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Genre Templates III

By Barak Blackburn

Introduction

Time again for another installment in Adamant Entertainment's series of Genre Templates for d20 Modern play. Our first two installments (which appeared in **Modern Dispatch #70: Genre Templates** and **Modern Dispatch #74: More Genre Templates**), have been well received, and so in this issue, we're presenting you with another four Genre Templates for you to use.

First, however, we'll give a brief re-introduction of the concept for those of you who are unfamiliar:

- 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.

In this issue, we present four different Genre Templates for use with the Modern D20 rules set.

Those Darned Vampires: Vampire Hunting, with Sass.

Skills:

Knowledge (Arcane), Sense Motive, Tumble.

Feats:

Power Attack, Combat Expertise

Tweaks:

- Knowledge (Arcane) covers everything about the supernatural, from vampires, to ancient cults.
 - Geeky: Every additional Knowledge area a character has gives the character a cumulative +2 bonus on any other Knowledge check.
 - Hit ‘Em Where It Hurts AKA Stake ‘Em!: vampires are tough to take down, but not if you know where to hit them. A wooden stake through the heart or chopping their head off will end a vampire’s existence. Sadly, d20 does not offer either of these options in combat.
- To attempt to remove the head of a vampire, an edged weapon must be used, and a player must subtract 6 from their attack roll for the head shot. The damage dealt to the vampire must be higher than

their Cha. If the damage is higher than their Cha, the damage is multiplied by the weapon's critical multiplier +1. If the subsequent multiplied damage brings the vampire to 0 or fewer HP, the vampire is destroyed.

To stake a vampire, a wooden stake must be used (*Wooden Stake-- Simple Weapon, Damage 1d3, Critical 20, Piercing, 0 range [but may be thrown with the standard range penalties applied for every 5 foot increment, and a -4 non-Proficiency Penalty], Size: Small, Weight: 1/2 pound, 0 cost*) or a crossbow fitted with wooden bolts (range of crossbow decreases to 10 ft). An attack roll must be made with a -6 penalty. If the attack hits, multiply the damage by 5. If this damage is enough to bring the 0 or fewer HP the vampire is destroyed. If this damage is not enough to reduce it to zero, the damage is not multiplied by 5.

One interesting dilemma is that both attacks are most effective the weaker a vampire gets. In order to determine the present state of a vampire, a character rolls a Sense Motive check opposed by a vampire's Bluff check. Success will determine one of two things (players' choice): the vampires starting HP +/- their Cha score; how many hit points the vampire has left (Full, 3/4 to full,

1/2 to 3/4, 1/4 to 1/2, less than 1/4). If a character beats the vampire's bluff check by more than 5, the player may learn both pieces of information. This Sense Motive check is a move-equivalent action, the Bluff check requires nothing on the vampire's part. If the check by the PC fails by more than 5, the vampire is aware of being sized up by his opponent.

Optional:

Join Me! Instead of the standard method of creating vampiric spawn, vampires instead infect their victims over time. The strength of the vampire (and the GM's whims) determines how many times a vampire must drain a victim's blood to convert them (usually between 1 and 3).

Each draining is a standard vampiric bite attack, but the attack must drain 3 or 4 Con points from the victim, and each must occur on a separate occasion. If 4 Con points are drained, the draining will happen sooner, if 3 it may take a day or longer for the effects to take place. With either draining, the total number of points actually drained can be kept a secret from the players. Instead tell them that only 1 or 2 points were drained.

If a character's Con is reduced to 0, they do not die, instead they collapse and are unconscious for as long as the GM determines.

Determining whether a character will turn is a sketchy proposition. Characters may attempt with any medical type skills, or even Knowledge (Arcana), however, the Gm will secretly roll any die. The GM will make the roll, and at the same time roll any other die. If the other die rolled comes up odd, the research indicates that the character WILL NOT turn. If the check comes up a natural 1, the GM should tell the character the opposite of whatever the truth is.

This check may only be attempted once. Period.



BRAINS!!!! Zombies!

Skills:

After zombies are encountered and if characters survive, Survival and Treat Injury become class skills for every character. But before zombies are encountered, all characters are blissfully ignorant. After Zombies are encountered, Survival and Treat Injury can also be used untrained.

Feats:

None. Characters have the abilities they had before the zombies arrived. S.O.L.

Tweaks:

Improvised weapons: The local mall generally will not have much in the way of swords and the like. However, with a DC15 Survival check, a character may find something that can be used as a Simple weapon.

A result of 15 gives a character a Small weapon (1d4 Damage, 20 Critical), A result of 20 gives the character a more deadly Medium weapon (1d6 Damage and 19-20 Critical or 1d8 damage, 20 Critical). A result of 25 gives the character something really good (a Medium weapon, 1d8 Damage, 19-20 Critical, or a Large weapon, 1d10

damage, 20 Critical). For each weapon found, the Gm should roll a d10 to determine weapon type: 1-5 Bludgeoning, 6-8 Piercing, 9-10 Slashing.

