

Issue 3

ADVENTURE BOUND: SILVER COINS AND ANCIENT MONEY

Excavator Monthly™

Official magazine for **The Mutant Epoch™** milieu

TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art

In this issue...

PC GENERATION VAT:

**FIXED VALUE
ALLOTMENT**

PLAYER'S PERSPECTIVE:

**MEETING
COMRADES**

HOW DO YOUR CHARACTERS
KNOW EACH OTHER?

GM'S BUNKER:

**CHARACTER TYPE
ROTATION & SIMILARITY**

INHABITANTS:

- **KARREL BEDSWORTH** the BOUNTY HUNTER
- **PEGLEG PETE** the WANTED WILDMAN

EVOLUTIONS:

- **DEVIL SPIDER**
- **JAW CRAWLER**
- **MUTANT PERCH**

**THE ARMAMENTS OF
REGULAR PA FORCES**

RELICS RECOVERED:

- **LANDMINE DETECTION COIL**
- **ADVANCED GRENADE LAUNCHER**

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Created by William McAusland

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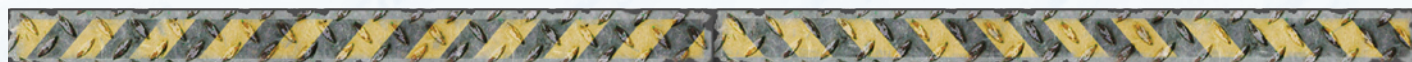
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the Gambler System character generation method. This 40 page issue also contained a full color character sheet to copy or download.

As with every issue of Excavator Monthly, issue 2 will be permanently available for purchase as a downloadable PDF or print copy, check our website for details and links.



Cover of EM issue 2

Last Round

Issue 2 presented readers with a piece on solo-play gaming, another on stashing your loot, and a huge article on Apocalypse Mythology for your characters. We also had all the usual departments and presented three new creatures: the Bloat Creeper, Pipe Worm and Mouter, plus two new relics: the handy Remote Watcher and Semi-Automatic Sniper Rifle. Additionally, Issue two contained a pair of interesting NPCs: Phaydrix the Mind Waster and Sgt. Cole Dodgerre, a purist bounty hunter, plus, another highly useful treasure table along with

Next Round

In next month's issue we announce a contest: Your Character Portrait Drawn, with the winner to be announced in issue 6. We have all the regular departments covered, including 3 articles for GM's bunker: Adversaries Encountered, Keep Them Dice Rollin' and Creating Intriguing Handouts. In Generation Next we cover the Bonus Offer System for rolling up new characters while in Player's Perspective we have two articles: Agreed upon rendezvous as well as this issue's main feature: 50 Character Goals, Drives, and Obsessions. Of course we add to

the game master's bestiary with evolutions, showcasing the massive Waste Grazer, disgusting, Pus Worm, and horrible Hackoid. Relics Recovered gives us the Grenade Mat and potent Laser Tipped Bullets. Articles include a brief tale about a meeting with the real Road Warrior: Mel Gibson, and an excellent and highly useful piece by Danny Seedhouse: The Acrobat Skill



Cover of EM issue 4

From HQ

Issue 3 is a few pages longer than 1 and 2, and we are starting to see an eventual creep up in page count as we add more content, include some gamer-relevant advertising and announcements, and introduce new writers. This month we'd like to welcome Graeme Hallett, who supplied the article on Outfitting A Post Apocalyptic Army. We look forward to getting more content from him for future issues. As mentioned elsewhere on the TME blog, twitter feed and member's only forum, producing this monthly magazine has been great fun, but so too, an enormous amount of work. Some have suggested we go to a quarterly release schedule, and that is tempting in some respects, but not something we plan to do until after issue 12. That said, producing a magazine is challenging and takes about two thirds of the month, leaving not a lot of time to get to the larger source book and adventures. Still, we are proceeding with the interior art of Pitford: Gateway to the Ruins and plan to have it out soon enough.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this content rich issue. Please let us know what you think and send us suggestions of articles you'd like to see.

In closing, we would also like to thank Audrey Deutschmann for her editorial assistance with some of the text in this issue. We plan to recruit her for other TME releases.

Regards, Will McAusland
Creator

Media Chatter

Blogs

Adventures and Shopping is a blog we highly recommend for frequently updated gaming news and in depth descriptions on products, commentary, rules systems and more. Billiam Babble, the host, is also a frequent poster on our TME forum so please join his site, get involved in the great discussions over there and let him know we sent yeah.
<http://adventuresandshopping.blogspot.com>

Youtube

One of our favorite youtube broadcasters, **tetsubo57**, has some interesting things to say about the PA genre, such as in his **Post-apocalyptic Ponderings** video and in **RPG Pondering: A Post-Apocalyptic Conundrum**

Those of you getting our newsletter will remember tetsubo5's reviews of The Mutant Epoch and The Mall of Doom. Maybe we should try and get him to do some writing for us?

