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## Genre Templates

By Barak Blackburn

### Introduction

There are times when a Game Master (and hopefully, her players) will want to emulate a specific genre of fiction or media and the Modern D20 rules do not support this particular genre exactly to the fit required.

One option is to purchase one of the many Modern D20 support products produced by third-party publishers, all of which devote a good amount of detail to emulating a particular genre. But what if you don't want to go into that much detail, or you want a genre that isn't covered by any supplements?

If Ani (the GM) is running a Western game for Mark and Grant at third level, they would most likely want Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot and Quick Draw to make their gunfighters, thus, using up all their available feats.

At sixth level they could each choose Improved Initiative, or maybe Grant saw his character Diego "El Diablo" Gutierrez as a bit of a pugilist, so he picks up Brawl. He is finally now (at 6<sup>th</sup> level) able to get into a bar



brawl without embarrassing himself. Forget trying to model a party of characters on *The Magnificent Seven*, each of whom was not only skilled with a gun but also had another qualifying specialty.

It isn't fun being incompetent. Genre Templates enable competence within the tropes of a particular genre.

Using the above example, at 1<sup>st</sup> level,



Mark has decided his character Black Seth is lightning fast and selects Improved Initiative. Grant wants Diego to kick some ass in melee and selects Power Attack.

But, what about Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot and Quick Draw?

See the appropriate Genre Template for the answer!

## **What are Genre Templates?**

- Genre Templates are add-ons that give each player access to the skills and abilities typically possessed by significant characters within in a given genre.
- Genre Templates unlock the coolest bits of the d20 system for each character allowing players to customize their characters while ensuring that each character has a bare minimum degree of competency within the given genre.
- Genre Templates are not complicated rules additions. There is no need to add layers of difficulty to the already comprehensive d20 system.
- Genre Templates are not “balanced.” Not every Genre Template is designed

the same. Within a particular genre, adding a Genre Template to all significant characters will not change them in regards to one another, however, when dealing with insignificant characters, significant characters will be at an advantage.

- Genre Templates are not over-powered: significant characters are not harder to hit, they not have additional hit points... They are simply able to do the cool stuff that characters in that genre do with regularity.
- Genre Templates are designed to be “plug and play.”

## **How do they work?**

When a campaign starts, add the Genre Template to each player and other significant characters.

Genre Templates are comprised of the following sections:

**Skills:** These are the skills that all significant characters always have access to as class skills.

**Feats and abilities:** These are the feats and special abilities that all significant characters automatically have. However, just because a

significant character has a particular feat or ability does not ensure or require that they have all the pre-requisites. When they want to pick up a feat or ability that requires pre-requisites that they do not have, they will have to acquire them.

For instance: a character in a Modern d20 campaign might get Point Blank Shot from their particular Genre Template, but unless he has a Dexterity of 13 he cannot get Double Tap (even though a 13 Dex is required for Point Blank Shot).

**Tweaks:** These are simple rules add-ons that are designed to be seamlessly integrated into a campaign.

**Optional:** Some Templates have optional rules provided, which allow for more drastic changes in the rules to emulate a particular genre. These are a bit more radical than the Tweaks, and so are presented as options, usable at the discretion of the Game Master.

Beginning on the next page, we present five different Genre Templates for use with the Modern D20 rules set.



## Crouching Dragon, Hidden Dice: The Wuxia Genre

### Skills:

Balance, Jump, Move Silently and Tumble.

### Feats:

Acrobatic, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack.

### Tweaks:

- Significant Characters get a +10 Genre Bonus to all Balance, Jump, and Tumble checks.
- Significant Characters have no maximum distance on their jump checks.

### Optional:

*Wire Fu*: One skill point spent adds one

rank to Balance, Jump, and Tumble skills. Not one point for each, but one point total. Thus, all three skills will increase at the same rate requiring only one skill point. In addition, Significant Characters have a max rank of their character level +13 on these skills.

*Wire Fu 2*: Double the unadjusted base speed for all Significant Characters if they are wearing nothing heavier than light armor.

## For a Few Dice More: The Spaghetti Western

### Skills:

Intimidate, Ride

(If you can't ride a horse, you ain't much of a cowboy...and although some folks might want to start without being intimidatin', eventually they might want to work on their stare.)

### Feats:

Combat Martial Arts (Brawl might seem more appropriate namewise, but really, cowboys are good at their fisticuffs and Combat Martial Arts represents this.), Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw.

### Tweaks:

- Significant Characters s do not provoke Attacks of Opportunity when using a firearm.
- Intimidation can be used with either Strength or Charisma.

### Optional:

*Showdowns*: The typical scene--a dusty street, with a gunfighter at each end. They stare at each other for what seems like an eternity, and then draw and fire!

