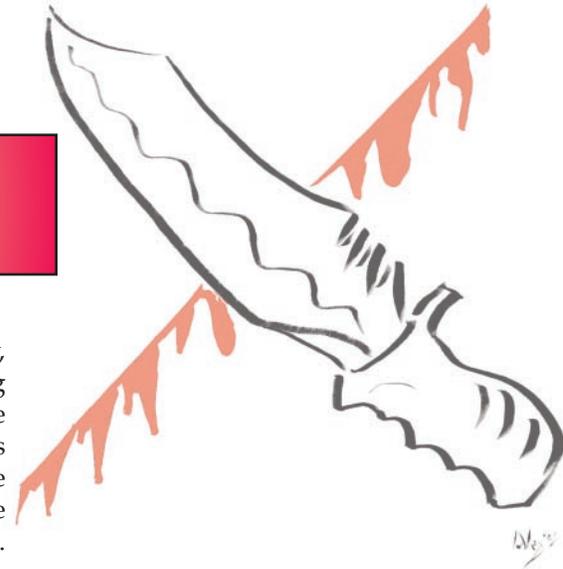
Have Your Say

Just as important as the people who create are the people who consume—so please, let us know what you think of The Shadowrun Supplemental. There's a small survey to fill out available at http://tss.dumpshock.com/feedback_17.html, and you can always email the editorial team at tss@dumpshock.com. Your feedback is always appreciated!

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The Cutthroats

Alexandre van Chesten [havoc@videotron.ca]



Internal Memo 125432-34B

Three,

It has been brought to my attention that the developing group calling themselves the Cutthroats could be a prime candidate to test the procedure we have talked about of late. They are a more recent arrival in Puyallup, and as such show promise. I have enclosed an analysis that has been circulating around our Seattle clans. Despite the litter of useless and bland addendums by our peons, the information should be sufficient to determine whether or not support could be directed towards the Cutthroats' leadership so as to help them gain control of the area. Their tactics seem brutal enough that our eventual takeover will be seen in much better light by the populace, and therefore more welcome. I will be waiting for your response.

-Four

• This is a translated memo between two very high-ranking people in the Yakuza ladder, and as far as I can tell, they are talking about giving unofficial support to a sprawl gang. This is nothing new, but the following report they did on the gang has enough depth that I felt it should be posted here. The mean streets of Seattle may be getting even meaner.

• Wolf

The Cutthroats are a recent arrival in Puyallup, favoring thug tactics and brutality over any subtlety and efficiency. Nonetheless, they are a force unto themselves and could prove to be troublesome if not routed or tamed in time.

◇ Forget taming. The organization has already been tainted far too much by so-called 'tamed' individuals who place their own agenda above and beyond that of the clan or the House.

◇ Kensei

◇ Kensei-san. Four words: Wake the frag up.

◇ Nishikihebi

• Sorry to bother y'all, but who're these guys?
• Redneck Rampant

• Like Wolf mentioned, these gentle fellows are Yakuza personnel - apparently this file passed through a few clans and a few levels of the big ol' hierarchy before ending up here.

• Wavelength

Focus

Fear, brutality, and overwhelming force; these are the three key points forming the triangle of power that are the Cutthroats.

Large numbers make up for what they individually lack—ability and intelligence. They rule by frightening others into giving them what they want, and are not above making examples of the weak or rebellious—thus their name. Their weapons of choice are blades of any make, size and kind. They do little dealing; their main financial gain comes from theft perpetrated on their ever-expanding turf.

• And that makes them different from the yaks because...?
• Smudge

• Finesse, my man. Finesse.
• Sixth Gear

Leader

Gash, a brash young human male, leads the Cutthroats. While his frail stature does not make him fit to be a gang leader, pure greed and malice more than make up for his physical inadequacies. His primary weapon is a multi-barbed whip. A tall head of hair dyed various shades of blue and often gelled and spiked heavily upwards is his most noticeable physical feature. The strongest of his gang members are with him at all times, and he rarely ventures out of his headquarters.

◇ Coward. He would not last long in any real confrontation; his craving to inflict pain is obviously a way for him to vent his frustrations.

◇ Kensei

◇ Eh, I'm tempted to think otherwise. He does keep guards about, and the confrontation begins with them, nya?

◇ Nekojin

◇ Not if you confront them with high-explosive charges or a long-range rifle slug.

◇ Enrai

Lieutenants

The Cutthroats have three lieutenants: Deathstrike, Jugular and The Pure Zen. They are not assigned any particular numbers; they simply have the authority to give members orders, short-term or long, and are free to recruit any cell not currently attached to another lieutenant and lead them off to any assignment they deem fitting. Unattached gangers usually roam free and, as long as they bring the gang funds, Gash and the lieutenants often ignore them.

Deathstrike is a troubling girl with long red hair, a body-hugging suit of black vinyl-like material and a breathing mask obscuring her face. She appears to be quite insane, as well as addicted to sniping—she carries a rifle with her at all times, and seems to derive physical pleasure from shooting at random targets (including people) from a distance. Her usual tactic is to lead from a distance, letting others do the real dirty work. Out of all the Cutthroat lieutenants, she's the one least thirsty for actual up-close blood.

◇ My kind of girl.
◇ Kyohoudo

- Amen to that.
- SMG Guy
- Deathstrike? Who goes by the name Deathstrike? How is that used in casual conversation? "Hey, 'Deathstrike', let's go for a beer. And make sure 'Pure Zen' brings money this time - I'm not frontin' for his sorry hoop again."
- Crowe
- Actually, most of the gang refers to her as 'That Crazy Bitch'. Out of her earshot, of course.
- Wavelength

Jugular is an overly large troll with one horn broken off near the base and shoulder-length hair obscuring most of his face. He does not speak much, he does not think much, and most of all he does not bathe much—what he does in droves, however, is apply his fists to people at high speed. True to Cutthroat form, he has hand spurs on both sets of knuckles, and leads his detachment of lackeys via gestures and grunts most of the time. Few question his decisions; those who have did not live to regret their disloyalty. Rumors point to Jugular having been a successful gunsmith at one time, but little fact backs this up.

- I've seen him in action. Believe the rumors.
- He Who Breathes Shallow
- What kind of work could a humongous troll possibly do? Gunsmithing's fine work, and it doesn't help when your index finger's bigger than what you're building.
- Grind

The Pure Zen is an ork who obviously has seen too many samurai movies. Normally bare-chested, he wears the traditional aikido split skirt, as well as two katana sheathed at the belt. Always serious, he seems to view Gash as his master, but whether he truly follows bushido or Gash is hard to tell. He is an adept, a terror in close combat. A handful of gangers stay around him at all times not as backup, but as apprentices.

◇ He and I shall clash blades. I can see it.
◇ Kensei

Gang Rating

Following the usual evaluation schematics, the Cutthroats appear to be on equal ground when compared to most other groups and organizations in the area. They have access to small arms at best, and usually rely on cutting implements of low quality. Expect to see their main forces use small blades, knives, spiked clubs, and sometimes low- to large-caliber pistols.

◇ They may appear equal in small groups, but I wouldn't trust these odds - they have access to startling amounts of backup, and numbers can even all odds.
◇ Nishikihebi

Head Count

The Cutthroats tend to stick together and act in large groups; their numbers have been reported to be close to at least a hundred, but assuredly not over a hundred and twenty-five members.

Initiation Rituals

There are two initiation rituals to become a Cutthroat. Firstly, one must stand before Gash and suffer as many strikes from his barbed whip as possible until the pain is intolerable and the potential ganger yields. The more strikes suffered, the higher the ganger's status will be in the gang. The blood-soaked and torn clothing becomes the ganger's uniform from now on; at least one strike must be weathered in order to become a Cutthroat.

- And when Gash is particularly wary of an applicant (i.e. he's scared he might overthrow him), he might just add something to those barbs. Know many gangers who have toxin filters?
- Grind
- So how did the lieutenants get up there in the first place if Gash is such a wimp?
- Smudge
- I think I can field this one - lieutenants can be powerful, they just can't be industrious. I doubt any of the trio mentioned here actually *want* to be at the head of the gang. They seem happy with their position.
- Lisa Diamond-Eyes

The newly-crowned Cutthroat is merely an apprentice at this point. To become a full-fledged member, the ganger must turn a band of white cloth completely red with the blood of a victim. The band is to be worn somewhere on the ganger's body, and it seals his status as a Cutthroat.