Websites

Role players Chronicle asked us some questions about The Mutant Epoch and archived it on their great and growing website. This site covers plenty of other games and looks to be regularly updated. You can check out the whole article here: <http://roleplayerschronicle.com/?p=13108>

Military Channel: There is absolutely a relation between fictional TME excavation teams and small modern military squads. In many TME publications the characters act in the service of some community or faction as volunteers, mercenaries or coerced draftees, often ending up as local heroes regardless of their motivations for taking on a mission.

In some areas of the twisted new world, military traditions continue, passed down to descendants from survivors of the great cataclysm. The reason: so many survivors were soldiers, airmen, marines, sailors, coast guard personnel, off-world troopers or special forces operatives. Most of these personnel were in active duty service at the time of the collapse. Likewise, many survivors were former service members who became law enforcement members or survivalists in the end times, and lead their families and communities through the worse. They were the fittest, best equipped and best trained. They knew how to fight and survive, as well as how to evade danger, pick one's battles, and subsist off the land. They taught their children how to do the same using discipline and teamwork. Their lingo, tactics, uniforms, and gear were well cared for and passed on to subsequent generations until by 2364, ending up in the care of excavators.

These dig teams usually take on a paramilitary structure. One individual becomes a medic, while another gravitates toward being the unit's sniper, melee range tank, stealthy scout, technical expert or negotiator and spokesman. Often adopting the slang and tactics of old world military organizations, some groups even assign ranks amongst themselves, perhaps referring to a new digger as private or trooper.

As a gamer or TME GM of civilian background, it is sometimes helpful to learn more about the armed forces of our time. One place to get inspiration for both players and game masters is the online **Military Channel** at <http://military.discovery.com/>. This site is an exceptional resource.

While The Mutant Epoch is merely entertainment, it never hurts to learn some history along the way. Likewise, appreciating the sacrifices and dedication that the personnel and families of our armed forces have given us, both historically and in the present day, is well deserved.

WM

GM's Bunker

Character Type Rotation and Similarity

By Alexander Waby

Illustrated by W. McAusland

"Oh Man! I've rolled up another slave! He's already wounded, is totally broke, has a black eye, no armor, and only a shovel for a weapon. At least I'm a mutant with acidic blood... what? My character is still in chains and fights at -30 strike value until I can get these cut off? What next? Bounty hunters are after me, dead or alive. Oh son of a -."

Has this ever happened to one of your players? Isn't it frustrating to see one guy always roll up the same pathetic, underprivileged freak? Even worse is when the player next to him, usually a new TME gamer, rolls a battle bioreplicant or a well outfitted, pure stock who starts play with marital arts and an inherited assault rifle, not to mention wears tactical armor and is mounted on a fine horse.

The solution: **Character Type Rotation**. How does this work? The GM has the players roll up one or two new characters according to whatever generation system he or she reckons best; however, while still using the random type generation table, the GM can declare that no player can have the same character type or caste as any other character in the game. For example, Sandra rolls up a military clone, which turns out to have a former lifestyle as a mercenary. Her second character rolled is also a clone, but a labor model. This is still a clone, but not the same model or type. Sandra then goes on to roll that this new character was formerly a raider.

In another example, Mark rolls a mild mutant who is a labor slave, and then a severe Mutant (another type) who is also a slave, but an escape gladiator. While both are mutants and slaves, they are different types and slave types. A GM can elect to impose a house rule that states no player can roll back to back slaves, since Mark's PC's would be at a serious outfitting disadvantage when compared to other PCs in a group. On the other hand, it would make sense that two slaves would be on the run together, having fled the same cruel master.

While every GM may approach this differently, the important thing to remember is that players

should portray a variety of character types from assorted backgrounds. By doing this, a player gets a feel for what it is like to play a heavily mutated freak, a well designed synthetic human, possibly a pure stock human who can travel into the purist zones with little risk of being shot on sight, or even a ghost mutant, able to dwell in both Purist and Aberrationist lands as she desires. It is essential that each player at your table feel that their character is able to contribute to the outcome of the adventure.

Why were slaves even added as a possible character caste? There are many reasons, but the main one is that to rise up from nothing as the underdog and deal with the harsh challenges of The Mutant Epoch is rewarding... if one survives. Think of Spartacus, who led a slave revolt in ancient Republican Rome and defied the very emperor. There are countless great people in human history who have started from humble beginnings.