For a showdown, all parties involved make an Initiative check and roll damage as normal. When a character is hit, they not only take damage, but must make a Fortitude save with the DC set as 10+ 1/2 the character level of the attacking character. If this check is failed, they drop to 0 hit points.

*The Staredown*: When a man is mean enough, folks take notice and few can draw their guns fast enough to react. The character makes an opposed Intimidate check against any enemies within 30'. Any character failing the intimidate check suffers a penalty on his initiative checks equal to the difference. Any character with a final initiative check below zero loses their action for the first round and remains flat footed for the second round of combat until they act.

*New Feat:* Characters using this genre template have the opportunity to get this Feat, if they meet the prerequisites.

## Rain of Bullets, Rain of Blood

**Prerequisites:** 15 ranks in Intimidate, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Double Tap, Combat Reflexes, Quick Draw, Improved Initiative.

**Benefit:** Characters with this feat are able to clear a room before anyone has a chance to do anything. When a character with this feat drops a foe (below 0 Hit Points) with a ranged weapon, they may make an immediate additional ranged attack against any other foe within 30' of the downed foe. This extra attack is made with the same bonus as the attack that downed the foe. A character may make an additional number of attacks equal to his Dexterity modifier +1.



## Jade Bullet Die: Hong Kong Style Gunplay

### Skills:

Intimidate, Jump, Tumble.

### Feats:

Personal Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Shot on the Run, Skip Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting, Quick Draw.

### Tweaks:

- Infinite Bullets: Significant Characters never run out of ammo unless they roll a natural 1 on an attack roll.
- Significant Characters do not provoke Attacks of Opportunity when using a firearm.

### Optional:

*Threatening:* As noted above, firearms do not provoke AoO while using the Template. With this option, firearms do threaten adjacent squares and SCs can make use of the following feats (if they have them): Whirlwind Attack, Improved Feint, and Combat Expertise.

*Mexican Standoff:* One character chooses to

initiate the Mexican Standoff by foregoing his action for the round and being in visual range of any other character he wishes to engage.

The initiating character makes an Intimidate check. Each opposed character makes a Will save. Failure means they may act normally. If they make the save, they are engaged in the Mexican Standoff.

Engaged characters leave initiative (but if there are unengaged characters, the engaged characters are still targets, although they get an initial +2 Too-Cool Bonus to Defense which increases +2 each round they are engaged in the Standoff.) During the Standoff, characters may communicate, load their weapons, and prepare for the end of the Standoff, but they may not do anything that gives them an advantage over their foes.

Once engaged, characters make Will saves every round with the DC starting at 10 and increasing by 2 each round. Every round that a character makes their save they add a +2 Cool Bonus to their Cool Pool. Any character may willingly leave the Standoff at any time. Once one character voluntarily leaves the Standoff, any character still engaged may either remain engaged, continuing to add to their Cool Pool, but is unable to do anything else other than move, or they may disengage as well, gaining an



additional +2 Cool Bonus for not flinching first!

The character who initiated the disengage gets an additional +6 Getting the Drop Bonus to initiative.

A character who fails their Will save leaves the Standoff and opens fire and they add their Cool Bonus to initiative.

If a character makes a successful Will save, they then have the option of disengaging voluntarily if any other character also disengaged, and they gain their Cool Bonus to all attack and damage rolls for the first round.

*Slow-Mo:* At any time in a combat (once per session), a Significant Character may decide to slow things down. He announces he is entering Slo-Mo. He forsakes his action for one round, and his initiative is reset the next round. When it is his turn in the new round, he enters Slow-Mo. Slow-Mo doubles the character's speed for that one round and gives him one extra attack at his full attack bonus. Once Slo-Mo is activated, any Significant Character may decide to take advantage of it, gaining all the benefits above without having to reset his initiative and without having to lose an action!

*Feat:* Characters using this genre template have the opportunity to get this Feat, if they meet the prerequisites.

## **Ranged Cleave**

**Prerequisites:** Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Strafe, Burst Fire, Wis 15+, Dex 17+, Combat Reflexes, BAB+9

**Benefit:** If you deal a creature enough damage to make it drop (typically by dropping it to below 0 hit points or killing it) with a ranged attack, you get an immediate, extra melee attack against another creature within 30' of you. The extra attack is with the same bonus as the attack that dropped the previous creature. You can use this ability once per round.

## **Die, Commie, Die!: Eighties Action Movies**

**Skills:**  
Climb, Jump.

**Feats:**  
Personal Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, Exotic Firearms Proficiency (action stars of the 80's have no trouble picking up

any type of gun and using it to cause massive destruction!), Strafe, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Combat Martial Arts, Improved Damage Threshold. Evasion (if a character already possesses Evasion or if he later acquires it, he gains Improved Evasion- this ability works like evasion, except that while the character still takes no damage on a successful Reflex saving throw against attacks and he takes only half damage on a failed save--Ever notice how, even with explosions happening all around them, 80's stars rarely get a scratch on them?)

