

RETROSTAR

THE RPG OF 1970S-ERA SCI-FI TELEVISION



Lightspeed Adventure Manual

Welcome to Retrostar

You want to play Retrostar? Cool!

Each player will need a character as well as a handful of customary six-sided dice (d6), perhaps 6 per player, and you can always borrow some from the cool cat sitting next to you, or if that is totally bogus and no one touches your dice, bring ten d6, just to be safe.

The Showrunner will need to bring two types of tokens, it doesn't matter what they are, as long as they look different. Maybe 5 tokens of each type per player, but, as you read through this piece, you will get a better idea what it's all about. The Showrunner might also want to bring a 12-sided die (d12), which is used to keep track of die rolls (see page 9).

This is a lean, mean manifesto, so we are gonna keep it short and to the point, because this revolution is free.

Science Fiction:

Take a scientific principle; pose a question or hypothesis about that principle; and then explore the effects of that principle on society/culture.

Now, add disco! This is RETROSTAR!

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INTRODUCTION

These days, science fiction can be found on virtually every television channel. It's everywhere. One only has to turn on the television in order to find starship battles, post-apocalyptic survivors, malevolent aliens and robots of all kind.

But that wasn't always the case.

There was a time, back in the 1970s, when science fiction was pretty hard to come by on television. Not only was it fairly rare, but much of it wasn't overtly "science fiction" per se. For every full-on science fiction series – *Battlestar Galactica*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Space: 1999*, etc. – there was a series that minimized the science fiction elements to one degree or another; shows such as *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Man From Atlantis* and *The Bionic Woman*, for instance.

Regardless of how many sci-fi trappings were present in these programs, they all had one common denominator: charm! That's right; charm. No, they didn't boast computer-generated special effects, nor did they typically display terribly deep storytelling. They seldom had a massive budget and the acting ranged from good to abysmal, often within the same series. Continuity was commonly spotty as well and nobody was going to confuse the writing for high art.

But that was fine and dandy, because these television shows were fun and that's what made us tune in every week. We longed for adventure and they delivered that in spades! So *what* if we could tell that the robot was made of cheap plastic? Who cared if the camera was just being tilted back and forth to give the illusion of the spaceship being hit? You say the laser blasts looked hokey? Big deal. We wanted a fun science fiction story and that's exactly what we got.

If you understand where we're coming from, then *Retrostar* may very well be the game for you! Our goal was to create a game that captured the essence of these shows from beginning to end. We wanted to bring all the fun, excitement and, yes, cheesiness of the 1970s-era science fiction television shows to life for you and the rest of your game group. This required us to study and analyze the various TV shows of the time, taking them apart, figuring out how to best reflect the tropes with the rules and putting it all together into a cohesive game.

Retrostar is not a "universal" sci-fi roleplaying game. While it's certainly wide open for the creation of your own series, every nuance of the game system was fashioned to recreate the style of action and adventure cultivated by the science fiction television shows of the 1970s. Trying to use it for anything drastically different is like attempting to fit a square peg into a round hole.

However, if it's a rollicking good time while playing space adventurers, starship pilots, robots and the like, you're in the right place. So, strap in and get ready for the ride of your life. Just don't expect that ride to have amazing special effects.



SERIES DIALS

Every Retrostar Series has five Dials that help define its overall tone and “feel”. These Dials are rated from 0 to 6. A Dial of 0 would indicate no occurrences of this in the Series with any regularity, whereas a Dial of 6 would indicate a gonzo level of occurrences. The Dials are: Thematic, Plot, Recurring, Cheese, and SFX.

Dials also allow a quick glance at what a Series is about and what it might cover in any given Episode. Each Dial will list numerous Series-specific details that will allow a better view of what is in a specific Series, and will allow Showrunners the ability to create an Episode with minimal effort.

Thematic

Science fiction has always been a way for creative types to provide commentary and even satirize hot button topics. In the 1970s this might include examining counter-culture societies, the Vietnam conflict, women’s lib, the fuel crisis, divorce, or even Watergate. By contrast, some sci-fi Series were just an excuse to wear cool costumes and have “laser pistols” and did not worry themselves with Thematic elements.

A Series with a high Thematic Dial would likely touch upon many topical issues and fads and would feel dated today. A Series with a low Thematic Dial a series with a low Thematic dial was likely made in Great Britain (or would at least feel somewhat less dated).

Plot

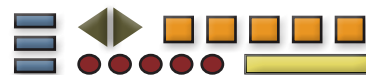
Some Series had overarching storylines that advanced as a Series progressed; others touched upon this just briefly (if at all). A Series where every Episode moved the long-term plot along would have a Plot rating of 5 or even 6, while a Series comprised primarily of standalone Episodes would be a 1 or even a 0. Often, even shows that seemed to have no over-arching plot had a season finale that hinted at a cliffhanger, or there might be cast changes, or the child character is getting older and this needs to be addressed, and would be a Plot of 1 at least.

Recurring

What are the recurring Scenes of your Series? Does every Episode have a starfighter battle? Is there always a Scene with the chief scientist arguing with the general of the troops about how to secure fuel? Does the jive-talking robot do something ridiculous? Sci-fi Series tended to have recurring Scenes, as the SFX were built and paid for, and were part of the appeal for television audiences. A high Recurring Dial would have many Scenes repeated every Episode, and a low Recurring would have very few.

What is a Series?

Retrostar does not have a singular setting in which to play. Instead, it offers the opportunity to play in many different settings (which we call “Series”), either of your own creation or ones published by Spectrum Games. The Retrostar rulebook will contain everything you need to know about whipping up all manner of far-out Series.



Cheese

Here is where 1970s sci-fi really stood out! How much does your Series rely upon the fads of the era? Is there a disco? Is there a planet of scantily clad women? This is more than just the costuming, which is covered elsewhere; this is the inclusion of fads for the sake of ratings, and capitalizing on those fads! Cheese is not just about the far-out fashions. It is a reflection of the inclusion of those Scenes and elements that were often totally out of place, but that made the Series intrinsically something ripe for Retrostar mining! High-Cheese Series were probably laughable even at the time, while low-Cheese Episodes focused less on these trends (and were likely British).

SFX

How heavily did a Series rely upon special effects? How much of a budget did they have for SFX? This Dial has a very distinct in-game effect for Player Characters, as all characters will have SFX available to them, be it laser pistols or a low-cut dress that the censors are worried about. For a Player Character, the definition is expanded to focus on the cool moments a character has every Episode, but is all encompassed by the SFX Dial.

When you look over a Retrostar Series, take a look at the Dials. This will give you a snapshot of what kind of Series it is! The Retrostar rulebook will include some specific tools for a Showrunner as well— tools that will help them plot out specific Episodes as well as create their own Series.

When a Showrunner wants to plot a new Episode, they will roll a die for each Dial. If the number is equal to or less than the Dial value, that Dial will be present in the Episode. If a Series Dial is 0, no die will be rolled, as that Dial will never be included. This is not to say that a Series cannot cover this Dial, but it is not part of the Series worksheet and bible. Showrunners can quickly look over the list of Dial details for specific Episode ideas.

The Retrostar rulebook will go into much more detail on this. Consider this a teaser!



Just like the Series in which they exist, Player Characters also have 4 Dials (Thematic, Plot, Recurring, and Cheese), with values the same as the Series. The details for these Dials are defined through play, as we learn more about these characters.

At the start of every Episode, each character may make one roll for one Dial of their choice. This is a roll on a single die, and if the number rolled is equal to or less than the Dial value, the character will make note of this and inform the Showrunner.

The Showrunner will note these individual Dial results, and the player and/or Showrunner will incorporate them into any given Episode. A Player Character will get one Spotlight Token to be used for this specific Dial.

A Quick Note About Intents/ Intentions

At this point in the text, you will begin to see references to “intent” and “intentions”. You may be scratching your head, wondering what they are. No, you didn’t somehow overlook an explanation. Don’t worry, though. We go into great detail about them, starting on page 9.

For now, all you need to know is that they involve rolling dice to determine whether or not a character is successful at a challenge they are attempting to overcome.



This is a way for players to customize their characters as a Series develops, and might include such things as:

Thematic: Single father

Plot: Former lover of the Queen of the Imperial forces

Recurring: Smokes a cigar

Cheese: Yoga

Some of these character Dials (such as the Thematic example above) are best incorporated by the Showrunner (e.g., introducing a character who also comes from a broken home), and some will be player-driven (e.g., practicing yoga).

The Spotlight Token gained for this must be used directly relating to the Dial: the single father can use the Token for a Dramatic intention to influence a character, Yoga might be practiced to gain some great insight for later and so on. We’ll discuss how Spotlight Tokens affect the game on page 13.

Sometimes it will be difficult to incorporate a Dial into an Episode. Don’t stress it as a Showrunner. Let the player have a moment to come up with even the most tenuous of reasons why it is appropriate. Episodic television has had more than a fair share of credibility-straining moments, so it’s all true to the genre.



PLAYER CHARACTERS

Player Characters are defined by their Background, Casting, Traits (and Descriptors) and have access to specific SFX.

Background

This is a concise description of the character’s role within the Series. Think of this as the show producer’s notes on each character.

Macho yet sensitive, outlaw spirit, tough guy, very anti-authority, honorable and loyal to his friends and all the runners, always sticks up for the little guy. Veteran of the war, but would rather not talk about it. Has a way with the ladies, and definitive charm, roguish glint in his eye.