◇ It has come to my attention that this band is not only a source of pride, it is a source of shame - shredding the band to some degree is a common way for a Cutthroat to atone for mistakes. As most of us know, that can be exploited to great extents.

◇ Enrai

Lieutenants are another matter; Gash chooses them personally from his horde. The test to become a Lieutenant is as of yet unknown, but probably involves repeat appearances of Gash's whip.

- With repeat appearances of applied chemistry to said whip. This would be a rather good use for hypnotherapeutic drugs, wouldn't you think?

- He Who Breathes Shallow

- You're overestimating Gash. Gangers don't go to such great lengths, especially not gangers in the Puy.

- Grind

- I know the Cutthroats.

- He Who Breathes Shallow

- That reminds me. If this gang is so scroungingly poor, why are they so many? What do they get from getting slashed up by a skinny white guy so they can be another one in a hundred?

- Smudge

- What else is there? At least they get to take advantage of any businesses that are 'protected' by the Cutthroats, and they get some buddies to boot. It's either that or be on the receiving end. And seeing as how Gash rarely steps out of his ivory tower, he gets a lot of notoriety factor due to the simple fact that he's often heard, seldom seen. Some people want to be on the side that's on top, and Gash is trying his best to make his side look like it.

- Grind

Uniforms

It is easy to identify a Cutthroat; they wear blood-stained street clothing that has not washed for quite some time. Full-fledged members wear a reddish-brown band somewhere on their body.

Symbol

The Cutthroat symbol and sign of their power is a blade of some sort over a bloody gash, forming an 'x' with the latter. Each gang member wears a patch or a drawing of this somewhere as well.

◇ The Pure Zen has the insignia tattooed on his chest.

Act accordingly.

◇ Kensai

Territory

The Cutthroats seem to have staked their claim to the eastern middle part of Puyallup, around the abandoned central train and subway station. The latter acts as their headquarters. Their territory spreads daily as they seek more and more people to terrorize and rob for 'protection.' It is rumored that Gash has tapped into what's left of the Puyallup phone grid from the station, and directs squads of his gangers by calling pay phones close to their whereabouts.

- If he tapped into the phone service (or what's left of it), then he's got to have some serious decking muscle.

- Redneck Rampant

- Or just a one-time affair. Wink.

- Wavelength

- Given the disrepair of Puyallup's grid, carrier pigeons are probably more reliable.

- Rat

Operations

The Cutthroats support themselves through thug work and robbery. Nothing else.

Foes

The Cutthroats oppose anyone and anything that occupies the territory into which they wish to expand. Most notably, they oppose the Crash Hammers, whose troll leader has reportedly started looking for outside help to dispose of some of the Cutthroats, possibly Gash himself. Otherwise, the Cutthroats stand relatively unopposed in their thuggery-driven expansion.

◇ Leave the gangs to the gangs, and they shall take care of themselves without our involvement.

◇ Kaze no Hishu

◇ But it's so fun to get involved!

◇ Nekojin

Uniqueness

The Cutthroats are renown for slitting the throats of those who died opposing them or refused to pay what they wanted. These examples are left in the street, the head sometimes completely separated from the body. Cutthroat squads attack without a discernible SOP or goal; they simply loot and brutalize people on their turf into paying them to go away.

Game Information

Cast of Characters

All characters should be given other skills, gear, and cyberware as appropriate for your campaign.

Gash

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R
2	3	2	4	4	4	6	-	3

INIT: 3 + 1D6

Dice Pools: Combat 5

Karma Pool/Professional Rating: 2/2

Active Skills: Edged Weapons 3, Etiquette 3, Interrogation 2, Leadership 4, Unarmed Combat 2, Whips 4

Knowledge Skills: Chemistry 3, Puyallup Area 4, Puyallup Gangs 3

Gash is little more than a thug, but a very competent one at that. He has a working knowledge of chemicals; enough to know which ones have what effects and how to apply them to his whip without getting high.

Deathstrike

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R
4	4	3	2	3	4	6	-	3

INIT: 3 + 1D6

Dice Pools: Combat 5

Karma Pool/Professional Rating: 2/1

Active Skills: Athletics 3, Edged Weapons 4, Etiquette 2, Interrogation 3, Leadership 2, Rifles 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Knowledge Skills: Puyallup Area 5, Puyallup Gangs 3

Deathstrike is indeed a certified nut with a Barrett, but her ammo is running low and she's not above 'thinking outside the box' (i.e., hiring people or cutting deals) to acquire more ammunition for it.

Jugular

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R
8	2	8	3	2	3	5.8	-	2

INIT: 2 + 1D6

Dice Pools: Combat 3

Karma Pool/Professional Rating: 2/2

Active Skills: Cyber-Implant Combat 3, Edged Weapons 3, Etiquette 3, Heavy Weapons B/R 3, Negotiation 4, Pistols 3, Pistols B/R 1, Rifles 2

Knowledge Skills: Firearms Theory 3, Puyallup Area 3

Cyberware: Spurs (2)

Jugular is an accomplished gunsmith, and had his own business until goblinization left him dunced and dimple-fingered. He only works on heavy weapons now, as anything lighter is too small for him to work on. He's currently toying with a minigun on "loan" from a yakuza contact.

The Pure Zen

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R
6	4	5	3	4	3	6	4	5 (7)

INIT: 5 (7) + 1D6 (2D6)

Dice Pools: Combat 5 (6)

Karma Pool/Professional Rating: 2/2

Active Skills: Athletics 4, Edged Weapons 4 (Katana 6), Etiquette 3, Instruction 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Knowledge Skills: Bushido 3, Haiku 3, Puyallup Area 4

Adept Powers: Blind Fighting, Combat Sense 1, Freefall 2, Improved Reflexes 1, Smashing Blow

An adept devoted to combat with two swords, The Pure Zen has a pair of very low-powered foci blades of his own. He's fanatical, speaks in haiku, wears Japanese garb, and his real name is Ezekiel Walthertorsh. Amongst his possessions are tattered copies of *Shogun*, *Amaterasu for Dummies*, *The Collected Written Works of Megumi Hayashibara*, and *The Life and Teachings of Daruma*.

He has lost two magic points due to injuries suffered in turf wars.

Head Count

The Cutthroats number 110, with that value depending on the rollover. They're on equal footing with starting runners in terms of power, as their numbers make up for their individual lack of skill and experience. Most are armed with melee weapons, but they also have access to pistols, as well as shotguns and hand-held automatic weapons if the Yakuza backing comes through.

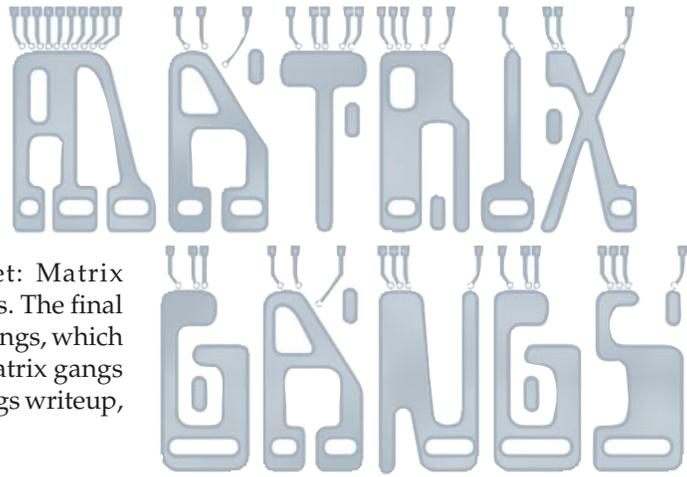
Phone Grid

The public phone grid around their territory has been hacked into and turned to their use; the state of things in Puyallup has made the phone company not care at all what happens to a few wires. The new center node for the lines is in the gangers' HQ in the old train/subway station, and it's connected to at least one physical phone line out of every two in the sector.

The Yakuza

The actual extent of the financial backing depends on what the GM wants to do with his campaign. The Yakuza plan to use the Cutthroats to terrorize an area of the city, then take that territory over from them, looking like heroes. They could also be using the Cutthroats for something more mundane—grooming them to test some sort of new drug, equipment, or implant.

by Adam Jury
[adamj@dumpshock.com]



Part of my contribution to the Target: Matrix sourcebook included a section on Matrix gangs. The final version of the book featured a different set of gangs, which took a slightly different look on the state of Matrix gangs in the Sixth World. For the complete Matrix gangs writeup, see p. 102, **Target Matrix**.

