
Quick Notes

I had back-to-back business trips this month, which left me with little energy to write much more than comments this month.

The second session of the superhero mini-campaign went much better than the first. Under the heading of "let your players help you," at one point I simply told them, "Ok, come up with a reason why these two characters in Parkville want to go to Hell City to link up with this other character and save him from the robot who's kicking his ass." The third and fourth sessions continued to pick up steam, even though we were missing Gil for both those sessions, and we should wrap it all up in the next couple of weeks.

Ignorable Theme for Issue #392

Plot Hooks

Since most of the games I run are one-shots, often for conventions and with pre-generated characters, I usually have the plot hooks built-in. I just give the characters a reason to do what they are doing and I don't worry about how heavy-handed or "railroaded" it may seem. Usually, there's a large, blinking metaphorical sign that says, "plot this way" at the trail-head. Normally, the PCs have to figure out their way through the metaphorical forest. Recently, I've also fallen into the habit of only having a vague notion of what's on the far end, which has its advantages and disadvantages, but not really relevant to the topic.

Comments on Issue #391

Myles Corcoran

"Be awesome" is just as vapid and pointless as "just have fun." One gamer's fun is another's boring; one gamer's awesome is another's lame.

Michael Cule

You do realize, of course, that now you have to make Curved Crenelations a major plot point, or at least a vital clue or answer to a riddle.

I think it should be easy enough to make Edge's kleptomania a plot without being "too psychological" depending on what he steals and whom he steals it from.

Given the general lack of morals and ethics in the PCs, have you thought of framing the game

as a classic "evil party" campaign? Or are you already? :)

Lee Gold

Ok. *Complex* brain surgery that doesn't leave an hole in the skull. Sheesh.

I think the best (and probably most complicated, mystically speaking) counter to detection spells are those that give false information. Simply canceling a detection spell (and/or adding any other effect) tells the diviner that something is up. Giving the diviner false information is more devious since there is no indication that the detection spell was countered. Widespread use of such detection-masking spells would effectively render detection spells useless.

Spike Y Jones

I believe the ladder for abilities should be asymmetric, with more ranks above average than below average, because that is where the PCs live. However, the degrees of success are just based on a simple numerical comparison and I see no reason why it wouldn't be symmetric.

True stick drivers don't use the tachometer; they just go by sound and feel. :)

Joshua Kronengold

If you want to challenge Reed Richards, how do you do it? By outclassing him in his specialty? No. That's like trying to challenge the Flash by having someone who's even faster. It frustrates the player who wants to be "the best _____ in the world/cosmos" and it just leads to pointless power escalation. After having been challenged by someone with a higher ability rank, the player buys more ranks and the process repeats.

Instead, Omega-class characters must be challenged (or defeated, in the case of antagonists) by other means. You don't attack Mr. Fantastic's intellect; instead, go after his family, his physical limitations, etc. Encase him in a spherical forcefield, separated from his technology and without leverage for his stretching powers. What does he do then?

DitV doesn't *have* to be too gamey, but then D&D doesn't *have* to use miniatures. Yes, you could just "say yes" and do it freeform. So if I'm freeforming, why do I need the gamey dicey system again? I find it ironic that an indie game should suffer from "system as written" vs. "system as intended" vs. "system as played" discrepancies.

Given that D&D 4e is taking the tack that hit points are something other than wounds, the system would have to be "less swingy." You have to use up those "non wound" defensive resources and the only way to do that is to hit more often. Also, I fail to see how having HP that goes up and down in the middle of combat with various "healing surges" achieves the desired goal of "low bookkeeping."

Brian Misiaszek

What is the mark-up for an impressive cod-piece? Is it like having a masterwork weapon in D&D? :)

The Great Wolf Lodge sounds like a lot of fun, but the noise and chaos would drive me nuts.

Lisa Padol

"I am shy" is exactly why I don't do LARPs. I tend to do much better with a PC that other PCs seek out. If I am forced to initiate social contact and make small talk, I don't get anywhere. This is true even for online freeform games.

I don't think an updated *Heroic Worlds* would be doable, except perhaps as a net project not unlike www.pen-paper.net.

Brian Rogers

RAE Battle Scenes. Your observations and suggestions were spot-on. Now if I can only remember to implement them!

RAE Trek, but found it difficult to keep track of all the characters and plot developments of the Hogwarts write-up. From a GM perspective, how did you handle the Astronomy class scene? It seemed like a lot of GM narration without much character action or player involvement.

While I would not use GNS terminology per se, I agree that addressing the issue of different-fun-for-different-folks would be a good thing to add to O/AD&D. Our group never used the armor-vs-specific weapons rules and I do not consider them the gamist default. Rather than introduce damage-absorbing armor¹ for simulationists, I would add the armor-vs-weapons rules and some tactical combat options, such as those handled by the Attack Finesse and Power Attack feats of D&D 3.x.

Versatility in Champions is only penalized if the GM seeks to penalize versatile, sub-optimal builds. Such is the case for any system, though it is masked by the illusion of the "balanced point

system." Is Champions worse than D&D 3.x in terms of "required character builds?"

Regarding Amber contribution points, you are probably right. After all, excessive points spent during character creation would have to be filled in by Bad Stuff if the contributions were not done.

Contribution xp awards have to scaled for the system. Giving out 1 bonus xp rather than 2 is a 50% increase. That's probably too much. ½ xp per session (25 xp over 50 sessions) is not that bad. In M&M, I'd probably use Hero Points instead of Power Points. For Savage Worlds, bennies might be better than xp (even if one uses the "roll saved bennies for xp rule)

Jerry Stratton

Welcome. Sorry I can't think of anything to comment on this time.

Jim Vassilakos

Another traditional American sentiment is "I disapprove of what you say and I don't have to listen to your bull." Just as I disapprove people talking during a movie or screaming on the bus, I disapprove of divisive² political rhetoric in a gaming forum. In RPG.net parlance, Take it to Tangency.

The other option, of course, is simply not to read the contributions that you don't like. Over the years, I have skipped over certain write-ups, fiction, game mechanics, and political rants because I found them boring, infuriating, idiotic, and/or not my thing. Lee has the final say regarding what people can and cannot say in these pages. Otherwise, we can publish what we want, but we can't compel anyone to read it. Or compel anyone to care.

Multiple

Pirate snowmen would fit right into S. John Ross' Uresia setting.

PCs do tend to be obstinate when at the mercy of NPCs, don't they? In pulpy and superheroic games, the villain can respond by putting the PCs into a death trap. In gritty genres, I think the NPC should simply kill one of the PCs to set an example. In D&D, just kill them and take their stuff. :)

I agree that the player/GM dynamics of karma points in X-Ω has to be tested. Until I get a sense of how it actually plays, I want to avoid rigidity, especially in the karma rules. Yes, there may be a "fastest wins" problem, but it also depends on how adversarial the players and GMs want to be.

1 A rule change that is too radical a change from the main rules to simply be an *option*.

2 Oh, I had plenty of other appropriate adjectives to choose from.