Casting

This is a description of the “actor” portraying the character. In many TV shows, this was as significant as their Background, and is the stuff cover photographs of weekly television periodicals were made of.

Shaggy brown hair, mutton chops, muscular, distinctive deep voice.

Traits

Each character is defined by the same three Traits: Adventure, Thought, and Drama.

Traits are generally rated from -1 to 2, with higher numbers being better. Any Trait with a non-zero value will also have a Descriptor(s), which helps define that character more: Adventure -1 might have a Descriptor of *Clumsy*; Thought 1 could be *Vast Academic Knowledge*, and Drama 2 would have two Descriptors (*Infinitely Charming*, *Trendy Hairstyle*).

Adventure

Adventure is a measure of how suited the character is for action, especially the physical aspects of it. Tasks that would require the use of Adventure:

- Running from a group of enemies
- Sneaking up on a guard
- Maneuvering an airship through a narrow canyon
- Climbing up the side of a cliff
- Shooting a large creature with a laser gun

Thought

Thought is a measure of the character’s intelligence, perception and resourcefulness. Tasks that would require the use of Thought:

- Detecting an enemy ambush before it is sprung
- Repairing a damaged vehicle
- Devising a strategy to thwart the enemy
- Analyzing a chemical to determine what it is
- Rerouting the power in a space station

Drama

Drama is a measure of the character’s personality, charisma and strength of will. Tasks that would require the use of Drama:

- Persuading a space pirate that you don’t have any valuable cargo hidden on your ship
- Seducing a high-ranking official
- Using intimidation to get a captured henchman to give up information
- Bargaining with a merchant to get a good deal
- Participating in a disco-dancing competition
- Resisting any of the above



SFX

Psychic powers. Cybernetic limbs. Laser blasts. Monkey-Dog companions. Skin-tight costumes.

In Retrostar, any of these things would be considered SFX.

A character might fire their laser pistol multiple times, but only once does it hit the girder and take out three enemy minions. A character has cybernetic legs, why don't they use them all the time?

Because, SFX.

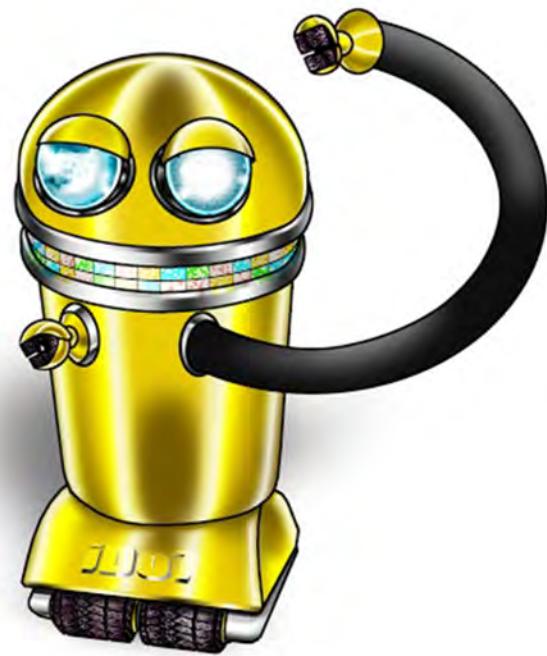
A Retrostar Series has a limited SFX budget. Every dollar was significant and nothing was wasted. This is why props, sets and even entire chunks of footage were used over and over again.

The SFX Dial of a Series determines the number of SFX points each player has. Additionally, each player will have a list of specific SFX available to them.

The Showrunner has a pool of SFX equal to the total number of SFX points the players have each Episode.

SFX can also be used for other effects... just make sure what the player is doing is SFX-worthy and because these are not regular Series-assigned SFX, 1 SFX Point can be spent for +1d. This will be explained more on page 12.

SFX points replenish every Episode.



What About Starships?

Vehicles were a means to an end and most often will not add or subtract any dice to an Intent. Retrostar will not include detailed vehicular rules; there are tons of games out there that do a great job of this level of granular crunch. In the future that Retrostar represents, vehicles were indeed very cool, but the drama was character-focused and characters are all about Action, Thought, and Drama!





INTENTIONS: HOW TO DO STUFF

Retrostar has two major dice-rolling conventions that help the Showrunner and players collaboratively participate in 1970s-era episodic science fiction stories: Time Management and Player-Driven Action.

Time Management

1970s science-fiction shows traditionally used a 5-Act Structure. Most Episodes (usually a single session) of Retrostar will also use this structure.

Mechanically, what this means is that each Act will have only 12 dice rolls (In Retrostar, most dice rolls are called *Intents* or *Intentions*, but we will cover that very shortly).

The Showrunner will track the Intentions in plain view of all the players. A 12-sided die makes a wonderful counter.

Consider each Intent to be 1 minute of screen time, (5 Acts) x (12 minutes) = 60 minutes. Neat how that works out. This is not to say that each Intent equates to one minute of screen time, it is more a pacing device. Why would we do this? Simple: because limited Intents make each Intent significant, and players should be willing to allow other characters a chance to shine, and should work together. Players rolling dice (for Intents) indicate that the character is attempting something they might fail at, and this is significant in a television series, and worthy of our attention. For example, if one character fails a Thoughtful intention, an Intent based on Thought, it is not fun for every other player to attempt the same Intent. Every Intent indicates risk. Risk is compelling! And the viewers do not want to see the characters trying the same action over and over and over again (translation: it isn't compelling if all the players take turns making a specific Intent).

In the Retrostar rulebook, we will discuss Showrunning tips in greater detail, and how to manage this very valuable resource to move your stories forward.

An Act will likely contain multiple Scenes. A Scene is a specific location with specific characters. Scene 1 might be in the disco, and serve only as a means for one character to attempt a Dramatic intention against another. This Scene ends, the next Scene takes place in a laboratory, and serves as means for several Thoughtful intentions. The next Scene might require no dice, but involve one character talking with their adopted son.

It is entirely possible that an Act will come to a natural conclusion before 12 Intents. If this happens, the Showrunner might carry over any unused Intents to the next Act. Even still, in order to truly capture the feel of episodic television cliffhangers and commercial teases, always try and use 12 and only 12, even if it means interrupting a Scene or starting a Scene only to leave it unfinished!

And maybe it will not finish at all. The Showrunner might decide to move onto another Scene. This pushes the action in a way that is very deliberate.

Time Management Recap: Each Act in an Episode will have a definitive, limited number of Intents. 12 Intents, to be exact.

Player-Driven Action

When players roll (and frankly, players will do the vast majority of the rolling), they are determining not a binary success or failure, but rather, they are working towards the unpredictable nature of an episodic TV show.

Intent and Intention

Any time a player rolls dice in an Episode (not the initial Dial roll), this is called Intent or Intention.

Why?

It goes back to the acting technique. In acting, one doesn't just say lines... one should be actively trying to do something.

This seems appropriate for Retrostar: "What are you trying to do?" is the question. Because Intents are limited, each Intent roll (or just Intent) should be a moment; the camera focuses on that character and we see them trying to do something, whether it's piloting a ship, defending, attacking, jury-rigging a ship's computer or charming the evil princess.

The character has a specific Intent; the result of that Intent is why dice are rolled!

Players are either in control of their characters' actions or the Showrunner will determine what happens to them and even what they do. For the sake of simplicity, this often means that a character is no longer an active member of a Scene (or Scenes). They might be injured or could simply be off doing something else.

While this may seem strange at first, understand that Retrostar is designed this way to tell interesting and compelling stories; the kinds of stories found in the old sci-fi television shows. It is the duty of both the players and Showrunner to do this, so it is not at all an adversarial relationship.

It is the Showrunner's duty to take the lead in telling interesting stories, to put the PCs in danger and to put them in uncomfortable situations... but because this is episodic television, we all know that the characters will ultimately be okay. It is the conceit of the genre.

So, how does this happen?

The basic die-rolling mechanic of Retrostar involves rolling 2 dice. As mentioned, the players do the majority of the rolling. Add the two dice together to determine what happens:

Intention Results	
Die Total:	What Happens:
2-6	The player loses narrative control of their character.
7-9	The player has a choice: <i>Fail and maintain control of their character</i> OR <i>Succeed and cede control of their character after this particular action.</i>
10+	The player's character achieves a regular success.

What's in a Roll of the Dice?

Intent is everything! It is an attack and a defense. It is attempting to do something and determining the fallout from the result.

Some of these Intentions might be active and initiated by the player ("I want to try and blast the door open" or "I will attempt to persuade the enemy guards to let us pass") or it might be reactive ("the ship's guards are firing at you"). For this second case, a player roll might be a reaction as well as an action (I duck down to avoid their laser fire and take a shot at one as I do").

The result of the Intent will indicate success or failure.

Failure can mean anything. A total failure (rolling 6 or lower) might mean a character is injured and unconscious. A player-controlled failure (7-9) might up the ante for the player and their teammates, allowing the Scene to continue; or the Scene might end, moving the Episode to the next Scene where we face the fallout from the failure.

Ceding control of a character?

Until a Showrunner and the players get a better feel for the system, the easiest way to deal with a player ceding control of their character is for the character to effectively be taken out of a Scene. They have expended themselves. They might still be there, but will not be contributing any more rolls to the Scene(s).