Crimson Crew

Not to be mistaken for a branch of Crimson Crush, the Crew is a bunch of ruffians with barely adequate gear. Most of them are located in the Boston area, and actually spend the majority of their time hawking pirated chips to students and shady re-sellers in the Rox and other shadowy areas of Beantown. The few other members located around the UCAS spend their time shunting the software to the “burners” in Boston. Crimson Crew don’t actually crack any of this software themselves, and are really nothing more than a bunch of leeches on the system.

Radickalz

The Radickalz are a tight-knit group of crackers who work primarily on cracking and releasing productivity software. Since splitting from the crumbling group ALLXS several years ago, they’re no higher than a third-tier gang because cracking is the only activity they partake in. The Radickalz maintain a working relationship with several other gangs who distribute their software, both over the Matrix and on chip to unwary consumers. They’ve also exposed some embarrassing backdoors and other “features” in products from leading corporations – including that little exploit in RCS-FastData that let anyone with the right passcodes intercept all your faxes and document transfers.

Radickalz

Broadway Olive

Named for an intersection near the Aztechnology Pyramid where the two founders allegedly met in the middle of the 50’s, Broadway Olive has carved out an impressive reputation and expanded throughout the last half dozen years to become one of the movers and shakers in the shadow Matrix. Starting from a small nucleus of rich kids in downtown Seattle, they’ve expanded at a steady pace, adding four or five members each year to now sit at about 35 members spread throughout the UCAS with a few more overseas. Broadway Olive specializes in the good old-fashioned datasteal, and in doing shadow “research.” It’s not unusual to see files turn up on Shadowland weekly, painstakingly researched and authored by a member or members of the group.

“The Corner Of” is Broadway Olive’s public node on the Matrix, tangentially linked to the Denver Data Haven – once info hits The Corner it’s ferreted to the haven for good. The node houses the complete public “works” of Broadway Olive, cross referenced and updated when necessary, as well as the necessary information to get in contact with members (through multiple blind relays). Some members of Broadway Olive are more than willing to perform “custom” research, for a tidy fee, while other members prefer to work on their own projects for the thrill of exploration and exposure, not for monetary gain.

The two founders maintain tight control over Broadway Olive, aided by a council of three other veteran members. Important decisions regarding the future of the group, including admission of new members, are first debated amongst the founders and council, and then presented to the rest of the group for some internal discussion and a vote.

Irrational Systems, Inc

One of the larger Matrix Gangs, Irrational Systems, Inc. is a jack-of-all-trades gang. It is divided into a half-dozen or so smaller groups, all of which answer to the High Council. The Council is made up of a representative from each division, the three founders, and several other long-term members. The actual number of members is unknown, but conservative estimates place it at around 100. Some divisions, such as the Matrix Presence division—responsible for upkeep of ISI's public and private hosts has under 10 members, while the Programming and politely named Intrusion divisions have well over 20 members each. Unlike many groups of its size, ISI maintains very little "Grey Hat" mentality—they're a gang, the bad boys riding into town in a black hat.

- A lot of ISI members hang out in a New York based Matrix bar called Club 31337. They pretty much rule the roost there and are friends with a lot of the staff, so don't try starting anything stupid.
- Optik evreN

Irrational Systems has no qualms about pimping their services to the highest bidder, with members operating as a typical freelance decker or working together for an employer. When need be, Irrational Systems is extremely professional—you won't find them leaving behind evidence or "call signs," as some gangs are prone to do. But make no mistake about it, they're not doing this because they like you, they're doing it for self-preservation. They value your money more than your friendship and respect.

- Just to throw out a few more names here, because there's a million more: The Black Widowz, a small gang with an extremely obvious arachnid flavor (they're also very picky about their icons and suchlike being anatomically correct...), Rocks and Stones, a small gang that fashions themselves as environmental activists, and we can't forget VirtueUs: The Matrix gang for God.
- Sam Haine

Game Information

Matrix Gangs come and go like the wind. When using them in your campaigns, keep in mind and play up the speed of the Matrix as opposed to the meat world: Alliances can be made, broken, and forged anew within hours or even minutes. Yesterday's heroes will be old news tomorrow if they don't keep up with the pace of the Sixth World.

Crimson Crew

Gang Focus: The Crimson Crew is a third-tier gang that operates by selling pirated software in the Boston area.

Leader: Jackboot, a 20-something dwarf with nothing better to do.

Gang Rating: Inferior

Head Count: 10-20

Initiation Rituals: None.

Uniforms: None.

Symbol: Red graffiti-like text reading "CC."

Territory: The Rox and poorer student-populated areas of Boston.

Operations: The Crew primarily sell burned copies of pirated software to college students, or to other re-sellers in the Boston area who then sell the softs to unsuspecting customers.

Foes: Anyone in the Boston area distributing pirated software for free or cheaper than them. These people will be threatened and most likely assaulted or mugged.

Uniqueness: Nothing really sets the Crew apart from the pack.

Radickalz

Gang Focus: The Radickalz are a well-tuned third-tier gang that crack productivity software. They have a reputation that makes them look better than they are—not that they're slouches.

Leader: G-Force, a former council member of AllXS.

Gang Rating: Equal

Head Count: 10-15

Initiation Rituals: Prospective members must try and crack a piece of software devised by senior member Hudson. Only about 1 in 6 actually manage to do so; the gang accepts those who managed to crack it, and some who had exceptionally good ideas while trying to do so but still failed.

Uniforms: None, although icons with outlandish hairstyles and "body" modifications are encouraged.

Symbol: Green text over grey triangle-like logo.

Territory: Aside from private nodes, the Radickalz frequent many software and cracking forums to keep on top of the state of the art, but do not "claim" any of that as territory. For the most part they are respectful users of other Matrix systems.

Operations: Radickalz crack software only; they do not distribute it nor do they crack games or other entertainment software.

Foes: The Radickalz do not get along with the remains of AllXS.

Uniqueness: The Radickalz have pulled off some impressive cracks in their time, but a few individual members let ego get in the way of improving their skills.

Broadway Olive

Gang Focus: Broadway Olive is a datasteal and research machine.

Leaders: Denny and Boylston, named for a street and avenue near the Broadway and Olive intersection.

Gang Rating: Superior

Head Count: 35-40

Initiation Rituals: None as such, but extreme talent in both system penetration and data organization must be present in all recruits. All new members have a strict month-long trial period in which they can be denied full entry to the group at any time.

Uniforms: None.

Symbol: Red and black text over an intersection like cross.

Territory: Broadway Olive operates a public Matrix node named "The Corner Of," but maintains a low profile otherwise. Physically, they're scattered across the planet.

Operations: Datasteals, organization and research are what the Olive deals in, whether for personal gratification or by contract.

Foes: Broadway Olive's main foes are systems administrators. They quickly crush any other Matrix gang foolish enough to steal their work.

Uniqueness: Renowned for their attention to detail, Broadway Olive are frequent contacts for fixers and other information brokers.



Irrational Systems, Inc.

Gang Focus: No particular focus, but whatever ISI tries to do it does well. Each division is an autonomous unit and has its own quirks and rituals.

Leader: The Head Council does not have a particular leader—it is remarkably democratic and self-regulating. The three founders are Robertson, a CAS-based troll; Tranc, a Seattleite of unknown race; and Charlatan, elven, residing in an unknown geographical location.

Gang Rating: Superior

Head Count: 100-125

Initiation Rituals: Individual divisions ensure that members are up to snuff in their chosen specialty.

Uniforms: The stylized ISI logo appears prominently on all member's icons.

Symbol: A stylized ISI, usually white on black.

Territory: Known to terrorize various public Matrix services, with no long-term public territory.

Operations: ISI has well-developed operations in every facet of existence for a Matrix gang.

Foes: Almost everyone wants a piece of the ISI pie, so they butt heads with almost every other Matrix gang on occasion, and have serious grudges with gangs that they view as being not serious enough.

Uniqueness: One of the larger Matrix gangs, ISI stands out in the crowd but their size makes individual members hard to pin down.

Additional Martial Arts Styles

by Eric Polovich [thepolo@adelphia.net]

Several years ago, I found an online supplement that added specific martial arts to Shadowrun. After playing with and refining them, my group and I had added, subtracted and basically massacred the original rules to the point that there were little of them left in our day-to-day gameplay. The main thing that we changed was the styles. They were great, but after playing each once or twice, we wanted more. Included in this article are several of those styles that have been altered to work with the Advanced Melee Combat rules from p. 85, *Cannon Companion*.

