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Cyberpunk-Genre Adventure Generator

By Gareth-Michael Skarka

Introduction

This issue of Modern Dispatch follows the same theme we provided with the *Modern Adventure Generator* (issue #29), the *Pulp Adventure Generator* (issue #42), and the *Superheroic Adventure Generator* (issue #66), detailing a system for Modern d20 Game Masters to generate adventure ideas on the fly, giving enough of a core seed idea to proceed.

This generator is specifically for cyberpunk-genre campaigns. There are a number of d20-based cyberpunk genre products, and this system is useable with any of them. Adamant Entertainment produces a line of cyberpunk-genre d20, under the title *Terminal Identity*, which can be found at [RPGNow](http://RPGNow.com).

The tables provided in this issue of Modern Dispatch will give a Modern d20 GM the bare outline of an adventure. That outline will have to be tailored for your specific campaign style. For example, a *Bladerunner*-esque style campaign will have very specific needs, and differ greatly from a campaign

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About the Author

Gareth-Michael Skarka has been working in the adventure games industry since 1988. He is the designer of several role-playing games, including *Hong Kong Action Theatre!*, *UnderWorld* and *Skull & Bones*. He is the owner and director of Adamant Entertainment, one of the top PDF publishers in the business, which produces support for *Skull & Bones*, *Northern Crown*, the pulp d20 line *Thrilling Tales*, and more.

which is run with *The Matrix* as its primary inspiration.

Learning from Screenwriting

The basic format for the random adventure seed is the dramatic core taken from screenwriting: all plots can be boiled down the following sentence:

“The main characters must [DO SOMETHING], but have to contend with [COMPLICATIONS] while being confronted by [OPPOSITION].”



This is the basic structure of any story, whether it is filmed, written, presented in a comic book, or roleplayed. The variables change, providing a wide array of possibilities. For the Cyberpunk-Genre Adventure Generator, however, we'll expand that basic structure even further, allowing for a wider variation. So, the basic dramatic structure of our Modern d20 adventures will read more like this:

“The main characters must [DO] [SOMETHING], at [LOCATION], but have to contend with [COMPLICATIONS] while being confronted by [OPPOSITION].”

The main difference between the standard format and the one presented above is that the location of the adventure has been added as a variable, and, more importantly, [DO SOMETHING] has been split into [DO] [SOMETHING].

Let's explain that a little bit further.

The “do something” is the focus of the adventure -- it's what drives the action. Making it a single category under this system will only result in 64 possibilities (by cross referencing two d8 rolls). However, after splitting the “do” (the verb) and the “something” (the subject) into two categories, that means that each have 64 possibilities, and can combine for a total of 4096 different results.

For example, take these: “Rescue the Scientist”, “Find the Murderer,” and “Defeat the Android.” Under this new system, these three focii

can be split, giving you those same results, but also additional ones such as “Find the Scientist,” “Rescue the Android” etc.

This can, admittedly, lead to some odd results, such as “Rescue the Murderer”....but cyberpunk stories are filled with strange stories and bizarre plots. As a GM, that phrase, which on its surface seems odd, begins to generate all sorts of ideas for me. Why would the PCs have to rescue a murderer?

How to Use the Generator

This type of system provides the Game Master with a framework...a springboard for the development of the Game Master's own ideas. The adventure concepts generated by this system will still need to be fully fleshed out, populated with started NPCs, etc...but this system will give you a starting point from which to work.

To use the Cyberpunk-Genre Adventure Generator, the Game Master rolls two eight-sided dice, and cross-referencing the results on each of 5 category tables: **Do, Something, Location, Complications** and **Opposition**.

As stated before, **Do** provides you with the verb, **Something** provides you with the subject. Together, they form the focus of the adventure. **Location** gives you where the adventure takes place, **Complications** are those things that arise during the adventure to hinder the player-character's progress, and **Opposition** is the force or individual that is actively going against the PC's efforts.

Each category has 64 possibilities, so this system allows for 1,073,741,824 different combinations...more than enough to give any cyberpunk-genre campaign ideas to last for its entire run.

Do

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Fight	Meet	Find	Retrieve	Race	Seize	Trade with	Steal
2	Combat	Talk with	Protect	Attack	Serve	Defend	Take	Negotiate with
3	Guide	Avenge	Deliver	Hack	Guard	Join	Watch	Create
4	Chase	Assassinate	Escort	Rescue	Ally	Resist	Repel	Safeguard
5	Disguise	Travel with	Copy	Defeat	Investigate	Support	Destroy	Change
6	Move	Track	Aid	Assist	Ruin	Fight	Protect	Erase
7	Conceal	Obliterate	Trap	Oppose	Testify against	Observe	Shut down	Locate
8	Strike	Reveal	Beset	Shield	Contend with	Invade	Kill	Save

