
Miscellany

I seem to be going in a bunch of different directions at once, so here's a smattering of stuff.

DunDraCon

You know we are having a very dry winter when it does not rain in DunDraCon.

None of the games I played were exceptionally notable, but all were fun, including the *BESM 3rd Edition* game I ran.

BESM 3rd Edition

In the middle of creating characters for my DunDraCon game, I came to the realization that the new edition required more work than I wanted to deal with. For a fairly simple and very straight-forward system, there sure is a lot of effort needed for creating characters. The core system has been changed from 2d6 and trying to roll under your stat to 2d6 plus stat (plus skill) against a target number. It's simple, straight-forward, and rock solid. So why do characters have 200+ points? An average character spends 120 on stats alone. Does a simple system need this level of detail? I say no. If I wanted this level of complexity, there are plenty of other options.

In *BESM 2nd Edition*, skill points and attribute points were separate pools at a ratio of 10-to-1. In 3rd Edition, they essentially put all attribute costs on the scale of skill points. So instead of 12 points for average stats, you now have 120. Other attribute costs were also tweaked, such as Special Attacks going from 6 attribute points per 15 points of damage to 2 points per 5 points of damage... which means they are actually 10 times cheaper in the new edition.

Some attributes were changed for the worse, in my opinion. Insubstantial was copied from *Tri-Stat dX* rather than the more elegant 2nd Edition. Dynamic Powers, which had some nice (but different) guidelines in *Tri-Stat dX* and *BESM 2e*, has been made completely amorphous and effectively useless. The dreaded PMVs¹ from *Tri-Stat dX* have been streamlined with reasonable defaults, but they are still a pain.

Another odd change is the introduction of Damage Multipliers which means a weapon's damage is the product of the level times the character's Damage Multiplier (default of 5). This has

some odd effects with unarmed combat and Super-Strength. While I can kinda-sorta see where they were going with it, it adds yet another level of complexity that was not really needed. Critical hits have also been tweaked and I'm not sure if they are even possible based on the margins of success needed to get one.

In many ways, *BESM 3rd Edition* is like a d6 version of *Tri-Stat dX* 2nd Edition. The new roll-and-add system (something else people tended to do anyway) works well, combat options have been added, and the overall system is better than before. By sticking to d6, some things were nailed down in ways that never worked with "dX."

It is still *BESM* at its heart, with all the standard complaints.² If you did not like previous editions, you probably will not like this edition. Personally, I would much rather play *BESM 3e* than *Tri-Stat dX*, but I do not know if I might just play *BESM 2e* with some system tweaks based on 3e. I certainly would not want to subject a couple hundred points of character creation on my players. And while I'm on a roll, I liked the handy digest-sized soft-cover books better than the new hard-bound, full-sized edition.

Voyages...

... of the Starship <insert name here>

In the year 2000, mankind has explored every planet in the solar system using the power of their atomic rockets. Now, they are ready to embark upon a new area of exploration and reach out to the stars themselves. The crew of the Starship <insert name here> are on a mission for the United Earth Space Exploration Force to explore strange new worlds, meet new life and new civilizations, etc.

This is "semi-firm" retro science fiction. There will be some alien psionics and technology that is indistinguishable from magic, but they will be either very low key (mind melds and illusions, not telekinesis or flying, for example) or merely a plot device (monsters from the id, aliens-as-gods, etc.). The tone is that of classic Star Trek as if it has been made ten years earlier.

That was the pitch for an episodic Savage Worlds campaign I may run for my Friday night group. Before it launches, I am letting others the opportunity to GM, so it may be several months before it goes anywhere.

1 And if you don't know what they are, you don't have to worry about them.

2 "It doesn't have any mechanics for genre emulation; it's not balanced; there are too few stats..."

Comments on Issue #378

Myles Corcoran

I have complained about too receiving too much xp (and character advancement in general), but then I'm weird.

Simple rpgs, like Dungeon Squad encourage tinkering because of their transparency. I see this as a benefit of such systems. One of the things I find annoying with the Fudge community is their tendency to make the system more complicated and crunchy. I prefer fudge without nuts.

Michael Cule

I like your idea for an *Ars Magica* LARP. Roleplay Online (rpol.net) has several *Ars Magica* play-by-post games, though the ones I have encountered tend to me more freeform than I prefer. I like games with plot, structure, and direction.

Spike Y Jones

Nothing about watching Hiro is a waste of time for me. I really liked the way his shoulders slumped and he sighed as he went back to put the fake sword back. I too worry about the *Heroes* writers leading the audience in non-conclusive circles, but I have not felt manipulated in the way *Crossing Jordon* (for example) does. Watching the characters is more interesting and entertaining to me than the plot itself.

Joshua Kronengold

Participation is good, but sometimes you can have too much of a good thing. Having a shared, collaborative narrative can suffer by having too many cooks. And other tortured proverbs.

Your comments to Lisa about PCs in PBEM got me thinking of a PBEM with a dozen characters, but only one PC, unbeknown to the sole player. It'd be like a geek version of *Joe Schmo*.

When I read A&E, I put a simple X on the page and a bracket or arrow by the text that inspired the comment. When I got back later to write the comments, if I cannot remember what I wanted to say, I figured it was not important or interesting enough. This is no promise that my eventual comments are interesting, but it's a first-pass filter.

Mike Kubit

Any chance that DSD will see some disclosure and discussion in A&E?

1. Because people suck. Anonymity and lack

of eye contact just exacerbates it.

2. Yes. Not me, but others do.
3. Come up north to Kublacon.
4. But which one sings better?

Louis La Mancusa

I had never heard the Parkinson's and amphetamine connection to Hitler. Nor had I ever heard of the former causing madness.

"Couple" sounds like an odd description for a probability of 0.1-3.0%. Personally, I'm more comfortable with knowing raw numbers than qualitative descriptors. For me, knowing the probability is one-sixth is clearer than saying its "infrequent." But then, I'm the guy who works of odds of success for board games. The most recent was for *Return of the Heroes*, which uses 2-5d6, taking the best 2, against a character-dependent target number. I prefer hard numbers to squishy vocabulary.

Your Joke of the Day reads like a translated "Dumb Blonde" joke, but it was funny.

Brian Misiaszek

RAE Chaos Crypts. When I design such things, I usually bend over backwards to come up with a mechanism that can reset itself, allowing caretakers straight-forward access and not allowing would-be thieves from destroying that access. Having the swinging cage fall would not fit that bill, for example, but allowances can be made for the ravages of time, decay, and neglect.

Brian Rogers

Thanks for the USS Carter plot synopsis. I may be using some of these if I ever run my retro space exploration campaign.

One of my annoyances with D&D is the idea of "class skills." Sense Motive is cross-class for clerics. So is Bluff. Thus, making a diplomatic cleric is actively discouraged by the system.

In my Friday night gaming group, I tend to run more than the other GMs. My theory is that I'm better at making the leap from concept to getting my act together and actually running the game than the others. I would like to set up a fixed schedule of rotating GMs if I thought schedules (including mine) would permit it. I think people want to do this, but it will require those people to stop up to the plate and actually run (rather than just promising to run).

I don't count rolling 2 or 3 dice at a time and taking the best/worst as increasing the number of rolls. Just as I don't count 3d6 as rolling more dice than 1d20.