The New Styles

The new styles included in this supplement are Choy-Li-Fut Kung Fu, Fan Tzi Pai Kung Fu, Feng Ying Kuen Kung Fu, Fu Ying Kuen Kung Fu, Hao Pai Kung Fu, Hou Ying Kuen Kung Fu, Judo, Short-hand Kung Fu, Loong Ying Kuen Kung Fu, 8 Step Praying Mantis Kung Fu, Tsui Pa Hsien Kung Fu and Wing Chun. They broaden the base of styles that the Cannon Companion covers by adding more eccentric styles of combat from all over the globe. Several styles are forms of Kung Fu (primarily the animal styles); they expand upon the simple 'hard/soft' distinction in the original rules.

Choy-Li-Fut Kung Fu

Created in 1838 as one of many offshoots of Shao-Lin Kung Fu. The form is very aggressive, concentrating on long hand techniques like roundhouse and overhand swings. A Choy-Li-Fut master, when confronted with a fight, will immediately attack, plunging right into the middle of any group of opponents. Using the circular parry, she will fend off any attacks while lashing out with a flurry of hand strikes, snap kicks and back sweeps.

Advantages: Choy-Li-Fut martial artists receive +2 power to all Whirling and Multi-Strike maneuvers.

Disadvantages: Characters using Choy-Li-Fut receive -2 dice to the Subduing Combat and Called Shot options.

Maneuvers: Blind Fighting, Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Vicious Blow, Whirling

Fan Tzi Pai Kung Fu

(The Boxing of the Eagle)

One of the several animal styles of Chinese Kung Fu, the Eagle style is swift and unforgiving.

Advantages: Characters using Eagle Style Kung Fu receive +1 reach when using the Full Offense maneuver.

Disadvantages: Fan Tzi Pai martial artists suffer a -3 to the power of all Called Shots.

Maneuvers: Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Herding, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Vicious Blow, Whirling

Feng Ying Kuen Kung Fu

(The Style of the Phoenix)

One of the several animal styles of Chinese Kung Fu, the phoenix is a symbol of joy and rebirth. The Phoenix style is one that combines both hard and soft techniques.

Advantages: Characters using the Style of the Phoenix may negate 1 point of opponent's reach.

Disadvantages: Characters using the Style of the Phoenix suffer -1 die to the Knockdown Attack and Charging Attack options.

Maneuvers: Blind Fighting, Focus Will, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Whirling

Fu Ying Kuen Kung Fu

(The Style of the Tiger)

One of the several animal styles of Chinese Kung Fu, the Tiger style is characterized by power and determination.

Advantages: Characters using Fu Ying Kuen Kung Fu receive a +1 to the power of all attacks.

Disadvantages: Characters using the Style of the Tiger suffer -3 dice to Subduing Combat option.

Maneuvers: Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Whirling, Zoning

Hao Pai Kung Fu

(The Style of the Heron)

One of the several animal styles of Chinese Kung Fu, the Heron style uses both hard and soft techniques. Some typical movements are, for instance, positions on one leg only or attacks with joined fingers in the eyes, and so on.

Advantages: Characters using Hao Pai Kung Fu receive -2 to the TN of all Called Shots.

Disadvantages: Characters using the Style of the Heron suffer -2 to the power of all Subduing Combat attacks.

Maneuvers: Close Combat, Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Herding, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Whirling

Hou Ying Kuen Kung Fu

(The Style of the Monkey)

Another of the several animal styles of Chinese Kung Fu. The Monkey is a figure of trickery in Chinese folklore, and the Monkey style uses fast and deceptive footwork to confuse foes.

Advantages: Characters using Hou Ying Kuen Kung Fu receive +2 dice to the Disorient maneuver.

Disadvantages: Characters using the Style of the Monkey suffer an additional -2 to the TN of all Called Shots.

Maneuvers: Blind Fighting, Close Combat, Disorient, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Whirling

Additional Martial Arts Styles

Judo

(Shao-Lin Kung Fu)

Judo originates from ancient styles, but has developed into a modern sport and martial art. Its name can be translated as “soft, flexible way.” It focuses on ways to fall safely, and also on grapples and throws.

Advantages: Characters can use half their judo skill rating as armor against the Throw technique and when taking damage from falls.

Disadvantages: Characters using Judo suffer -1 dice to the Charging attack and Called Shot options.

Maneuvers: Close Combat, Evasion, Ground Fighting, Kip-Up, Sweep, Throw, Zoning

Li-Chi

(Short-hand Kung Fu)

Short-hand Kung Fu gets its nickname from the fact that most of the movements are based on a boxing distance; close enough for hand movements but too close for anything but snap kicks. Other strengths are rapid stance changes and intricate hand movements. The Li-Chi master will enter combat steadily and deliberately, advancing to combat range. Then it becomes a simple matter of outfighting the opponent with as many blows as possible.

Advantages: Characters using Li-Chi receive +1 die to attacks made while using the Close Combat Maneuver.

Disadvantages: Characters using Short-hand Kung Fu suffer -3 dice to Charging Attacks.

Maneuvers: Blind Fighting, Close Combat, Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike

Loong Ying Kuen Kung Fu

(The Style of The Dragon)

One of the several animal styles of Chinese Kung Fu, the Dragon is a figure of strength, concentration and fertility. The dragon style combines fluid movements with powerful strikes.

Advantages: Characters using Loong Ying Kuen Kung Fu add an additional +1 bonus to the Focus Will and Focus Strength maneuvers.

Disadvantages: Characters using the Style of Dragon suffer -2 to the TN when using the Subduing Attack and Pulled Punch options.

Maneuvers: Focus Strength, Focus Will, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Vicious Blow, Whirling

Shyun Style Praying Mantis Kung Fu

The Shyun Style is one of the last pure fighting styles left in the world. It has been passed down master to student for well over 350 years. It is a very well-rounded style, emphasizing lightning-fast strikes and efficiency of movement. It is also known as the Eight Step Praying Mantis Style.

Advantages: Characters using Shyun Style Kung Fu gain +2 dice to all Called Shots.

Disadvantages: A character must begin play with Praying Mantis Kung Fu; he cannot learn the art after the character has been created. A level 2 contact must also be purchased, and maintained at twice the normal cost in order to improve the skill.

Maneuvers: Blind Fighting, Focus Will, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Herding, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Sweep

Tsui Pa Hsien Kung Fu

(The Style of the Drunken Man)

This is the style of the drunk man made popular by Jackie Chan and created by Li Po. The goal of this style is to have reactions that are totally unforeseeable. The expert falls to the ground, hesitates, rolls, changes his rhythm, and so on.

Advantages: Those who attack the character never benefit from the ‘Superior Position’ target modifier.

Disadvantages: Characters who are students of Drunken Boxing automatically gain the addiction flaw (Alcohol, Mild). If their skill in Drunken Boxing rises above 5, the flaw proceeds to Moderate.

Maneuvers: Evasion, Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Herding, Kick Attack, Kip-up, Multi-Strike, Sweep, Whirling

Wing Chun

The objective of Wing Chun is acquiring the skill to deliver the right technique at the right time, negating the opponent’s attacks and using his incoming momentum against him. It relies on softer attributes such as timing, natural power and sensitivity to maintain advantageous positioning. It uses strategies to trap the opponent and limit his maneuverability.

Advantages: Wing Chun practitioners gain an effective +1 to reach when counterattacking.

Disadvantages: Characters using Wing Chun suffer -2 dice when using the Charging Attack and Called Shot options.

Maneuvers: Close Combat, Disorient, Evasion, Focus Will, Herding, Kip-Up, Sweep, Throw, Zoning

Wrestling

The traditional sport, which is not really a martial art, but included here anyway to go along with Boxing. The combatants attempt to pin each other to the ground using a combination of holds and takedowns.

Advantages: Wrestlers gain +2 dice when using the Subduing Combat option.

Disadvantages: Characters using wrestling suffer -3 dice when using the Called Shot option.

Maneuvers: Close Combat, Focus Strength, Full Offense, Ground Fighting, Herding, Zoning

Knowledge Skills

Folklore & Mythology

Folklore and Mythology refers to the traditional recurring folk tales, legends and myths of historical cultures. It covers everything from knowledge of ancient pantheons to the various Arthurian legends, Native American tribal tales, the Baba Yaga and more. In the Sixth World, where belief can shape reality, those with this knowledge can find insight into many modern mysteries. Formerly the province of academics, this skill has many applications in the Awakened world.