Something

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Agent	Murderer	Treasure	Scientist	Company	Samurai	Assassins	Cyborg
2	Worker	Royalty	Citizens	Rebel	Energy	A.I.	Police	Country
3	Terrorist	Organization	Corporation	Stranger	Artifact	Hacker	Invention	Android
4	Friend	Gang	Secret	Woman	Celebrity	Computer	Vehicle	Criminal
5	MegaCorp	Enemy	Low-life	Item	Man	Child	Robot	Building
6	Aircraft	City	Network	Smuggler	Technician	Government	Outcast	Soldiers
7	Love Interest	Businessman	Thief	Object	Bystanders	Spy	Team	Satellite
8	Veteran	Data	Information	Animal	Foreigners	Technology	Mercenaries	Mobster

Location

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Space Station	Ghetto	Cyberspace	Subway	Wasteland	Military Base	Data Haven	Underground
2	TV Station	Skyscraper	Villain's base	Foreign Country	Airport	Prison	Business District	Island
3	In Orbit	In Transit	Research Facility	Online	Mansion	War Zone	Hideout	Government Installation
4	Landmark	Residence	Outlands	Secret Location	Agricultural Zone	Casino	Nightclub	Jungle
5	Corporate Headquarters	Bank	Entertainment District	Gated Community	Shopping Center	The Moon	Bar	Highway
6	Garage	Fortress	Vault	Slums	Market	Border	Church	Virtual Reality
7	Sporting Event	Lab	Third World	Restaurant	Warehouse	Museum	Another City	Freezone
8	University	Gang Territory	Law Enforcement Center	Under Water	Hotel	Apartment	Ruin	Rooftop

Complications

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	None	Betrayal	Rivalry	Trap	Government influence	Hacking	Trickery	Unexplained
2	Travel	Squabbling	Distractions	Abduction	Barriers	Weather	Diplomacy	Ambush
3	Computer Crash	Riots	Security	Politics	Theft	Mystery	Vendetta	Fear
4	Mistaken Identity	Power Struggle	Enemy	Transport problem	Gangs	Corporate Influence	Drugs	A.I.
5	Encryption	War	Being Sold Out	Side-tracked	Misdirection	Bureaucracy	Insanity	Enemies
6	Interference	Attention	Organized Crime	Equipment failure	Military influence	Crime	Invasion	Money
7	Psychological	NetCops	Red Herring	Disaster	Contract	Interested Parties	Recurring NPC	Differing PC motivations
8	Media Attention	Legal Trouble	Lack of trust	Desperation	Love Interest	Cybernetics	Disease	Double-Cross

Opposition

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Government official	Terrorists	Gang	Mercenary	Spy	Specialist	Country	Company
2	Corporation	Enemy	A.I.	Criminals	Programmer	Hacker	Assassin	Technology gone Amok
3	Ruler	Shadowy Figure	Mobster	Rebel	Organization	Corporation	Agency	Computer
4	Former Ally	Stranger	Police	Military	Veteran	None	Corporation	Outlaw
5	Android	Cartel	Thief	Celebrity	Team	Roll Twice	Lawyer	Traitor
6	Scientist	War	Driver	Technician	Lunatic	Threat to World	Hired Killer(s)	The Mob
7	Femme Fatale	Conspiracy	Punk	Dealer	Operator	Enemy	Law Enforcement	Time
8	Friend	Ghost in the Machine	Hacker	Corporation	Cult	Clones	Warlord	Tycoon

Examples

I break out my d8s, and give a few rolls on the tables above. I will give an example of how it might be used to generate adventures for a cyberpunk-genre campaign, featuring player-characters on the fringes of society, who undertake “black ops” for patrons wishing to keep things deniable.

My first roll is: 6-4, 4-1, 3-3, 8-2, 6-7. This yields a result of :

“The main characters must [Assist] [A Friend] at [a Research Facility], but have to contend with [Legal Trouble] while being confronted by [Hired Killers].”

Giving some thought to this result, I come up with an adventure where the PCs are called by a Friend, pleading them for help -- he had signed up

for some medical research for a quick buck, but the Corporation is doing some illegal experiments on the test subjects, trying to create the perfect assassin. The PCs must try to break their Friend out of the facility, while the police, and a group of the Corporation’s newly-created assassins try to stop them.

My next roll is: 1-2, 2-4, 8-8, 1-6, 3-8. This yields a result of :

“The main characters must [Meet] [a Rebel], at [a Rooftop], but have to contend with [Hacking] while being confronted by [a Computer].”

Pretty archetypal cyberpunk-genre adventure there... the PCs have a clandestine meeting on a rooftop with some dissident, but are thwarted in their efforts by events occurring in cyberspace....and little do they

realize that their enemy isn’t actually human....

My last roll is: 4-2, 7-2, 8-4, 5-3, 4-7 . This yields a result of :

“The main characters must [Assassinate] [a Businessman], [Under Water], but have to contend with [Being Sold Out] while being confronted by [A Corporation].”

Industrial Black Ops -- hired by one corporation to assassinate an officer of another coporation. We’ll place it in an underwater city (in Tokyo Bay, perhaps)...but the PCs are betrayed by their employers, and the rival corporation is on their scent....

So, grab your dice and get rolling!

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