But, what about an example case of trying to catch something before it falls down a pit? The character succeeds and cedes control.

The Showrunner describes the character as catching the doohickey, adding that doing so also threw the character off-balance, thus as they throw it to their teammate, the character falls down the pit instead.

This sends the Episode in an unexpected direction!

And failure? A character is using Thought to try and bypass the security system on a door. They fail. Have the control panel explode, the characters must try something else, and you, the Showrunner, must offer up different avenues for them to explore.

And what about failure in combat? In a group Scene, where all the characters in engaged to some degree (Enemies firing on the PCs), failure could mean the character getting injured. Ceding control can mean the character runs down a hallway just before the emergency door closes, separating the party! In a one on one combat, failure would mean just that, failure. They lose.



That is the basic mechanic, but it is the intricacies of the system that make it a bit more interesting. We'll examine some of these intricacies below.

Adding and Subtracting Dice

Every positive and negative factor affecting the task adds to or subtracts from the total number of dice rolled. Is the character trying to climb a rocky cliff with lots of protrusions to grab onto? They'll probably have an additional die to roll. Is the character instead trying to climb a metal wall with hardly anything to hang onto? They'll likely be chucking one less die. Regardless of the number of negative factors working against a character, the player can always roll at least 2 dice.

Below, you'll find some details on what will affect the number of dice rolled for an Intent.

- **Acting Character's Trait:** The character's relevant Trait (Adventure, Thought, Drama) will have a rating from -1 to 2. If it's a negative number, subtract it from the dice rolled; if it's a positive number, add it to the number of dice rolled.

- **Opposing Characters:** most Showrunner Characters (all characters controlled by the Showrunner, not just enemies) will have a simple die rating assigned to them: Minions would be -0d; named minions would be -1d or -2d; significant SCs would be -3d or -4d. Any action against or opposed by an SC subtracts dice from a Player Character's Intent. The Retrostar rulebook will also detail how some very important and significant SCs will have Traits all their own as well, and can muck things up by making their own Intents!

- **Task Difficulty:** Some tasks are more difficult to pull off than others, due to various factors. Particularly challenging tasks will subtract from the total amount of dice rolled. Jumping over a wide chasm might impose a -1d penalty, while flying a Starfighter through an impenetrable asteroid field might incur a -2d penalty, an ambush might add -1d to a particular Scene, and a character who has been injured might have a -1d penalty.

- **SFX:** SFX will add to (and possibly subtract from) the total number of dice rolled. Player SFX will always give a dice bonus equal to the number of points spent +1. Showrunner SFX will give the Showrunner the same, but the Showrunner's SFX subtract from the players' Intents. So, a Laser Pistol 1/2d would cost 1 SFX point to use, and would give the player 2 additional dice for one Intent. If the SFX are spent by the Showrunner, they will apply negative dice to the Intent.



- **Showrunner SFX:** The Showrunner can use SFX from their own SFX pool for enemies, thus subtracting dice from the total number of dice rolled.

- **Spotlight Tokens:** Spotlight Tokens, when spent, will add dice to the total amount rolled. These can be used for a +2d bonus to any Intent, but the character has to do so using something from their character sheet: Background, Casting, or Descriptors. A character who is “the best fighter pilot in the fleet” or “agile” can call upon these details, to have a greater chance of success.

The easiest way to calculate how many dice to roll is to determine all the modifiers to an Intent, add and subtract them, and then add those dice to the 2d roll.

If the net result is negative, the character will roll multiple dice and keep the worst 2, adding them for a result.

If the net result is positive, a character will roll multiple dice and keep the best 2, adding them for the final result of the Intent.

How Many Dice Do I Roll and What Do I Keep?								
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
6 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	5 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	4 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	3 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	2 dice (add together the two results)	3 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	4 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	5 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	6 dice (add together the 2 highest results)

This table is open-ended in both directions. Simply keep adding an extra die to the roll and keep the two lowest results or highest results, whichever is appropriate.

Characters Assisting Each Other

One character might not be well suited to making a certain Intent (Adventurous intention, Thoughtful intention, Dramatic intention) due to having a negative Trait value. However, that character might try and assist another character, using a different Trait (or at times using the same Trait in a different way). This will require the assisting player’s character to make an Intent before the assisted character makes their Intent.

If the assisting character’s Intent is successful, the character they are trying to help is given an additional die to roll.

For example, a physically weak character (Adventure -1) might decide to use Thought (1) to assist their fellow player attacking a group of enemies. The assisting character is looking for an opening, calculating angles, or anything clever and Thought-based. They succeed, so the acting player gets a bonus die!

Initiative

In the Lightspeed Adventure Manual, players make all the Intents, so Initiative is not very significant, as the players are the only ones acting and reacting.

So, who leads off initiative in a particular Scene? The Retrostar rulebook will offer several options, but for the purposes of this Quickstart, pick a player and go from there. Because the action is player-driven, they are the stars, and they should work together to decide what is best for a particular Scene.

Dice Rolling Summary

1. The Showrunner will declare which Trait must be used in the Intent, though the player might suggest an alternative appropriate Trait as well. The Showrunner declares the opposing character(s), task difficulty(ies), as well as any SFX they are using from their pool.
2. The player will then decide if they want to use a Spotlight Token and/or SFX (see pages 12 and 13).
3. The player will determine the net result of the positive and negative dice.
 - If the result is **negative**, they will roll 2d+the number of negative dice and keep the lowest two dice and add them together.
 - If the result is **positive**, they will roll 2d+the number of positive dice and keep the highest two dice and add them together.
4. The final Intent roll will be compared to this table to determine what happens.

Intention Results	
Die Total:	What Happens:
2-6	The player loses narrative control of their character.
7-9	The player has a choice: <i>Fail and maintain control of their character</i> OR <i>Succeed and cede control of their character after this particular action.</i>
10+	The player's character achieves a regular success.

Each Act will have a limited number of Intents, which the Showrunner will track.

Player Characters and Showrunner Characters

As we briefly touched upon earlier, there are two types of characters in Retrostar: those controlled by the players (called *Player Characters* or *PCs*) and those controlled by the Showrunner (*Showrunner Characters* or *SCs*).

Sometimes, SCs are referred to as either *Ally SCs* or *Enemy SCs*, depending on their relationships with the Series' PCs.



Ceding Narrative Control: What Does This Mean?

By ceding narrative control, the Showrunner determines what happens and, likely, it will not be good. It might be something as simple as the character no longer being able to roll dice in a particular Scene or it could send the character down a proverbial road they had not intended and no one expected. This is where the gonzo elements and cliffhangers of episodic television shine!

If a character is engaged in a starfighter battle and loses narrative control, the Showrunner can have them just fail, they can have their starfighter lose all power and drift away hopelessly in space or they can have the character crash land on an alien planet.

If a character is assisting another character and rolls an 8, they may choose to succeed and then cede control. This could mean that their assistance was helpful, but that character is out of the Scene (or perhaps multiple Scenes). Maybe the capacitor they were attempting to disable blows up and they are now injured.

This requires an improvisational Showrunner (and players). For those who find this concept difficult to wrap their heads around, consider the following:

If a player cedes control of their character, that character is out of the Scene (and possibly the rest of the Act or more) and can re-enter when the Showrunner determines it is appropriate. As you play *Retrostar*, the Showrunner might do other fun and interesting things that provide those moments worthy of discussion and worthy of a teaser before the commercial break:

For example, a character is attempting a Dramatic intention (an Intent based on the Drama Trait) against the evil overlord queen in a tense negotiation. The character cedes control, so the Showrunner narrates that the Queen has taken a shine to the character and decides this conversation would be better served behind the locked doors of the imperial bedroom. When we next see the player, he is dressed in a ridiculous silver toga while feeding her grapes, having given in to the most basic of urges we are led to believe, as the Queen declares an attack on the protagonist's fleet of starships.





SPOTLIGHT

At the beginning of every Episode, each Player Character gets one Spotlight Token.

Characters can also make a Dial roll at the start of an Episode (see pages 5-6).

In addition, there are a number of Spotlight Tokens available for use by any player; a communal pool, if you will. These Tokens are placed in the center of the table for ease of reach. However, there are only a number of Tokens equal to the number of players minus 1. So, if 4 players sit down to play Retrostar, there are only 3 Tokens available for use.

Why?

Because Retrostar is a collaborative storytelling effort, and the players must share the Spotlight with their fellow players. One Episode might see one player using all of these communal Tokens, another Episode might see each player but one using one apiece. It's up to the players to work that out, based on the needs of the Episode.



RUNNING THE GAME

The Dials of each Retrostar Series will give a Showrunner plenty of ideas for Retrostar Scenes in an Episode. The Retrostar rulebook will have kilobytes of information on how to create your own Series. The game's Series creation process is slightly intensive, but it covers a lot of possibilities and once the Series has been created, session prep is extremely fast. In fact, you won't need to do anything beyond the most minimal amount of work to get an Episode up and running. All the work is front-loaded with the Series creation system.

Each Series will have a list of standard challenges, so that sending cybernautic minions against the intrepid Aquarriors will be very easy. Challenges like jumping chasms, disarming bombs and the like will require on the fly improvisation, but you're a Showrunner, you can do that!