Default: Anthropology, History, Occult Knowledge

Specializations: By historical period, by region, by specific subject, by tradition.

Occult Knowledge

This skill confers all kinds of mystic, arcane and 'magical' knowledge. Distinct from the various Magic Background skills, which represent the accepted body of magical understanding in the Sixth World, Occult Knowledge describes the unknown – folk magic, dark practices and rites half-remembered. This skill is useful for talismongers, forensic mages, and theoreticians alike. It may be used as a Complementary Skill for relevant Magic Background skill tests, and also covers knowledge of practices not necessarily effective in the Awakened world.

Default: Magic Background skills; Folklore & Mythology

Specializations: By historical period, by region, by specific subject, by tradition.

Parabotany

Parabotany refers to knowledge of Awakened plants of all kinds. It covers cellular and biochemical information, cultivation and occurrence of such plants in the wild, and so forth. At the GM's discretion, Parabotany may be used as a Complementary Skill for working with herbal materials and radicals in Talismongering and Enchanting tests (see *MITS*, pp. 40-2). It may also be used in this way when concocting magical compounds such as those of the Anasazi or Koradji (see *M&M*, p. 122-3 and *T:AL*, pp. 108-9).

Default: Botany, Parazology

Specializations: By order, by region, by para-trait

Parazology

Parazology is the study of Awakened animals, particularly non-sentient ones. Characters with this skill know the behavior, physiology and biological needs of critters they may encounter. This skill doesn't directly confer any ability in dealing with the animals in question, but may be used as a Complementary Skill when handling or caring for appropriate animals.

Default: Zoology, Parabotany

Specializations: By order, by region

Active Skills

Hypnotism (Willpower)

Hypnotism is the art of entrancing a target to make them more susceptible to suggestion or command. To use it, the character selects their target and places them in a trance using meditation or concentration techniques. This requires quiet surroundings and minimal distractions, and should almost always be performed in person. The hypnotist makes an opposed Hypnotism test against the target's Willpower; if the hypnotist achieves any net successes, the subject is in a hypnotic trance and is open to suggestion from the initiator. Placing the target into a trance requires a time equal to their Willpower in minutes; this time may be reduced by extra successes on the Hypnotism test.

Once in a trance, the target must make a Willpower test (with a target number equal to the hypnotiser's Willpower) to resist any commands or suggestions given by the hypnotist. Only the hypnotist may affect the target in this way. If the target is given commands that are counter to their self-interest or are wildly inappropriate, the hypnotist must maintain control by succeeding on another opposed Hypnotism test against the target's Willpower. If the target achieves equal or greater successes, they slide out of their trance and any implanted commands or suggestions have failed.

This skill should only be allowed in the game at the discretion of the gamemaster.

Default: None

Specializations: Subject control, memory regression, personality modification

Riding(Reaction)

Although animal riding is a rare talent in the Sixth World, compared with a couple of centuries ago, there are still those who find it useful to be able to ride a horse, mule, or other animal. Whether for leisure or recreational purposes, or as a self-sustaining form of transport, some people around the fringes of urban civilization are adept at animal riding.

This skill allows the rider to sit their mount appropriately under a range of riding conditions. GMs should make Riding Tests based on varying conditions in a similar fashion to Handling Tests. The Riding skill also allows a character to select the appropriate tack, animal-control equipment and other accoutrements for riding their mount, and gives the character some small means of behavioural control over the animal when riding it.

Default: None

Specializations: By animal

Damage Control

by Steven "Bull" Ratkovich
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Double Shot! Double Shot!

Conventional Control

Ahhh, summer. 'Tis the season that school children long for, when school is out of session, the ice cream truck drives by daily (if they're lucky), the sun is bright and warm, and the days are long and lazy. For those of us who are a little older, summer means other things. Picnics, baseball games, fireworks, swimming pools, girls in bikinis, take your pick.

If you're a gamer the most important thing the summer brings is the game convention. Dragon-con, Gen Con, Origins, plus hundreds of smaller conventions around the country take place during those long, hot days. And if you're a hardcore gamer, you'll try to attend as many of these as you can. There are generally three kinds of conventions: local, regional and national.

If money and time are an issue, you might be able to find a small local convention hosted by a nearby college. Most larger public colleges, especially state schools, have a gaming club that puts together a convention of some kind. These are typically quite small, with a handful of games run by volunteers, and possibly some dealers from local game shops. If the club is lucky, they may be able to pull in an industry guest of some kind, but that's unusual for a little convention like this, and you rarely see any sort of presence from game companies. These conventions can be a fun chance to get out, try a new game, or just game with people you don't know. You can also often get some good bargains from some of the vendors that do set up for these conventions.

After the local con, there is the regional con. Often these are put together by an organization other than a college gaming club. Sometimes this is a group of shopkeepers in an area, and sometimes it is members of several gaming clubs working together. The results are usually more impressive than the local convention, though still somewhat confined. These will often attract GMs from outside the group putting it together, will usually have a handful of professional and amateur vendors in a dealers' room, and will occasionally have a couple

of minor industry guests, such as a writer or an artist. These industry guests are often people who someone on the planning committee knows or who live in the area. These conventions are usually weekend-only, and are worth attending if you can. There are almost always games available for the more popular RPGs, and often a handful of smaller, less well known games will be run. Plus the dealers' room and auction are often a great chance to find bargains.

Finally, you have your national conventions. These range in size greatly from smaller national cons that draw several thousand attendees to the mecca of gaming, Gen Con, which brings in over 30,000 attendees each year. Conventions of this size always have some sort of dealer room or exhibitors hall area with a number of dealers and usually have some presence from at least a few game companies. Several of these shows, namely Origins and Gen Con, have representatives from almost every game company out there despite the hefty expense of renting booth space. There are also often an anime rooms showing various movies throughout the day, an auction room, an art exhibit hall where you can check out and buy pieces of original artwork, game demos, open gaming, tournaments, and guests of honor from gaming, television, and movies.

So, you want to go to a game convention. Now what? Well, there are a few things you can do to make the convention experience go a bit smoother.

1. Plan ahead

This is one that I cannot stress enough. The larger the convention, the more you need to plan for it.

1a. Travel Plans

This is the first thing you should figure out. How are you getting to the convention? If the convention is nearby, driving is an option. If it's cross country, you need to decide if you can drive to the convention, or if you want to fly. If you want to go by plane, buy your tickets months in

advance. The earlier you buy them, the cheaper they will be. You'll also want to plan to get to the convention a day in advance, most likely. This allows you to take care of the preliminaries and get settled in, so that you can just enjoy the convention when it starts.

1b. Pre-Register

Register for the convention as early as possible. Often, it's cheaper to do so. Plus it will allow you to register for games, and possibly get hotel accommodations more easily. Once you get the pre-registration book, go through it carefully, highlighting any games that look interesting. Once you've seen what's available, work up a schedule that seems feasible to you. Don't sign up for too much, as you'll burn out. Keep in mind that there will be more games that are scheduled after the pre-reg book is released, so there will be more to check into on site. Make sure you sign up for any games you really want in on, as you don't want them to sell out. With 5,000+ attendees at some of the larger conventions, and often only six slots available, game space goes fast.

1c. Rooming Accommodations

Having a place to sleep always helps make the convention experience a little more enjoyable for you, as well as those around you. Sure, you may be able to handle going three days with no sleep and no shower, but trust me, no one around you wants to deal with it. Whether this is making arrangements to crash on a friend's floor or reserving a hotel room, you want to have sleeping arrangements worked out ahead of time. There's nothing more frustrating than getting to the convention and finding out every hotel in the city is booked up (and for some of the larger conventions, this is not just a possibility, but an inevitability).

2. Prepare

With pre-planning finished, the next step is to figure out what you should take to the convention. Packing is a major step in preparation.

2a. Clothes

Take enough clean and neat clothes for the entire convention. As with showering, you may be comfortable wearing the same clothing for days on end, but trust me: No one else is. Take enough clothes for each day of the convention, plus an extra days worth, just in case. Plus if there's the possibility of other activities, such as going clubbing, or going to a formal dinner, prepare accordingly. As silly as it sounds, plan your wardrobe for the entire convention. Nothing is worse than spilling chocolate syrup on your only pair of jeans.