A natural 20 on the Survival roll finds the character 1d4-1 “real weapons.”

These are treated as standard weapons, and are not improvised.

Any natural 1 on an attack roll will result in an improvised weapon being destroyed. GMs should roll a 1d4-1 for each location to

determine how many weapons can be found. Players looking for specific items (to make bombs and the like) should use a Search check, with the DC determined by the appropriateness of where they are looking. Improvised Power Attack: any character may try and do more damage with a melee weapon. The weapon must be Medium or Large. A Medium weapon user trying to use their weapon with two hands must subtract 2 before any other subtractions.

To attempt an Improvised Power Attack, characters subtract 2 from their attack roll for every +1 to damage (or +2 if using a two-handed weapon). Character may subtract a total from their attack roll up to their BAB.

Optional:

Mob Tactics: One zombie is scary. Many zombies are very scary! Any time a character is adjacent to more than one zombie, the zombies attack in force. One attack roll is made using



the highest BAB of an adjacent zombie and the roll is made with +1 to hit and +2 damage for every additional zombie.

Hit 'Em In the Head: Using this option, zombies can only be killed by destroying their head. All zombies gain fast healing 5. In addition, every time a zombie is reduced to 0 or fewer HP, after 1 round, it returns to action, with full HP. If a character wishes to hit a zombie in the head, an attack roll is made with a -6 penalty on the roll. If the initial damage is greater than 10, multiply the damage by 5. If that total reduces the zombie to 0 or fewer HP, the zombie is destroyed.

Infection: How are zombies made? No one knows for sure. However, with every attack roll, a GM should note if the natural number rolled is odd or even. If the number is even, the GM should make a notation for the character (Keep note cards handy with all the character's names printed on them, make a single notation for every even roll). If the roll is a natural 20, make 5 notations.

For every notation 5 and after, a character must make an immediate Fort save with a DC equal to 15+1 for every notation. If the check is failed, the character may make a Will save with the same DC. If both saves fail, the character immediately collapses and stands the next round, as a zombie! If

the Will save is made, the character knows the change is coming and is holding it back! If a character does not get their fifth notation, they still must make a Fort save after combat. Failure means it is only a matter of time.... GM's discretion when this occurs, and GM's discretion if a Will save is allowed. One notation can be eliminated after 8 hours of rest. A really nasty GM might have all players roll their Fort saves in the open, but also roll one of their own in secret. The GM will also roll a d6 with this roll. If the d6 rolls a 1-3, the GMs roll stands, if it rolls a 4-6 the player's roll stands.

Mixing it up: GMs should feel free to modify the zombie abilities, just to keep things interesting: maybe some get +8 to Strength, maybe some have a 40' move and can run, there are even rumors that some of them must have their heart destroyed, not their head (rules are the same, just a different location).

After The Fall: Post-Apocalyptic Madness

Skills:

For characters who have grown up AtF(After the Fall), Survival is a class skill, but they must subtract their ranks in Survival from any Knowledge check made about

events Before the Fall. Spot, Listen, Search, Hide and Move Silently are also class skills for characters raised AtF.

Characters from BtF get a cumulative +2 on any Knowledge check for every Knowledge skill they possess. They must also choose at character creation to have Survival be a class skill. If they do not want Survival as a class skill, they get instead the ability to spend 1 skill point and increase the ranks in a number Knowledge skills equal to their Int bonus.

Feats:

Endurance, Toughness.

Tweaks:

- Progress- AtF, technology takes several steps backwards. Consider all characters raised AtF to be at -2 progress levels for their primary culture (IE an Information Age (PL5) Earth AtF becomes an Industrial Age (PL 3) for everyone raised AtF). Any attempt to use any equipment from a higher Progress Level requires an Intelligence check each time it is used. The only way around this is to get 5 ranks in Knowledge (specific equipment) for each type of item, such as guns, cars, televisions... For characters raised BtF, they are able to ignore this PL penalty.
- Barter- equipment is not nearly as available as it was BtF, however the

abstract d20 Modern Wealth system works well for bartering.

When coming across any population large enough to support a decent barter exchange (IE a wandering tribe number 20 is not likely to have a wide-variety of items to barter, so the GM should figure out before-hand what they have available) the GM should roll a 2 different colored d6 for every item bartered or to be bartered for. One die is positive, and one is negative. Take the total and add it to the normal equipment cost (the characters stroll into Blu Art City and hit the marketplace. During their last adventure, the PCs found a strange suit of clothing- Doc tells them it is called a business suit- and they try and barter it for some decent weapons. A business suit is normally DC 12 to purchase, the GM rolls 2d6, +3, -6 for a -3 total, the buyer is going to look at the suit as a DC 9 item.