Time Management

As the number of Intents in an Act moves towards the conclusion, the Showrunner should direct the action and Scenes appropriately. There is nothing wrong with ending a Scene without a conclusion. You can summarize. If players cede control of their characters, use this to your advantage to move the action forward. Introduce Scenes no one was expecting. Even two Intents left in an Act is an opportunity for high drama (or high adventure, or deep thought!).



Adjudicating Challenges

For players that have control of their characters, keep them involved (if they want to be!).

What happens when the group of 3 PCs is facing off against a horde of enemy minions? Allow players the opportunity to take out more than one; just add a -1d for each additional enemy or group of enemies.

The total negative penalty given to the players is up to you.

What if there are only 3 Intents left in an Act? Increase the task difficulty, force the players to make very difficult Intents, force them to use their Spotlight Tokens and SFX! Or end on a cliff-hanger and when the next Act starts, throw in a narrative wrinkle or two!

And just because the players have no Intents left, that doesn't mean the Act has to end immediately. As Showrunner you can describe whatever you want, but the players cannot respond. This shouldn't be abused, though.



A QUICK EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The PCs

- Blade (Adventure: 1; Thought: 0, Drama: 0)
- Elania (Adventure: 0, Thought: 0; Drama 1)
- Thermy (Adventure: -1; Thought: 2, Drama: 0)

Blade and Elania have access to Laser Blasters SFX 1/+2d.

Thermy has access to a Backpack Computer 1/+2d, as well as Destructoballs 2/ +3d

Each PC has 2 SFX points.

The Showrunner therefore has a pool of 6 SFX points.

The SCs

- The enemies are the nefarious Cyborvixes: -0d
- They are armed with Ion Cannons 1/+2d

Showrunner: The Cyborvixes are in pursuit as you attempt to escape their Warrocket. They are firing their Cannons at you. They are not using SFX yet, so it is a -0d. Blade, you're up.

Blade: I fire back at the Cyborvixes, while attempting to cover Elania and Thermy.

Showrunner: Do you want to try and give them bonus tokens, or are you just adding flavor?

Blade: Flavor for now. But how many are there?

Showrunner: At least 6. Because they are all firing at you, you will all need to each make at least one Adventurous intention.

Thermy looks very disappointed.

Blade figures out his dice to roll, -0d for the Cyborvixes and 1 for Adventure, for a total of +1! So he rolls 3 dice and will keep the best 2 (5, 5, 3 = 5+5 = 10)

Blade: I got a ten!

Showrunner: You fire your pistol back at the approaching Cyborvixes and they fire at you, you duck at just the right moment, and manage to take one of them out.

The Showrunner notes that one Intent has taken place this Act.

Showrunner: Elania?

Elania: I am going to take a shot with my Blaster (she marks down that she is spending 1 of her 2 SFX points) while my feathered hair looks great as I run away in my skintight silver suit.

Showrunner: Of course.

Elania figures her dice: -0d, +2d for SFX and 0 for Adventure, for a total of +2d!

Elania rolls 4 dice and will keep the best 2 (3, 3, 3, 4 = 3+4 = 7). Elania has to decide if she wants to succeed and cede control of her character, or fail and maintain control of her character. She wants to succeed, and she informs the Showrunner.

The Showrunner notes that two Intents have taken place this Act.

Showrunner: Elania, you fire your blaster and take out another Cyborvix, but as you are running away you trip and fall, your leg caught in the grate in the floor which has given way. Thermy?

Thermy: I run away as fast as I can, but I am going to try and hook up my computer to the ships internal systems.

Showrunner: OK, if you make it out this, you will go twice in a row.

Thermy rolls 3 dice and will keep the worst 2 (Cyborvixes -0d, Adventure -1).

Blade: C'mon kid, you got this!

Thermy rolls (3, 6, 6 = 3+6 = 9), and decides to fail and maintain control.

The Showrunner notes the third Intent of the Act.

Showrunner: Thermy, you also stumble, taking your backpack off, and notice the Cyborvixes are closing in on Elania and Blade. Elania's foot is stuck and she can think of nothing else to do but try and yank it free. Due to the chaos of the Scene, I am giving you a -1d penalty.

Thermy: I boot up my computer, and attempt to hack into the Warrockets mainframe system, I want to close all the doors so we can escape, as well as open the docking bay so we can steal a shuttle and escape.

The Showrunner considers the action and decides it will be an additional -2d penalty.

Thermy calculates his dice: Thought 2, -1d chaos penalty, -2d penalty for the difficult action, and he is using his Backpack Computer SFX +2d, his total roll will be +2, -1, -2, +2 = 1+2 dice. Thermy will roll 3 dice and keep the best 2.

Blade: Hold on kid, I'll cover you!

Showrunner: Blade, you want to help Thermy?

Blade: Damn straight! I'm going to try and give the kid some cover so he has some more time. I want to assist him with +1d.

Showrunner: That seems like a very solid plan. Thermy, you okay with that?

Thermy nods.

Blade: I am going to use my Blaster for great effect. Blade calculates his dice: Adventure 1, Blaster +2, Assisting -1= +1, +2, -1= +2. Blade will roll 4 dice and keep the best 2 (1, 3, 5, 6 = 5+6 = 11). Blade notes the use of one SFX point.

The Showrunner notes the fourth Intent of the Act.

Showrunner: OK, Thermy, if you succeed with this Intent, you will stop the Cyborvixes for the moment, and you, Blade and Elania will be safe.

Thermy: No pressure, right?

The Showrunner smiles and nods.

Thermy has the same dice from above, but now gets +1 die from Blade's assist: he will roll 4 dice and keep the best 2 (1, 3, 5, 5 = 5+5 = 10!). Thermy notes the use of one SFX point.

The Showrunner notes the fifth Intent of the Act.

Showrunner: Thermy, you manage to override the Warrocket's defenses and close the doors. Elania looks pretty hurt.

Blade: I will go over and help her.

Thermy: I'll see if I start up a ship to get us out of here.

Showrunner: Make a Thoughtful intention, please.

Thermy rolls 4 dice (Thought 2) and keeps the best 2 (3, 5, 5, 6 = 5+6 = 11).

The Showrunner notes the sixth Intent of the Act.

Showrunner: Blade, you help Elania up. She seems to have twisted her ankle, maybe something worse. You help her over to the ship. Thermy, you find a ship, and easily start it up. Are you going to fly it?

Thermy: *[shakes his head]* I'll leave that to our hotshot pilot.

Showrunner: Blade, you grab the controls and initiate the launch sequence, when over the ship's communications system you hear, "Shuttle four, please input launch code."

Thermy: I can try this.

Showrunner: Failure will be dismal.

Elania: Am I well enough to do something?

Showrunner: What are you thinking?

Elania: I want to respond on the ship's comm.

Showrunner: That sounds reasonable.

Elania: "Do you have the audacity to ask me for a launch sequence? Who is this? I shall tell my mother that you have embarrassed me. Better yet, I shall tell her that you impeded my departure."

(Elania is making much of this up; the Queen does indeed have a daughter, but everything else is just improvised.)

Elania confirms this is enough for an Intent.

Showrunner: Add a -1d penalty.

Elania calculates her total (Drama 1, -1d penalty = +1, -1 = 0). She will roll 2 dice and add them (2, 5 = 2+5 = 7). She decides that it is best if she succeed, so she chooses success and cedes control of her character.

The Showrunner notes the seventh Intent of the Act.

Showrunner: "I'm sorry, Princess, allow me to input those for you." The comm clicks off and your launch sequence lights up, confirming launch status. Blade, the Cyborvixes have broken through, and are firing at you. I am using 2 SFX points, for two Cannon shots. The Showrunner notes 2 SFX from his pool.

Blade: Is that all?

Showrunner: Yes, two shots, -2d each, -4d.

Blade calculates his dice (+1 Adventure, -4d = +1, -4 = -3). He uses one Spotlight Token referring to "crack pilot" under his background for an additional +2d (+2, -3 = -1). Blade will roll 3 dice and keep the worst 2 (1, 2, 6 = 1+2 = 3).

The Showrunner calculates the eighth Intent of the Act.

Showrunner: Just as you are about the fire the engines for launch, the dash of the shuttle explodes in your face. It's all you, Thermy, you're the only hope.

Thermy: Okay, I am going to attempt a manual override. These have automatic pilot, right? I am going to attempt to pilot the ship without actually piloting it, I just want to get us out of here!

The Showrunner nods, this seems very appropriate for the character.

Showrunner: Okay, they believe they have disabled the ship, so I won't be spending any SFX, so it is just a straight Thoughtful intention.

Thermy rolls 4 dice and keeps the best 2: (2, 2, 6, 6 = 6+6 = 12).

Showrunner: You activate the auto-pilot just as the Cyborvixes are approaching the ship, and it launches, to the surprise of everyone including yourself! You escape the sensors of the Warrocket and hurtle off into space. You are quite proud of yourself and look over at your comrades, both nursing their wounds...

What's next? Four more Intents to go, that is what. The Showrunner would have Thermy make some more Intents for piloting and possibly send the ship on a destination not at all desirable, given that he did activate the auto-pilot. And likely, leave Thermy to finish out this Act with minimal assistance from Blade or Elania, as they are both under the Showrunner's control for the time being.

The Showrunner would be sure to let them participate, speaking, etc., but no Intents!