2b. Gaming Books

First off, do not drag every book you own with you. And if you do, don't drag them all to the convention hall. Two hours into the convention, you'll be regretting it. Gaming books are heavy, much more so than you'd think. I'd suggest only taking what you'll absolutely need—core books for the games you're going to play. Most games will have both books and pre-generated characters available. Bring the types of dice you'll need, but remember that conventions are excellent places to pick up brand new dice for you and your friends back home.

2c. Other

Beyond the essentials, you may want to take a water bottle, as drinks and food at conventions are expensive. If there are any people there you want to get an autograph from, take something to get signed. Sometimes they give away a photo, but often they charge for them. A backpack to carry stuff in is a must, and a wheeled backpack is a godsend if, like me, you need to lug a bunch of books around.

3. The Convention

You've successfully prepared and packed for the convention. You've traveled, survived the trip, and settled into your residence of choice. Now, on to the convention!

3a. Registration

If you planned ahead, you pre-registered for the convention. However, it's not always possible to do so. Either way, you'll want to head up to the convention hall and take care of registration. If you pre-registered, you should have a badge and anything else you pre-purchased waiting for you, just show them the confirmation information—usually it's just a printed receipt from the web. Otherwise, you'll need to purchase a badge—the lines for this are often long, especially on opening day! You'll also want to pick up an on site program to get the updated game schedule, maps of the convention hall, and other information.

3b. Meetings

A lot of times you'll be meeting up with people you know, either from real life or online. Regardless of whether you've ever met them before or not, the first thing you need to do is set up a time and place. Even if none of you have attended that particular convention before, you at least know that there will be a registration booth of some kind, so that works as a default if you don't know of a better place. The time is relatively easy, the key here is simply to be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there. If you're supposed to meet at the Shadowrun booth at 3:00, and you're not there on time, you have no one to blame but yourself for not hooking up with your friends. Finally, you need a signal of some sort. This could be a sign, a recognizable t-shirt, or a unique hat or costume. This isn't so necessary if you've met before in person, but can still be handy, especially at a busier con.

Gamemasters and Conventions

3c. Gaming

This is what you're there for, right? Try out demos of games, play in the games you registered for, try out the company sponsored tournaments. Just be careful not to burn yourself out—you'll get worn out quickly if you get involved in a lot of games. Leave yourself time to eat, browse the dealer room, hang out with friends, and time to just relax.

3d. Hanging Out

If you're meeting up with a large number of people at the conventions, it's almost imperative that you plan your group outings carefully. Too often there are 20 people standing around, and someone is hungry. The next thing you know, there are 20 people tromping off to find some food. Quite simply, this is too large of a group. You can't talk to everyone, you can't get a table easily at a restaurant, so why go through the hassle? Break the groups off if you can. Try to avoid going out to public restaurants in groups larger than six, and try to vary your groups. If you want to hang out with everyone, realize that this means you won't hang out with anyone for very long. If you want to spend time hanging out and talking with just a single person, plan ahead—make dinner reservations and make sure that you don't pick up any leechlike friends on your way!

3e. Game Booths and Guests of Honor

Do not play drooling fanboy or fangirl at your favorite game company's booth during a meeting (if you're lucky enough to get one) with one of the guests of honor at a convention. Be polite, tell them you're a fan, thank them for their time, and move on. If there's not a huge line and you have time for a second or two of small talk, ask how they like the convention, and watch for the slightly haunted look in their eye. The same general principles apply to game company booths. You may think *Angst: The Agony is White Wolf's* coolest product ever, but don't sit there drooling over the booth workers and pestering them with questions. Even worse, if the game designer, line developer, editor, or janitor at White Wolf is at the booth, do **not** pester them with rules questions every three seconds. They're at the convention to meet fans, sell product, and to answer questions, but rarely do they have time to talk to a single fan for a half hour at a time. Some companies sponsor seminars for gamemasters or players of their games, so if you have questions you may want to attend them. Also, if you happen to see one of the guests of honor or your favorite game writer outside of the convention—at a shopping mall or restaurant, for example—mind your manners! It's very impolite to interrupt people who are with family, or who are eating dinner. If you must approach someone when they're in public, wait until they're finished eating and be as polite as possible. Don't be surprised or upset if you get a quick brush off. While some people don't mind talking to fans for a few minutes, they don't have an hour to stand around the mall's food court and talk to every fan there.

For many a gamemaster, a convention is their release, a break from the constraints of a gamemaster screen and the daily grind of dodging rules lawyers, power gamers, munchkins and loons. If he's feeling particularly frustrated, he may decide to become one of those irritating players. While a GM should know better than to become what he fears and loathes, often this is a necessary step in recharging the ol' batteries. Plus it often helps the players, for a short time at least, as the GM remembers what it's like to be on the outside of the GM screen.

The game convention also presents the gamemaster with the opportunity to grow, learn, and to master new tricks and traps to foil his players. If there are seminars about your favorite game, go to them, especially if they are "Gamemaster Seminars." I picked up some great tips one year at a 7th Seas GM Seminar, and I've never played nor ran that game. But a lot of strategies, tricks, and the like will cross games easily enough. Learn what you can, teach what you can, and the gamemaster community as a whole will be better for it. If you don't come back from a convention with at least a half dozen new ideas to deal with your players, you were sleeping too much.

Also keep an eye on the bargain bins and the auction room, if you can. There are some great deals on old products that come through. And even if you don't ever plan to run the *Tomb of Horrendous Unknown Elemental Nasties* against your players, you can always use it to generate ideas and plans. Even the crappiest adventure or sourcebook out there has something in it that makes it worthwhile, and often you can find these gems at rock bottom prices.

If money is an issue, or you just can't handle sitting at a table without a GM screen in front of you, gamemasters can volunteer and register to run some games at them. Most often, the convention will have some kind of reimbursement deal set up for anyone who GMs a certain number of games, usually a refund on the entrance fee. If you have an "in" with a game company, you may even be able to swing a free hotel room and/or some free product. An enterprising gamemaster can trade in on the skills he learned while dealing with his local munchkins by heading to a convention and pimping himself out.

If you decide run a game at a convention, here are a few tips:

1. Know your game

Run it by the book as much as possible. Other players aren't going to know your house rules, so unless they're minor and few, don't try to run a convention game using that ream of house rules you've spent the last 15 years collecting.

Damage Control

Controlled Characters

2. Bring materials

Don't expect the players to have all the books they'll need with them. They expect you to provide this information, so either have all the relevant data on the character sheets, or bring those sourcebooks you're using data from. While you're at it, bring extra scratch paper and pencils, too—it's easy to lose simple things like that during a busy day.

3. Prepare characters

Regardless of the game, generating characters is a time consuming process, so making characters during the game session is a poor idea. Giving the players the chance to BYOC ("Bring Your Own Character") is just asking to get a handful of the most annoying and abusive characters you've ever seen. Unless you're running a game where balance doesn't matter, always bring characters for the players to use. This also allows you to customize the characters to the adventure, so they'll have the necessary skills and experience to tackle the adventure. Four hardcore street sams on a run with heavy magical influence is not a good plan!

4. Test your adventure

Often you have a limited time slot to run in, usually three hours and 45 minutes. You need to make sure your game can wrap up in that amount of time. When plotting out your adventure, make sure you take into consideration time factors. As you don't know the players, you can't plan for all contingencies—maybe a fight scene will drag for longer than you intended, or maybe they'll miss a vital clue. Even though you can't predict everything that may go wrong, it's wise to have backup plans for most situations so the characters—and players—don't get stuck. Nothing is less satisfying than getting into a game for four hours, then not finishing the game because of time.

5. Stay hydrated

Remember the water bottle I mentioned earlier? You want one if you're running a game, and if you don't have one make sure you bring something else to drink. Water bottles can be filled up for free, but a can of cola at the convention will run twice regular price. As a GM, you'll be talking a lot, so you'll want something to keep you hydrated. Another thing to keep in mind is a bathroom and smoke break midway through the game session—most convention areas are non-smoking and you don't want players having a nicotine fit three hours into the game!

Well, that's it! Now you should be prepared to tackle a game convention and survive! Go forth, my sons and daughters. Learn, grow, have fun! And remember... The GM is always right :]

Is that another scream of frustration I hear, my dear fellow gamemasters? Have you sat down to begin a new campaign, and once again have half a dozen characters handed to you that look like they represent the legal firm of Munchkin, Power Gamer and Rules Abuse? Has the group loon tossed you another version of the psychic street mime turned operatic porn star? Has the local power gamer turned in yet another version of his oft-played ork street samurai, complete with the standard six page equipment list and the personality of a large slab of granite?