### **Tweaks:**

- Significant Characters do not provoke Attacks of Opportunity when using a firearm.
- Intimidation can be used with either Strength or Charisma.



**Optional:**

*Righteous Fury:* Once per session, each Significant Character may enter a Righteous Fury. To enter a Righteous Fury a Significant Character must designate a type of foe (drug-dealers, communists, zombies...) Once designated the character gains a +4 Genre Bonus to their Constitution score, and a +4 Genre Bonus to all attack and damage rolls against their foe.

Righteous Fury lasts for a number of rounds equal to 5 + the character's (newly improved) Constitution modifier.

A Significant Character may prematurely end his Fury. At the end of the rage, the Significant Character loses the rage modifiers and restrictions and becomes fatigued (-2 penalty to Strength, -2 penalty to Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of the current encounter. Hit Points gained from the increased Con score go away at the end of the rage when his Constitution score drops back to normal as temporary Hit Points.

*Catchphrase:* At the start of each session, the GM may hand out from 1-3 monosyllabic or very punny catchphrases to each character. If a character is able to use the catchphrase at an opportune time (determined by fellow players and the GM) they gain a Genre Bonus on all rolls for one

round equal to 1 plus their Charisma bonus (if positive). Once used, a catchphrase is returned to the GM (perhaps to be used again). At the GM's discretion, players may write their own catchphrases.

## The Force: Cops Who Cross The Line

**Skills:**

Bluff, Drive, Gather Information, Investigate, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot.

**Feats:**

Armor Proficiency (Light, Medium), Combat Martial Arts, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

**Tweaks:**

- **Pistol Whip:** Guys like Dirty Harry and Vick from *The Shield* know how to bring the hurt. If a Significant Character surprises an opponent with a non-lethal melee attack and catches them flat-footed, the opponent must make a Fortitude save with a DC of 10+ the damage dealt or be in extreme pain (screaming out, etc...).

An opponent who fails this save is -5 to all rolls until they make a Will save with

the same initial DC as the Fortitude save, but the character gets a +1 to the save each round until the save is made. A character can only be pistol whipped once.

- Intimidation can be used with either Strength or Charisma.

**Optional:**

*Breaking the Rules:* Cops on the force have likely gotten to where they are because they are not afraid to break the rules. This option allows them to do just that. Once per session, a Significant Character may break the rules in one of two ways:

- He may re-roll any one die or dice roll;
- He may gain the benefit of a feat that he doesn't have. He must meet the prerequisites of the feat, and gains the benefit of the feat until the beginning of his next turn;

*Maybe Now You'll Talk:* In the field, a cop sometimes needs information and time is not to be wasted. Letting the perp know you mean business is instrumental here.

A Significant Character makes an Intimidate roll against the target's level check. This check is made at -5 due to time constraints. A natural 20 gets the character more info than he was looking for. A natural roll of 1-



5 results in the Significant Character having to make a Will save with the DC equal to 10 plus the perp's level. If this save is failed, the cop goes too far. What too far means is up to the GM, but can be anything from a severe beating (hello, lawsuit... hello, suspension) to death. If death is the case, the

Significant Character may very well be linked to the murder.

*The Interrogation Room:* Getting information in the Interrogation Room is handled much differently than Interrogations on the street. Officers can play good cop or bad cop.

Good cops attempt to gain the confidence of the perp and they make opposed Bluff and Sense Motive checks. One check is made for each piece of incriminating evidence the character has over the perp.

Bad Cops are willing to go the distance to get whatever they need to know. The first step with a bad cop is an Intimidate check. If the perp is successful, the Bad Cop is likely to get nothing out of him, but may try again with further evidence. If the perp fails by more than 5, he is rattled, and might tell the truth, however... will anyone believe him?

The Significant Character and perp make opposed Bluff and Sense Motive checks, but the GM keeps her results a secret. Regardless of the actual result, on a natural even number, the perp is able to answer calmly. If the natural number is odd, the perp answers poorly. Whatever his actual answer is, there might be doubt over whether or not he is telling the truth.

As with Good Cop, a Bad Cop may make one attempt for every piece of incriminating evidence, but a Bad Cop is also willing to not only manufacture evidence, they will make threats. For each piece of false evidence or threat made, another opposed check is made.

We hope that you have enjoyed these Genre Templates. Not every genre requires the detail of an entire supplement...sometimes it's just fun to go with the quick-and-easy method. Grab some characters, apply a template, and play in your favorite genre.

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