THE FUTURE OF RETROSTAR

Thanks for taking a look at Retrostar. This is a quickstart version so we aren't including all the rules... just enough to get you playing! The Retrostar rulebook will have character creation rules, multiple Series for you to use (as well as the tools to enable you to create your own Series), optional rules for character death, and bytes more of far-out information. Plus, you'll find an exhaustive discussion of the 1970s sci-fi TV show genre so that every nuance, trope and convention is explored. Did we mention elaborate sections that give general advice for players and Showrunners alike?

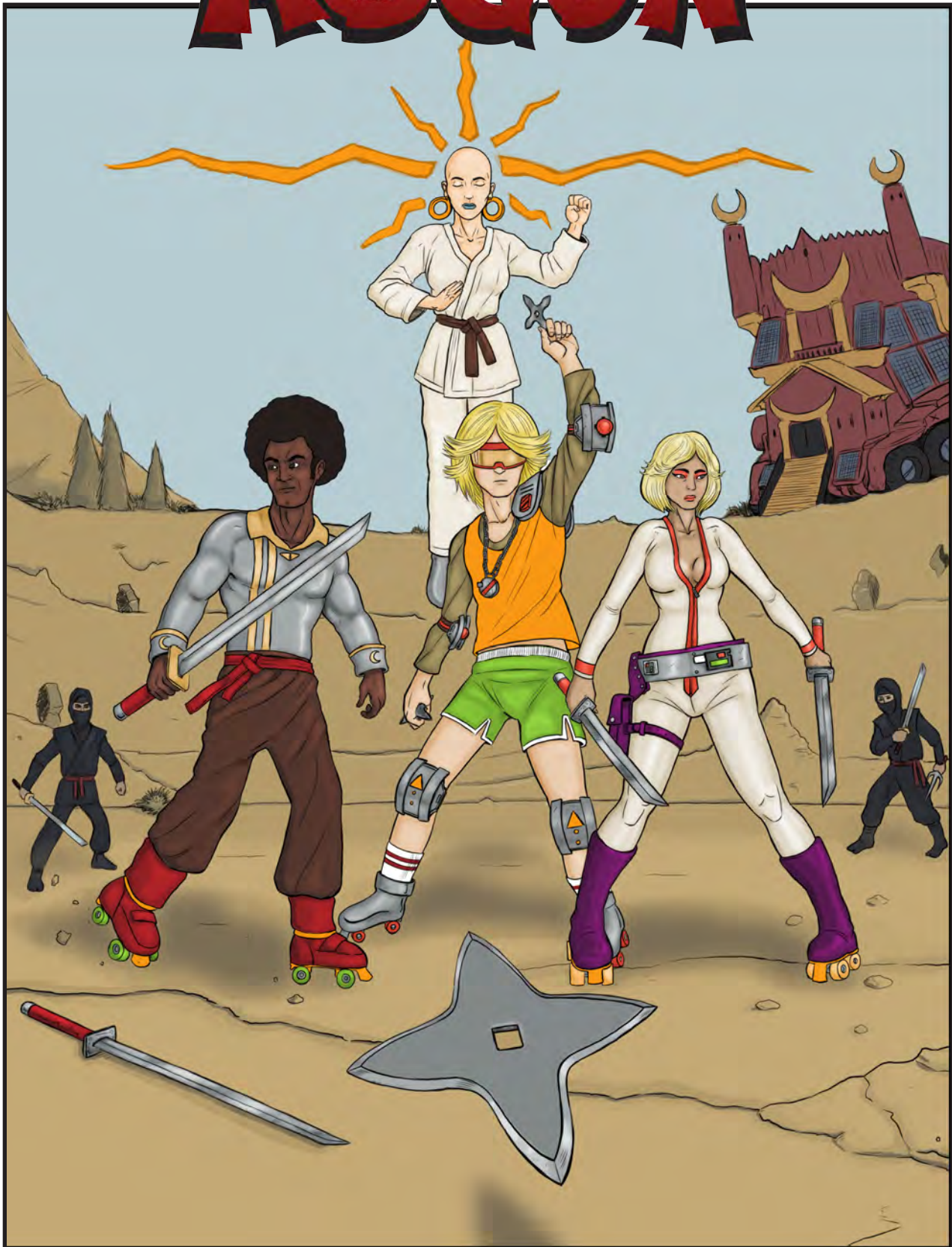
Get Ready for Adventure!

Now that you know the basic rules of the game, you can put it to use with the next section of the Lightspeed Adventure Manual, where you'll find a full-blown Series to try out. It even comes with an Episode outline. So, boogie on down to check it out!

The very beginning of it can be read by both the players and the Showrunner, but players should stop reading at the designated point in the text.



RÖGUN



A Ready-To-Run Series For Retrostar

SERIES NAME: Rōgun

SEASON NUMBER: 1

SEASON LENGTH: 10 EPISODES

PITCH

Rollerskating + Samurai + Psychics vs. Ninjas + Robots

SERIES CONCEPT

The answers were always there, but no one wanted to see them. Now, it is too late, careless fuel consumption led to pollution which decimated much of the world. Cities are overrun by the Scroungers; small pockets of mankind survive, under feudal rules. One man, Dr. Kenneth Takamoto, had the vision, and designed the solar-powered mobile fortress, the Rōgun. Traveling from town to town, always under siege by the Warriors of the Night and their cyboretic soldiers, the inhabitants of the Rōgun believe there is a better world out there. Protected by the noble, wheeled Samouri, they move with the sun, always east, hoping that the lands beyond bring salvation.

The tagline is: "In a bleak future destroyed by man's hubris and disregard, will the old ways be enough to rebuild society?"

SERIES DIALS

THEMATIC

3

- Rollerskating
- BMX bikes
- Skateboarding
- Environmental
- Fuel crisis
- Solar power

- Rebellious youth
- Honor
- Urban decay
- Urban music
- Transcendental meditation

CHEESE

3

- Roller derby
- Kung-fu culture

- Asian culture

PLOT

2

- Betrayal from within
- Impassable chasm, forcing Rōgun to be stationary, and setting up Season 2, which

- will have the heroes much more mobile.
- Appearance of Altaria

SFX

3

- Cyboretic facility
- Characters on the outside of Rōgun, so we see some of the details of this mobile for

- Laser Pistols (used by the Scroungers)

RECURRING

5

- New village
- Attack by ninjas
- Attack by scroungers
- Supplies in the big city

- Training montage
- Honor
- Any excuse for roller derby type Scene

MISC. DIAL NOTES:

ALLY SHOWRUNNER CHARACTERS

ALLY NAME:

Dr. Takamoto
Lord Zell

NOTES:

2d; Chief scientist of Rōgun, older gentleman, long beard
3d; Ruler of Rōgun, stocky, deep voice

ENEMY SHOWRUNNER CHARACTERS

ENEMY NAME:

Warriors of the Night
Scroungers
Cybormen

NOTES:

0d; Rollerskating ninja warriors
0d; Unkempt, armed with piecemeal weapons and armor
2d; Cybernetic constructs of the Warriors of the Night, will all have at least one obvious—and cheap-looking—cybernetic attachment (arm, leg, eye, etc.)
4d; Leader of the Warriors of the Night, beautiful, softly-lit brown haired female, severe purple eyeshadow

AVAILABLE SFX:

- Ninja Swarm (Warriors of the Night) 1/2d
- Rain of Steel (Warriors of the Night) 1/2d
- Acrobatic Rollerskating Stunt (Warriors of the Night) 1/2d
- Laser Blast (Cybormen) 1/2d
- Laser Pistol (Scroungers) 1/2d
- BMX Stunt (Scroungers) 1/2d

TERMINOLOGY:

- **Battle:** rollerskating combat. No one will say “rollerskating”; instead they will refer to “battle.”

RECURRING SETS/STOCK FOOTAGE:

- Practice Battle Arena: Asian themed roller derby court
- Lord Zell’s throne room
- Gearing up: PCs and SCs donning their roller skates and preparing for battle, before departing Rogun via an exit ramp
- Cybormen creation: dimly lit sci-fi medical lab, showing humans being converted to cybormen Warriors of the Night horde moving sneakily through the an evening landscape, leaping acrobatically, swinging swords,

FASHIONS:

- “Ancient Asian” meets “New Age” meets “Shiny Silver Sci-Fi”
- In the cities, dress is very traditional 70s attire, but often with one or more anachronistic sci-fi elements (goggles, silver boots, jumpsuit).

Character Name:
Maxis

Series Name:
Rōgun

Player:

Series Dial: 3 2 5 3 3
Thematic Plot Recurring Cheese SFX

Background:

Warrior poet, trained in the ways of the Samouri, tends to be soft-spoken, speaks with cryptic wisdom, has a dark past, favors the old ways, fearless in the eye of danger, very protective of women and children.

Casting:

Rugged African-American male, intense eyes.

Spotlights:

How Many Dice Do I Roll and What Do I keep?

-2	-1	0	1	2
4 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	3 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	2 dice (add together the two results)	3 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	4 dice (add together the 2 highest results)

This table is open-ended in both directions. Simply keep adding an extra die to the roll and keep the two lowest results or highest results, whichever is appropriate.