Take heart, my friends, there is a solution close at hand. But it requires you, the gamemaster of the group, to step in and take the players by the hand. Stand firm, for often the players will balk at such measures, but only together can you craft the all-important foundation for your game: the Player Characters.

The first thing you need to do is sit down with your players and find out what type of game they'd like to play in, or at least give them an idea of what sort of campaign you're interested in running and see what they think. "What's that?" I hear you asking. "You're advocating player input?" Well, yes. Of course I am. I may be a bastard, but even I know that a game isn't going to survive if the players aren't interested in playing it.

Once that's done, you need to determine the power level of the game. Are you going to play a "street punks" game, with the PCs having little beyond the clothes on their back and the switchblade in their pocket? Are you going to run a high magic game, a pure espionage and spy style game, a guns a-blazin' merc campaign, or a cyberpirates game? Will the characters (and likewise, the bad guys) be toting around LMGs, or will even seeing a heavy pistol evoke a sense of fear in both the PCs and NPCs? Determine what level and style of game you're going for before character creation has even started. At the very least, it ensures that the players have an idea of what types of characters they should create. After all, a ganger is a bit out of place in a high-level corporate espionage game.

Once you've determined the theme and power level of the game, you need to define the skills and attributes a bit for your game. Standard Shadowrun assumes that a 6 is an expert level skill, or the max a human can normally achieve. Of course, under normal character creation rules, it's quite likely you'll have characters with multiple 6s in both skills and attributes. It's often unrealistic, so you may want to take steps to remedy this situation. There are a few methods you can use to try and do this.

The first is to simply alter the "norm" for a skill. Where 2-3 was an average skill level, now 4-5 is average, and 6 is above average. A 9 in a skill makes you an expert, and 12+ makes you

world class. This brings a starting Shadowrun character back down into the more average realm, and allows for guards or other potential enemies to have similar stats without suddenly having every corp guard and Lone Star cop become a highly trained expert just so they are a threat to the PCs.

Another route to go is to limit the characters in some way. Reduce the starting build points if you're using the SR3Comp creation method, or reduce what the priorities give you in SR3. This gives the players fewer points to work with, and they're less likely to have a lot of maxed-out stats and skills. This is useful if you want the characters to be "newbies" to their profession. This doesn't work for an ex-Special Forces character, but it does work well for a former wage-slave turned runner or a street ganger going out on his own for the first time.

Yet another way to scale-back starting characters is to set limits on skills and attributes. Assuming that a starting character is only going to have a single "expert" level skill, allow only one skill to be taken at a rating of 6. Allow two or three skills to be taken at rating 5, and no more than three or four rating 4 skills. They can still blow a lot of points this way, but it forces them to vary their skills a bit and you know you're not going to be looking at four rating 6 skills for a starting character.

Likewise, for attributes, a 6 represents what amounts to a professional level athlete—a rarity. A 9 is the max a human can go, but those are very rare and represent the best of the best. Like skills, a 6 represents the results of a lot of training, or just some really high natural talent. Anyone who's got all 5s and 6s for attributes isn't going to be wasting his time shadowrunning; they're going to be a professional athlete, a supermodel, or something similar. Nobody except the mentally unhinged would be shadowrunning for a living if they have a lucrative option available to them, and even the SINless can find a way around that particular drawback, especially if they have a manager waiting to sign them to a multi-year, multi-million nuyen contract.

So again, you set some limits. Allow a 6, probably in their "main" attribute. Allow a couple 5's, and the rest at 4's. Again, this helps diversify the character a bit, and forces him to spread his points out a bit. Utilizing both methods, you will hopefully end up with a very well-rounded character. He's going to be good at some things, but not at everything, and he'll have a couple points here and there in skills he would have otherwise ignored in order to pump up other skills.

At this point you should consider gear: what do you allow, what don't you allow? Restricting how much money a character can start with is a viable option. Don't want the million nuyen samurai? Then don't allow a million nuyen to be bought at chargen. Think long and hard before allowing this much money for character creation, as it can be abused easily. You can also limit the availability of gear to a certain

rating, but keep in mind that you will most likely need to be open to a case-by-case inspection of gear. Some gear has very high availability and shouldn't be that hard to get a hold of at chargen, while some has a low availability and you may not want characters to have it. Be willing to put your foot down and say no, but also be willing to allow in some things if you take the limited availability route. Characters should be allowed to take gear that can be justified by their background.

Once you have what sort of game you want, and what sort of characters will fit your game, it's time for character creation to begin. I heartily recommend that character creation be done as a group. This way, you can address everyone at once, lay out what character creation limits you are imposing, and can make a request for or limit certain character types. If you don't feel comfortable with or don't feel you can use a decker in the group, or you have a storyline that revolves around an NPC decker you want to have working with the group, forbid deckers. Or, if you have some great ideas for a game that requires a decker, request that one of the players play a decker. If you want a magic heavy game, suggest that more than one player make a magically active character. If it's going to be combat heavy, make sure a couple players are making tough samurai/merc types.

Likewise, have them work on their personalities as a group. Sure, there are some things that they may want to keep secret from each other, especially if you aren't starting them as a team that's worked together before. But you need to make sure they all know the basics about each other. Having a Luddite in a group full of cyber/techno junkies isn't going to fly, and having a Humanis member in a group full of trogs is certain death for the Humanis thug. If two players insist on playing characters that will be at odds with each other, pull those players aside and talk with them, and have them talk to each other. Make sure that this isn't going to disrupt your game. If you're going to allow "conflict characters" into your game, make sure that all players are mature enough to role-play this without hurting each other's feelings, and make sure both players are aware that they are a team and need to be able to work together. As I said above, minor conflict and tension can be rewarding, but two characters so at odds with each other that they can't even stand to be in the same room together will cause disruption and chaos, and such situations have caused the downfall of many a game.

As a GM, you are many things, both in game and out: bandleader, storyteller, babysitter, cat herder, referee, protagonist, antagonist, confidant and mortal enemy. You need to be able to juggle these duties, responsibilities, and roles. It's a heavy burden, to be sure. Just remember that in the end, you are the GM. You have the final say on what goes and what doesn't. You need to cater to your players tastes, but likewise, they need to take direction from you.

Good luck, my fellow GM. You're going to need it.



Datasteal: GURPS Atlantis

Wordman (<http://pobox.com/~wordman/>)

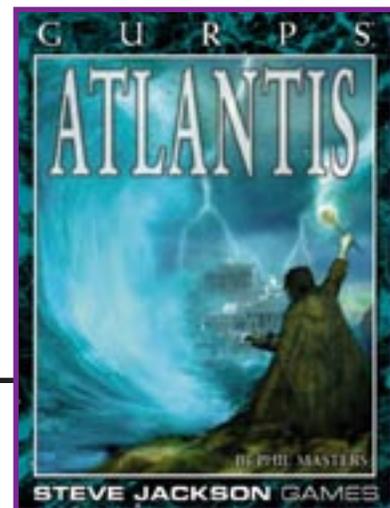
Given the importance of Atlantis to the “immortal cabal” plotline of Shadowrun, you might think that *GURPS Atlantis* would be a useful addition to the collection of GMs who make Atlantis and the Atlantean Foundation part of their games. Unfortunately, this is not as true as it could be. On the one hand, the 128-page sourcebook on Atlantis contains a well-organized collection of extremely useful information about theories on Atlantis (and other “lost continents”) ranging from the almost-plausible to the very far-fetched, all quite relevant to giving some depth to the activities of the Atlantean Foundation. On the other hand, a great deal of the work is dedicated to fleshing out three different campaign ideas on using Atlantis in your game. Since Shadowrun/Earthdawn canon already contains a fairly specific conception of how Atlantis fits into equation, this material is mostly extraneous to Shadowrun campaigns that care to use a predominantly “by the book” conception of Atlantis.

The book opens with “Platonic Solids,” a treatment of Plato’s mention of Atlantis that may or may not be the source of the whole concept of Atlantis. The chapter continues with a history of nearly all of the theories on Atlantis that sprung up afterwards, including the ideas of the Theosophist movement, science fiction and even serious archeological research. It gives accounts of a number of places considered as locations for Atlantis

and why. Though this description makes these 26 pages sound quite dry, it is fairly lively text and probably the book’s most interesting and useful section for Shadowrun gamemasters.