He shows them a finely crafted sword, normal DC 11, 2d6 +2, -2, 0 total, DC 11 item and tells them if they had something more he could take the suit off their hands for the sword. Obviously, the GM has final say as to whether certain equipment might be available.

Optional:

Radiation- life AtF is not pleasant. There is some bad stuff in the air. Pollution, radiation, bio-virus, who knows? What one does know is that it can kill a body dead.

GMs should set a Fort DC for specific areas and for contaminated food and water, and players will have to make their rolls when they come in contact. DCs should start at 5, because there are those folks who have become immune to the effects (If a characters Fort Save+1 is equal to or higher than the DC they do not have to make a save).

If a Fort save is failed, feel free to change an individuals condition to any of the following depending on the type and severity of Radiation encountered: exhausted, fatigued, nauseated, shaken. Every 8 hours spent in an area, a character must make an additional save or have their condition worsen. Once they leave an area, they must also make a save 24 hours later. If the save is failed, they gain a Rad Point.

Rad Points give a bonus to future saves against all Radiation, however, if the number of Rad Points a character has becomes greater than their Fort Save, they begin dying. Every day they must make a Fort save with a DC equal to the number of Rad Points they have +10. each failed save causes them to lose one from their Str, Dex and Con. There are tales of healing that can cure Radiation Damage, but many think they are just stories....



Neon Lights: 80s Style-over-Substance

Skills:

Bluff, Drive, Sense Motive.

Feats:

Brawl, Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Tweaks:

- **Stylish:** All SCs get a bonus to all saves equal to their Cha modifier (if positive). All SCs also get a +5 bonus to their reputation, and are -5 (ignoring the +5 also) to be recognized if they do not want to (IE the characters are undercover).

Optional:

Soundtrack- Once per session each player may request a soundtrack. They should be sure to have a copy of the popular music selection they wish to play. The music should obviously be setting and time appropriate. When the selection plays, the scene slows down, and the action becomes narrative: the player will describe what happens in the scene (obviously the description of the scene should be appropriate to the effect). The player can ask for one of four benefits:



- *Feeling better:* All SCs are fully healed;
- *Going Right for the Big Guy:* Players may eliminate a number of non-SCs equal to the sum total of their Cha modifiers (IE add up the Cha modifiers for all the players, this is the number of “mooks” that may be taken down without effort);
- *Taking it Slow-* A character may take 20 on any skill check, even if it was one that normally wouldn’t allow taking 20;
- *Introspection:* If faced with a problem that the players cannot solve, the player may ask for a hint or hints. These scenes are often spent with the character driving alone down a rain-soaked road, or taking off in their boat....

The GM also gets one use of soundtrack per session also, and this is for the benefit of the villain. If the GM is feeling generous, and

the XP is enough, a GM can also ask the players if they would like to level up. This requires that at least two characters sacrifice their soundtracks for the session (or if only one player has a soundtrack remaining, it must be sacrificed).

Soundtracks should not be used immediately back-to-back. At least one scene should happen between songs.

Unusual Past: The Vietnam vet who also has ties to a modern-day samurai clan, the cop who has spent more time behind bars than putting others behind them, the businessman who used to run guns....

At the start of every session, all players roll a d20 and submit the results to the GM. The GM also rolls a d20 for each player and adds the two numbers. The player with the highest total is the spotlight player of the session. At some point, the GM should inform the player of something from their past: perhaps an NPC is someone they know,

they have family connections to the drug-dealers, etc... This unusual past should be something cool, and should allow that player to shine for the moment. The GM and player will work together at the table through narrative to describe the relationship:

GM: *“As you enter the bar, you recognize the beautiful women seated at a back table. It is your fiancée from several years ago. You broke off the marriage when you discovered that she was having an affair with Santiago. Ever since, you have tried to avoid Santiago and have turned a blind eye to many of his dealings.”*

Player: *“I walk over to Marissa and put the engagement ring I have always carried since the day I last saw her down on the table.”*

These relationships may be very shady, and may even put the player in professional jeopardy, but in the end, everything always works out.....

Atypical Style: Each player may start the game with a number of items well beyond their means equal to their Cha bonus (a beautiful house overlooking the ocean for the beat cop, a Lotus Esprit Turbo for the research

scientist). None of these items should be game-breaking, and are meant mostly for in-game coolness.

In addition, a character may have a number of stylistic elements (clothing style, haircut, earring, etc) that deviate from the norm equal to his Cha bonus. These elements do not make the character stand out all when “on the job.” No one questions the man with the Mohawk hair-cut at the reception for the queen, the Miami cop is easily able to camouflage in the everglades even when wearing bright pink pants and a turquoise jacket....

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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