ADVENTURE

1

▲ Athletic

THOUGHT

1

▲ Level-Headed

DRAMA

-1

▲ Quiet

Thematic

- Struggles with racial identity; Black Power

Plot

- Has a past with Empress Altaria

Recurring

- Frequently is recognized by various residents of cities; no one knows

Cheese

- Shirtless

SFX

- Katana Strike 1/2d
- Powerful Rollerskating Stunt 1/2d
- Meditative Kata and Training Sequence 1/2d

SFX Pool:

3

Character Name:
Brody

Series Name:
Rōgun

Player:

Series Dial:

3

Thematic

2

Plot

5

Recurring

3

Cheese

3

SFX

Background:

Rōgun's battle prodigy, gifted rollerskater, BMX rider, and skateboarder, headstrong and impetuous, but usually eager and friendly to a fault, always interested in any attractive woman, has a serious crush on Dr. Crystal, trouble seems to follow him, but he often goes out of his way to look for it.

Casting:

15-year-old white male, longish surfer blond hair, charming impish smile, teen magazine heartthrob.

Spotlights:

How Many Dice Do I Roll and What Do I keep?

-2	-1	0	1	2
4 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	3 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	2 dice (add together the two results)	3 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	4 dice (add together the 2 highest results)

This table is open-ended in both directions. Simply keep adding an extra die to the roll and keep the two lowest results or highest results, whichever is appropriate.

ADVENTURE

1

▲ Daring

THOUGHT

-1

▲ Brash

DRAMA

1

▲ Dreamy

Thematic

- Moody disaffected teenager

Plot

- Has privately vowed to find the killer of Dr. Crystal's family: the Warrior of the Night who wields the Red Blade.

Recurring

- Rollerskating, BMX or skateboarding training montage/ flashback

Cheese

- Loves video games, plays them aboard Rōgun and always seems to find them in every village.

SFX

- Rollerskating, Skateboarding, BMX Stunt 1/2d
- Throwing Stars 1/2d
- Impossible Stunt 2/3d

SFX Pool:

3

Character Name:
Dr. Crystal

Series Name:
Rōgun

Player:

Series Dial: 3 2 5 3 3
Thematic Plot Recurring Cheese SFX

Background:

Rōgun's resident doctor and engineer, former child prodigy, has a conflicted romantic past with Lord Zell, was a widowed mother until her son was killed, very guarded around men, but is open to the idea of love, more than anything wants peace, acts unaware of her sex appeal.

Casting:

Attractive Asian woman, late 20s, blond hair, swimsuit-poster model, talks quickly when nervous.

Spotlights:

How Many Dice Do I Roll and What Do I Keep?

-2	-1	0	1	2
4 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	3 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	2 dice (add together the two results)	3 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	4 dice (add together the 2 highest results)

This table is open-ended in both directions. Simply keep adding an extra die to the roll and keep the two lowest results or highest results, whichever is appropriate.

ADVENTURE

0

THOUGHT

1

DRAMA

0

Thematic

- Sees no reason why women can't be seen as equals to men.

Plot

- Very curious about the Warriors of the Night and what technologies they might have. Can Rōgun and the Warriors of the Night unite?

Recurring

- Upset at all the violence, because of the loss of her husband and son.

Cheese

- Bathing suit scene

SFX

- Rollerskating Whip 1/+2d
- Two Sword Strike 1/+2d
- Just the Right Gadget 1/+2d

SFX Pool:

3

Character Name:

Tyrra

Series Name:

Rōgun

Player:

Series Dial:

3

Thematic

2

Plot

5

Recurring

3

Cheese

3

SFX

Background:

Little is known of the psychics, nor do they divulge much in the way of information. Psychics speak often of "the balance" and "we are all one," though their presence makes those in authority very uneasy. Practitioner of ancient arts (namely kung-fu type disciplines).

Casting:

Exotic looking, bald woman, serious eyes.

Spotlights:

How Many Dice Do I Roll and What Do I Keep?

-2	-1	0	1	2
4 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	3 dice (add together the 2 lowest results)	2 dice (add together the two results)	3 dice (add together the 2 highest results)	4 dice (add together the 2 highest results)

This table is open-ended in both directions. Simply keep adding an extra die to the roll and keep the two lowest results or highest results, whichever is appropriate.

ADVENTURE

-1

▲ Slow to React

THOUGHT

1

▲ Insightful

DRAMA

1

▲ Positive Aura

Thematic

- Gardening and self-sufficiency

Plot

- Sinister overtones to the psychics; do they have a hidden agenda?

Recurring

- Passionate kisses with whomever

Cheese

- Meditation

SFX

- Aura Read 1/2d
- Psionic Blast 1/2d
- Kung-Fu 1/2d
- Psychic Flight 2/3d

SFX Pool:

3



NOTES FOR THE SHOWRUNNER

IMPORTANT: If you are a player, please do not read any further.

Contained within are some more specific details on the Rōgun Plot Dial, as well as guidelines for a Rōgun episode.

Plot

Season 1 of Rōgun was primarily an excuse to have rollerskating samurai in a sci-fi setting, but the producers did have an extended narrative in mind. If the Plot Dial indicates the presence of plot in an episode, it could mean one of three things, and a Showrunner does not need to reveal their hand at once, and can provide menacing glimpses into the plot.

1: Someone within Rōgun commits an act of shocking betrayal or has a conflicted allegiance. This could be as simple as the Showrunner describing a Rōgun entry being unlocked allowing the Warriors of the Night entry. Of course, we do not see who did it, or it could mean Empress Altaria having a conversation aboard Rōgun, unbeknownst to anyone.

2: Season 2 of Rōgun focused less on the fortress as being mobile and more on the main characters. The producers wanted this to happen because of landscape features, so several times during Season 1, there was an obstacle that almost hinders Rōgun. The first season closed with Lord Zell declaring that Rōgun shall remain where it is while the Samouri venture forth.

3: An appearance by Empress Altaria! Any appearance by the mysterious, malevolent mastermind of the Warriors of the Night should be ominous and hint at greater plans in motion.

The Structure of a Retrostar Episode

Due to the Time Management mechanic, Retrostar uses a 5-Act structure. The 5-Act Structure used for a standard Retrostar Series is:

Act 1: Introduce the world and characters, introduce the problem.

Act 2: More is learned about the problem.

Act 3: Characters work towards resolution of the problem; often, a wrinkle is introduced, be it complications or new information about the problem, or a second problem entirely.

Act 4: The stakes rise, all seems lost, and finally, the solution likely presents itself.

Act 5: Dramatic climax with resolution of the problem.

A Retrostar episode, as prepared by the Showrunner, will likely be little more than a very rough outline of the significant elements of each Act. In the Retrostar rulebook, we will go into significant detail about episode and series creation and all aspects of Showrunning.

Retrostar episodes should be communal efforts, with the players and Showrunner using their Dials to flesh out the rough idea brought to the table by the Showrunner.

We are presenting some guidelines for a Retrostar episode, but will also give some broad guidelines on how to make it even more your own.

Using the Dials

In preparing for a Retrostar episode, the Showrunner will roll all the Dials to see what might come up. They will jot these down, and during an episode, a Showrunner should keep their series notes close at hand.

What does rolling the Dials do? It tells the Showrunner what Dials will definitively be in a given episode. How to incorporate the Dial is up to the Showrunner.

Players might also roll one of their Dials, and if it comes up, they will inform the Showrunner, who will jot down this specific Detail.

Because of the exciting, “stay-tuned” nature of commercial television, zigging instead of zagging is expected. Due to the time management mechanic of dice rolling, the burden falls on the shoulders of the Showrunner to keep an episode on track. The Showrunner has the authority to end a particular Scene whenever they want, especially if this moves the action and drama in unexpected ways.

So, a Showrunner has rolled their Dials and might have an idea of what they want the focal point of a specific Episode to be (“The PCs have to help protect a group of peaceful aliens from the marauders,” or “The PCs need to have an epic roller derby contest with the enemy.”), but the details are left very vague. A Showrunner will know that the Thematic Dial is present, as well as the Recurring Dial. Is this to say that the Cheese Dial will not be present? Absolutely not! Bring in whatever you want to, but be sure to include the Dials that came up.

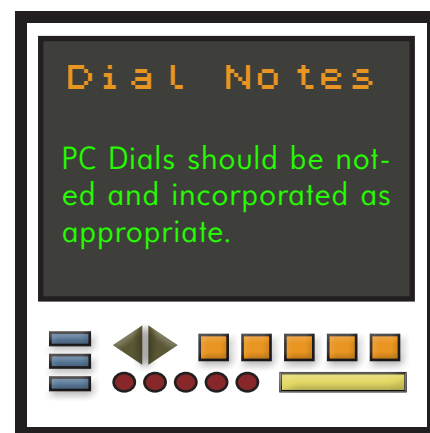
Look over the Dial specifics and start formulating an idea. It may seem that these specifics are rather limited. This is intentional. There is a direct sense of comfort and familiarity to episodic television.



In this section, we break down an introductory Episode of Rōgun, entitled *Force* (Rōgun episode titles came from the *I-Ching* and the producers envisioned 64 episodes total).

What follows is a rough outline of the 5 Acts, as well as some advice for Showrunners, but ultimately, you must make Rōgun your own.

Whenever a character fails or cedes control, it is an opportunity for the Showrunner to send the episode in wild, new and unpredicted directions, so don't feel obligated to follow the outline slavishly.



Overview

Rōgun episodes had many recurring features — characters training (rollerskating), discovery of a new village in the journey east, conflict with the Warriors of the Night, and sometimes a trip into a nearby city.

During the course of an episode, PCs will meet new people, make new friends, experience love and loss, and often have to help the people of the village deal with a problem... while simultaneously dealing with a problem aboard Rōgun.