The next chapter, “These We Have Lost,” continues in a similar, but less detailed, vein about a wide variety of non-Atlantean “lost” lands, such as Avalon, Lemuria and Mu. As in the first chapter, the text avoids any game-specific concepts for such lands, but instead summarizes what real-life scholars and quacks have written about such places. Again, this chapter is quite useful for GMs, particularly those looking to incorporate such places into their campaign.

“Beneath the Waves” follows, dealing with the concept that Atlantis is still functioning perfectly as an underwater city. This chapter is more scattered, starting with various myths of underwater civilizations, and then transitioning into the practical matter of underwater geology and exploration. As the chapter continues, it becomes more rules-intensive, discussing diving equipment and problems, underwater combat, submarines and rules for underwater vehicle design. Some of this may be of interest to rigger fanatics, but most of this is covered in Shadowrun terms in either *Cyberpirates* or *Rigger 3*.



Author: Phil Masters
Size: 128 pages
Cost: \$22.95
ISBN: 1-55634-478-3
URL: <http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/atlantis/>

The remaining three chapters make up almost half of the book and flesh out three specific campaign settings that use Atlantis. This is something of a minor tragedy for Shadowrun readers because, while these campaigns are well written and actually pretty neat, they are fairly useless to Shadowrun campaigns that involve the Atlantean Foundation and the canon material behind it. For other game systems, or for Shadowrun GMs anxious to ditch the concept of an Earthdawn crossover, one of these campaign ideas may speak to you. The three ideas tend to be mutually exclusive, aimed at specific GURPS products and different time periods.

“The Orichalcum Age” is set in a decadent but pre-disaster Atlantis, targeted mostly at *GURPS Greece* players. As the text says, it can be “inserted into almost any fantasy campaign as ‘the powerful island nation over the horizon.’” One of the neat aspects of this campaign is that the GM and the players, but not the characters, know that Atlantis will soon be destroyed by a big calamity, which has some interesting role-playing aspects that could be explored.

“The Heirs of Minos” targets modern illuminated/conspiracy campaigns. This is probably the most Shadowrun-like of the campaigns in the book and many of the ideas in it could be applied to the Atlantean Foundation; however, the campaign is based more around the idea of a vast conspiracy that are the world’s secret puppet masters (à la the Illuminati). This makes the conspiracy vastly more wide-reaching than the cabal in Shadowrun is thought to be, but some Shadowrun GMs may welcome this. As conspiracy campaigns go, this one is fairly standard, though the section on factions could be useful.

The last campaign, “Lords of the Deep,” is geared toward Victorian-era steampunk games, or perhaps a super-hero or even Lovecraftian setting, and is built around the concept of a living Atlantis beneath the waves. The back-story of this campaign involves an alien conflict over Earth’s orichalcum and is fairly interesting, which is a shame because this campaign setting is probably the least useful to Shadowrun GMs.

Sprinkled throughout the book are the random sidebars GURPS regulars have come to expect. As always, these are hit or miss in terms of interest, but hit more often than not. Sections like “A Nazi Atlantis?,” “Orichalcum,” and “Sonar and Oceanography” can suggest campaign ideas, rules modifications or are just basically interesting. One sidebar in particular, “Minoans in *GURPS Technomancer*,” comes closest to the Shadowrun vision for Atlantis. (This is not surprising, as *GURPS Technomancer* might as well be called GURPS Shadowrun in many respects.)

The last three pages, containing references and the index, are perhaps the most useful, particularly the detailed bibliography. This list references everything from oceanography and submarines to other role-playing material, as well as a healthy dose of pure Atlantis material. One of these, L. Sprague de Camp’s classic *Lost Continents*, rips apart the Atlantis theories up to its day (1954) in a spectacularly droll, British way, and should be required reading for any GM interested in Atlantis.

GURPS Atlantis is a good sourcebook, filled with a variety of ways to integrate Atlantis into nearly any game world. Unfortunately, most of these ideas are not particularly appropriate to canon Shadowrun’s view of Atlantis. Still, the first two chapters provide top-notch research on the subject, tailor made for role-playing, and this alone may make it worth your while to own.

SwiftOne

PEAKS

The old axiom about not judging a book by its cover includes the title. For every bit of imagination lacking in the title of **Threats 2**, inspired twists exists in the 12 “threats” inside.

My first warning is that this is a book for gamemasters only. Not because of the rules (which are somewhat sparse regardless) but because of the ideas. Many of the threats are threatening mostly by surprise (only one threat, General Saito, details a topic of “common knowledge” in the Shadowrun world, and several haven’t even been hinted at.) Should a player learn of the existence of the threat before encountering it in-game, much of the excitement and mystery will be gone. As with several Shadowrun books of this nature, players should be discouraged from reading the back cover. (At least the title isn’t as harmful as **Renraku Arcology: Shutdown**.)

The book consists of 12 sections, each detailing a “threat” via in-character Shadowland posts, followed by a page or two of game usage. Each section is by a different author (save one author who wrote two sections), most of whom have contributed to Shadowrun products in the past. For the most part, each section is stand-alone, with no reliance on the other sections.

The writing quality varies with the authors, but this is the ideal environment for most game writers: Write in-character material to inspire, just enough of a rules skeleton for the reader to flesh out, and then stop. This may be a problem for some readers: Anyone expecting **Threats 2** to resemble a premade adventure or a campaign setting will be vastly disappointed. The threats are often subtle, and will probably work best as either parallel to an existing campaign, or the puppet master behind the scenes of a campaign.

The original **Threats** compilation had difficulties with too many of the threats being at a power level beyond most groups. **Threats 2** contains a few globe-spanning conspiracies of incomprehensible enormity, but there are several entries far more likely to be encountered (and even survived) by the average team. Even the larger conspiracies have a few suggestions for how these large conspiracies would create local effects and situations for teams who aren’t taking on world powers.

Threats of magical, mundane and technical natures are revealed (sorry, no man-eating cars yet), and the fundamental rules are given, usually along with suggestions on how to have the players encounter the threat. The rules are often pretty thin, and the GM is given a lot of leeway in deciding how things really work. Some GMs will find this freeing, needing only the inspiration of the in-character materials to come up with devious plots and sub-plots, while others will likely find this annoying, wanting a single straight answer that they then have the choice of deviating from.

Personally, I would have been quite happy to see some of the in-character material either trimmed for more rules details, or trimmed for more in-character inspiration (sometimes three one-line contradictory paranoid shadowcomments are worth more than a page of details.) While some of the entries were fine, others took up far more space than they seemed worth. On the other hand, I suspect this will be the case for most readers, with the offending entries changing based on personal gaming preferences.

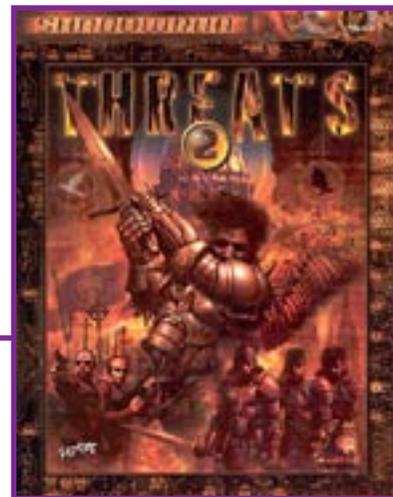
Threats 2 is superior to the original **Threats** compilation, and is a worthy addition to any creative Shadowrun GM’s library. Doubtless containing the essence of a backlog of three years of Shadowrun plot ideas, it can keep your game fresh for some time to come. Unfortunately, it’s not terribly useful for a player, nor do I recommend they read it regardless. Likewise, GMs seeking definitive and clear rules, or those not interested in running extended campaigns, will not find it as beneficial. My rating reflects my preferred style of off-the-cuff intricate plots, so adjust based on your own preferences. Some threats are low on the following list not because they were poorly written, but because they lacked adequate suggestions on how characters would encounter them.

Top Three

General Saito
The Aleph Society
Betrayal

Bottom Three

One Nation Under God
Order of the Temple
Dissonant Voices



Developers: Rob Boyle and Mike Mulvihill

Size: 120 pages

Cost: \$18.00

ISBN: 3-89064-652-2

URL: <http://www.shadowrunrpg.com/products/threats2.shtml>

Rating: 4 out of 5

Pros: Scheme-inspiring complications at an accessible power level

Cons: GMs only. Thin and sometimes vague rules.