And most episodes ended with some sort of showdown with the Warriors of the Night.

If you are asking yourself why rollerskating (and BMX and skateboarding), the answer lies in the lack of fuel. Human-driven propulsion did not rely on energy sources.



Act 1



Scene 1

It's time for rollerskating practice. Most Rōgun episodes start with some sort of combat training and practice. In the world of Rōgun, this means rollerskating, skateboarding, and BMX riding.

This Scene should require every character to make at least one Adventurous intention. The PCs are opposed by nameless SCs, as well as various obstacles (each of them a -1d challenge). It is the Showrunner's job to make this Scene fun and exciting!

Characters who fail should be highlighted at the end of the Scene, detailing their failure. Players who succeed will be immediately present in the next Scene.

Scene 2

Rōgun arrives on the outskirts of a new village. Only PCs who were successful in Scene 1 will initially be present here. If no PCs were successful, consider using only characters with positive Drama scores.

The name of the village is Green Vale. Visually, this village is reminiscent of the typical Main Street in "Small Town America", though in a slight state of disrepair. It should also have various anachronistic futuristic elements, in addition to shiny chrome fixtures present on every structure.

The problem Green Vale is facing is that its energy distributors have been inconsistently transferring the energy needed to power their automated nocturnal early warning systems.

Being simple people, they have been unable to pinpoint the problem. This is where the PCs can help. An initial -1d Thoughtful intention will get the system up and running, but this fix is only temporary.

An additional -2d Thoughtful intention will determine that at fault is the degradation of their Sol-taic fuel cells. Once these fuel cells degrade, they must be replaced.

Where might these fuel cells be found? A city.

Rōgun uses different fuel cells, and would not be able to spare any, even if they were the same.

Introduce some of the SCs, introduce and incorporate any Player Dials that are appropriate. Additionally, allow characters a chance to explore Green Vale and establish their own character-based plot threads. Dr. Crystal may decide to provide medical care to those in need, Brody might find other young people interested in BMX or skateboarding (and is likely to want to find the arcade), and so forth. Allow characters to assist the villagers with evening protection of Green Vale if they are not actively using their Traits.

Players may return to Rōgun to research and try and solve the village's problem, but the only solution is to replace the Soltaic cell.

Characters should easily be able to gather information on the nearest city, Elban. Elban is just over a day's travel away. It is a moderately sized city and is in ruin. Characters should get permission from Rōgun before journeying there.

Where is the rest of the action? An evening raid by the Warriors of the Night? An ambush by some scroungers far from the city? Helping the villagers?

Possible SCs include:

- An attractive teenage girl named Maddie for Brody to interact with, she is fascinated by Rōgun and wants to know more, and possibly even sneak aboard.
- A single mother named Sheilara, who is attracted to Maxis.
- Dr. Wells, a local doctor who has been trying to treat an illness he doesn't have the right medicine for.
- A cautious villager named Jediah who is scared of the psychic, but this is due to the fact that his daughter left Green Vale to journey to another village with her soulmate. Can the psychic heal his pain?



Act 2



The pacing of the Scenes in Act 2 is very much up the Showrunner. The essential elements of this Act are:

- A significant evening raid by the Warriors of the Night! Perhaps the raid is on Green Vale or maybe it is an attack on Rōgun. During this raid, an SC villager is lost. At least one of the PCs will see the character seemingly die, but the body will not be found. This should be very dramatic and not be brushed off lightly. The effect on Green Vale will be devastating.
- The PCs are also informed that Rōgun also needs a fuel cell and that this could be found in the city.



Act 3



The PCs will journey to the city, perhaps coming up against one or two challenges in their way (-1d challenges). Consider making them necessitate Thoughtful or Dramatic intentions — a bridge is out, some SCs need to be swayed to allow the PCs to pass, etc. Allow all the characters a chance to shine, not just the more Adventure-intensive ones.

Possible complications or ways to incorporate these challenges:

- PCs who failed or ceded control of their characters might find that villager SCs they grew fond of have followed them.
- Perhaps Maddie wanted to go and has been kidnapped; or they find traces of her (maybe her skateboard).

In terms of pacing, do not allow the PCs to expend too many Intentions, as there has to be a conflict with the Scroungers, and the players will need to find and recover two different types of fuel cells. How? Thoughtful or Dramatic intention to find them, and any Trait to recover them. And the Scroungers should be a threat, but not enough to disable the PCs.

Cities are dangerous places. Visually, they are run-down, streets lined with debris and crackling lights everywhere... but not all residents of a city are malevolent. Perhaps you can introduce some sympathetic SCs; maybe bring in Thematic or Cheese elements (a night club playing awesome soul or funk music, anyone?).

Consider ending the Act on a cliffhanger. Do the PCs escape the city alive?



Act 4



Night falls as the PCs make their way back to Green Vale, only to face another attack by the Warriors of the Night.

A return to Green Vale finds the recovered Soltaic fuel cell is non-functional. However, if the players return to the Rōgun, they will find the fuel cell they recovered for the Rōgun *is* functional. Lord Zell declares that the people of Green Vale must learn to fend for themselves and that the PCs have done them a great service by recovering the fuel cell. He does not want the PCs to help them recharge the cell. The characters can, of course, try to sway Lord Zell. This would likely be a Dramatic intention opposed by Zell (-3d). Hopefully, players will try and convince Lord Zell that they have a duty to help the people of Green Vale. If the players do not want to, have Dr. Takamoto stand up to Lord Zell.

If the players do not return to the Rōgun, send an SC to Green Vale and inform the PCs that the Rōgun will be leaving the following morning. They can, again, try to convince him otherwise, but must return to the Rōgun.

Dr. Takamoto (or perhaps Dr. Crystal with a Thoughtful intention) will inform the players that the Soltaic cell needs to be charged and that this can only happen by finding a Terranetic spring. Once found, the cell must be rotated clockwise around the perimeter of the spring until it recharges.

You don't know about Terranetic springs? Terranetic fields occur naturally and manifest as springs – large bowl shaped recesses in the ground. The use of Terranetic fields to power fuel cells is now somewhat archaic, but still effective.

Translation: a naturally occurring roller derby arena!

Finding these fields can be problematic (Thoughtful intentions using sensors aboard Rōgun, and possibly Dramatic intentions to access these sensors).

Recall that in Act 4, all seems lost, and the drama can take an unexpected turn.

The drama here is that the PCs are being ordered to *not* help find the Terranetic field and assist the people of Green Vale... and Rōgun will be leaving in the morning. Even if the players do not bite on their duty, Dr. Takamoto will insist. But, give the players the first opportunity to do what is honorable.

Hopefully, the PCs will accept their roles as heroes and do the right thing.

The PCs might end up finding the Terranetic spring in Act 4, but things get truly hectic in Act 5!



Act 5



One character will need to hold the cell (strapped to their back) while circling the Terranetic spring on rollerskates. Simple, right? Wrong! This is Act 5 after all!

The Warriors of the Night show up, so we're gonna have ourselves a good ol' fashioned Rōgun battle; in other words, a roller derby combat, but with Asian weapons. To up the ante even more, the SC lost in Act 2 reappears, now as a Cyborman! Can the SC be defeated without being destroyed? Can the humanity of the SC be restored? What exactly is going on? Of course, the "what exactly is going on" question hints at a much larger picture (and that is always fun), but for Act 5, it's all about the roller derby! Adventurous intentions are a must, but allow players the flexibility to be creative!

If the PCs are successful, allow them to return to Green Vale, be thanked by the villagers and all the other fun stuff that arises from being victorious (which shouldn't require an Intent). And then have the episode end with the sun setting behind Rōgun as it starts moving towards the camera, beginning its slow trek east!

If the PCs are not initially successful, allow them a chance to assault the Warriors of the Night to retrieve the cell. Or maybe this is the first half of a two-parter, in which case, you have to come up with Episode 2: *Field*.



GENERAL SHOWRUNNER TIPS

Due to the 5-Act Structure, players will hopefully have saved most of the SFX and Spotlight Tokens for the 5th Act (the climax).

Encourage players to describe flashbacks, so, if a character needs to call upon some wisdom gained earlier in the episode, and it seems appropriate, allow it. Flashbacks are a fun way to play with the narrative a bit... because of the unknown nature of a roleplaying game, we cannot foreshadow what will happen.

For example, the fate of the Soltai Cell in Act 5 rests upon the shoulders of Tyrra, who is alone against the Cyborman. She needs to succeed, and describes a moment that she and the Cyborman had in Green Vale before he was lost. Perhaps the Cyborman is still human enough to break away from his reprogramming. She describes this flashback, calling upon her Positive Aura for a Spotlight Token, and making a Dramatic intention, even though an Adventurous intention might seem more appropriate, since she is attempting to commune with the human soul still contained within.



Glossary of Terms

Act: (pgs. 9, 16-17, 30, 36) a specific narrative part of an Episode, and roughly one fifth of that as the game is using a 5-Act structure.

Adventure: (pg. 7) the name of one of the game's three Traits for every Player Character; Adventure is the Trait directly related to physical action, athletics, driving, piloting, and fighting.

Adventurous intention: (pgs. 13, 18, 32, 35-36) a fanciful phrase used for cases when an Intent is based on the Adventure Trait.

Ally SC: (pg. 14) a Showrunner Character who is mainly helpful, useful, and friendly towards the PCs. They may even play a key role in an Episode, but are not a main hero.

Background: (pg. 6) This is a concise description of the character's role within the Series. It will appear as a short paragraph of regular prose text on the character sheet.

bonus: (pgs. 12-13) This is a number of 6-sided dice added to the pool of dice to be rolled. In Retrostar, bonuses never add something to the roll results, but to the number of dice! Bonuses are indicated with a plus sign in front of the number of dice, for example: +1d, +2d. They can be gained from many circumstances and game elements, such as using a character's personal SFX, or from spending Spotlight Tokens.

Casting: (pg. 7) This is a short description of the "actor" portraying the character, mainly in terms of distinctive physical qualities. Of course, this can and should include fashions and beauty ideals of the 1970s.

challenge: (pgs. 16-17) something in a Scene that renders succeeding at a task more difficult by causing a penalty, e.g. "You are all walking on shaky ground now and have to take a -1d challenge," or "The massive purple squid monster in the pit counts as a -3d challenge."

Cheese: (pgs. 5-6) the name of one of the Series Dials as well as the Character Dials; Cheese indicates the amount of whimsical, superficial and shallow elements that are merely based on fads of the era (the real-life 1970s).

d6: a common abbreviation for any standard six-sided die/dice in roleplaying games.

d12: a common abbreviation for any twelve-sided die/dice in roleplaying games. In Retrostar, the 12-sided die is only used to keep track of the Intents per Act. (*Yes, really... it has no other application here. At least not until the big revision in 2018, that is. ☺*)

Descriptor: (pgs. 6-7, 13) a single word or phrase indicated in parentheses after the rating in a Trait, anything that serves to further illustrate and customize that Trait for that character only.

Dial: (pgs. 4-6) a measure of a Series' or a character's outstanding qualities and features, expressed on a scale from 0 to 6. The Dials will highly affect the general tone and feel of a Retrostar game, and the SFX Dial will also determine the number of SFX points available.

dice: (pgs. 2, 9-14) the basic randomizers used in Retrostar; dice only come out when there is a roll to be made that will alter and influence the plot. There will be only a strictly limited number of dice rolls per Act, and thus per Episode. Apart from the d12 used by the Showrunner to track Intents per Act, only 6-sided dice are needed. 6-sided dice are abbreviated as just "d".

Drama: (pg. 7) the name of one of the game's three Traits for every Player Character; Drama is the Trait used for tasks of romance, charisma, persuasion, negotiations, interpersonal (non-violent) conflicts, willpower, and more.

Dramatic intention: (pgs. 6, 9, 13, 15, 34-36) a phrase used for cases when an Intent is based on the Drama Trait.

Enemy SC: (pg. 14) any Showrunner Character who is used as an opponent to the Player Characters.

Episode: (pgs. 4-6, 8-10, 16, 30-36) a portion of a Series in Retrostar, a definitive adventure story, and usually (not always!) corresponding to a single session of play.

Intent: (pgs. 6, 8-10, 12-14, 16-17) the word for an "action resolution" dice roll in Retrostar. An Intent is usually rolled by the players, and is always based on a Trait and used to resolve a task. In order for something to require an Intent in the first place, it should be something crucial, spectacular and/or risky, and any outcome will affect the plot of the Episode. Intents can be proactive or reactive, offensive or defensive. The game mechanic remains the same. What is more, Intents represent significant moments of screen time, and are rolled for with a number of 6-sided dice after accounting for all bonuses and penalties.

Intention: (pgs. 6, 9-14) another word sometimes used for Intent.

Intention Result: (pgs. 10, 14) the result of a dice roll based on (and made possible by) an Intent, which can be only a success or a failure, with or without the player maintaining narrative control.

narrative control: (pgs. 13-15) a way of describing the right to spin the tale of an Episode, and determine a character's situation and actions. The Showrunner has complete and total narrative control of all the SCs in the game, and each player has narrative control of their respective PC unless dictated otherwise (see Intention Results).

penalty: (pgs. 12, 17) a number of 6-sided dice "subtracted" from the pool of dice to be rolled. Penalties are indicated with a minus sign in front of the number of dice, for example: -1d, and -2d. Whenever the total is a negative number of dice, you roll that number of dice plus two dice (2d6) and add the lowest two results. The latter makes succeeding very hard.

player: (pgs. 2, 5-6, 10-11) any person playing in a session of Retrostar, distinct from the Showrunner.

Player Character: (pgs. 6-7) any character created and portrayed by a player; Player Characters are always the "stars" of their series, and abbreviated as PCs.

Plot: (pgs. 4-6) the name of one of the Series Dials as well as the Character Dials; "Plot" measures how much the Series emphasizes overarching plotlines. A low rating in this Dial means that the Series uses Episodes with plots that are basically all self-contained.

Recurring: (pgs. 4-6) the name of one of the Series Dials as well as the Character Dials; "Recurring" measures how many repeated or re-used Scenes and shots a Series has. Note: It doesn't have to be literally the same footage, it also means how many topics, subplots, quirks and concerns are mentioned over and over again.

roll: (pgs. 5, 9-14) any instance of rolling a die or several dice to determine something in the game; in its basic rules, Retrostar only uses Dial rolls (based on 1d6) and Intents (based on 2d6).

Scene: (pgs. 4-5, 9-11, 16) a narrative unit of an Episode of gameplay; could be a long talky scene, an action scene, a big battle, a chase, a montage, or anything else. Several Scenes form an Act, and five Acts form an Episode.

SFX: (pgs. 4-6, 8, 12-13, 18-22) the name of one of the Series Dials, expressing how big the Series is on “amazing” special effects of the era. Characters do not have an SFX Dial, but an SFX pool. The SFX Dial of a Series determines the number of SFX points each player has in that pool.

SFX points: (pgs. 8, 12) a currency of points, and thus tokens, used to show when players or the Showrunner draw on a Series’ special effects budget to create a cool effect.

Showrunner: (pgs. 2, 4-6, 8, 13-17, 30-31) the Retrostar player taking the role of the game’s main narrator, rules adjudicator, editor, and master of ceremonies as it were; also, the one usually preparing the Series and its Episodes to play in.

Showrunner Character: (pgs. 12, 14) any character created and portrayed by the Showrunner, not by a player. Showrunner Characters are abbreviated as “SCs” and will include both Ally and Enemy SCs.

Spotlight Token: (pgs. 13-14, 16) Spotlight Tokens, when spent, will add dice to the pool of dice rolled. These can be used for a +2d bonus to any Intent, but the character has to do so using something from their character sheet: Background, Casting, or Descriptors. There will be Spotlight Tokens individually assigned to each Player Character as well as a small pool of Spotlight Tokens for all PCs in an Episode.

task: (pgs. 7, 12, 14, 17) something important a Player Character attempts to do in the story of an Episode.

Task Difficulty: (pgs. 12, 14, 17) a quick measure indicating how tricky – or how easy – a task is. (It’s important to know that, in Retrostar, this is not a “target number” to roll against, but the total of all added and subtracted dice in addition to the basic 2d6. The target numbers do not change, only the number of dice does.)

Thematic: (pgs. 4-6) the name of one of the Series Dials as well as the Character Dials; “Thematic” measures the amount of topical issues and events of the era worked into a Series.

Thought: (pg. 7) the name of one of the three Traits for every Player Character; Thought is the Trait mostly related to using intelligence, awareness, knowledge, and resourcefulness.

Thoughtful intention: (pgs. 9, 13, 20, 22, 35) a phrase used for cases when an Intent is based on the Thought Trait.

Trait: (pg. 7) the name for any of the three broad, principal characteristics used to define a Player Character – Adventure, Thought, and Drama.

Excitement. Adventure. Disco.



(Skin-Tight Jumpsuit Not Included)

If you enjoyed the taste of Retrostar we've given you in the Lightspeed Adventure Manual, you'll *really* dig the full rulebook, which is set for release in the first half of 2015! In addition to character creation rules, series creation rules, loads of advice and an abundance of other bells and whistles, you'll also receive numerous series write-ups, including:

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**EARTH
□ SQUARED**

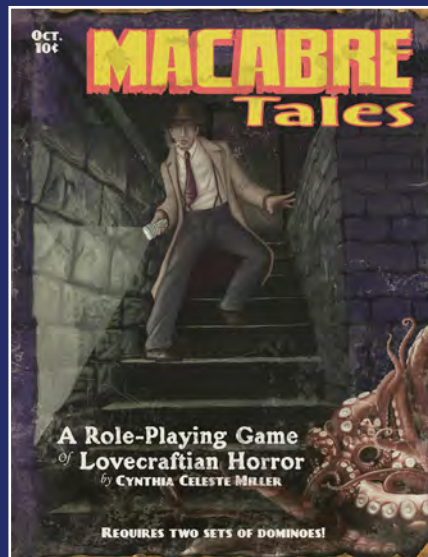
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Thanks For taking a look at Retrostar.

We would love some feedback from you, our customer. Come by our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/spectrumgames), hit "Like" and send us a private message. On a scale of 0-6 (6 being the best), what did you think of the following:

- The layout/graphic design
- The artwork
- The game rules (Intents/Intentions, time management, etc.)
- The sample series.

And if you want to expand upon anything, please do so.

Stay tuned to the Spectrum Games Facebook page for more Retrostar fun!