There is also the notion of identifying with one's underprivileged character. In our modern 21st century world, many not so famous people also struggle on a daily basis which keeps them in very real poverty, even servitude to a shitty job. While not true slavery, the same desire in a modern indentured, debt-chained worker to seek a better life is very strong. Given this, a person who plays a slave will certainly appreciate the power and security of getting hold of his or her first relic weapons and armor, not to mention the safety in numbers when the player character meets up with others eager to seek their fortune in the ruins.

Using the rotation method ensures that a player gets to try out a wide range of character types and outfitting tiers. To encourage this, perhaps the GM's house rule states that a player shouldn't roll up the same character type until every other type has been played. For example, Shawn has rolled up every character type over the past year of gaming, except an infiltration bioreplicant, and now, having lost or retired all his other PCs, is back to the generation rules and is asked to create 3 new characters for the next campaign. Shawn must start with an infiltration bioreplicant, but, the other two PCs can be totally random in type, so long as these last two are also different types from each other.

The reverse rule to character rotation would be **Character Similarity**. Using this generation technique, players take on purposely similar roles to undertake a specific mission, and here, the GM could declare something like this to the gathered players....

"Okay, everybody, here we go. For this new campaign, you are all starting out as ghost mutants living deep within the heartland of the Holy Purist Empire. Nobody knows you're God forsaken mutants. You've



William
McAusland
WM

only just confirmed that each of you is indeed a mutant, even though you all grew up in the same town and have seen each other around. Until meeting in person, you didn't know who you were talking to previously because you were using 'telepathy'*, which you all automatically start with for this scenario.

Eventually, talking from mind to mind you agreed to meet at a beer hall in the industrial part of Pure Hub City. Some of your friends and family are starting to wonder about you. Some say you don't fit in, are weird and talk heresy in your sleep. Worse; you've noticed the Gestapo-like spies for the church, Friars of the Purple Order, lurking about your homes. Clearly, receiving a test from a DNA scanner device isn't far off.

You've decided to get the hell out. You've discussed ways to flee to the Lower Freeholds and from there make your way to the Republic of Aberratia, where mutants rule and pure stocks are slaves."

Likewise, the players could be told....

"For this adventure, you are all labor slaves, beaten, ill fed, flea ridden and mistreated on a daily basis by both the guards and other slaves at a place called Goth's Prison Camp. Here each of you have been kept for several years, but have never really had a chance to talk to each other, until today. You have been chained together in a work detail in the enormous pit called 'the dump'. You have spent the long day digging at a particularly rich vein of relic garbage and debris, when one of you finds a remarkable find. It is a small, pen like tool called a laser scalpel, which due to being in a poly sheathed case which also holds d3 mini power cells, the device works. When the guards who normally beat you are off whipping another prisoner down the slope, you use the mini laser to neatly cut the chains off each of you. You are able to quietly scramble off up the steep crater of debris to the pit rim, and in the growing dark, flee into the plains.

You are free... as well as more or less naked, ill-fed, wounded, cold from sweating, and about a kilometer from the edge of a distant line of trees. The sound of howling wolves and stranger predators all that greets you. Alarm bells sound from deep in the pit behind you, as the prison guards realize they are short a few slaves and prepare to mount a search."

Finally, a third example could be the GM decides that the new characters are all pure stock human troopers of some holdover corporate state, heavily outfitted with combat armor, assault rifles, bayonets, grenades, and communicators. You are immersed in ongoing trench warfare with the robot and android armies of the local Mecha, but called together for the first time to participate in a special mission. Your objective: to slip behind enemy lines and destroy a solar generation plant which the androids are about to complete.

Alternatively, the pure stock PC unit can start play as the remains of a much larger strike team, cut off behind enemy lines and presumed dead. They have to go the long way home, being pursued by combat robots and androids mounted on ATV's and gyrocopters. For players who normally end up with a mix of character types, or play mutants and cyborgs, it might be refreshing for them to look upon the world from the viewpoint of a pure stock in a truly hostile, unpredictable landscape, where the villagers they meet in small towns are mutants, and the newcomers the oddities to be distrusted or rejected.

Using both Character Type Rotation or Character Similarity can foster new opportunities and viewpoints to a player's gaming experience.

The character Similarity option is best used to give the players a new perspective on The Mutant Epoch™, or to start a group from an outsider's view. Ask yourself, what if the PCs were all from Earth's past, frozen in cryonics chambers aboard a starship which has tried to auto dock at a spaceport on earth, but ended up in a swamp? Or, what if the characters were pure stock slaves in a mutant ruled land, or cyborg soldiers for the Mecha who gained self awareness and now seek to flee without being detected and incinerated? For the ultimate mind twisting, heart pounding gaming adventure; try taking the Outland Arts slogan literally... "Putting YOU in the game", and put a bunch of modern day people - a couple of PCs each because they might not last long - just like the player him or herself, into a time machine found at a university lab, a machine designed for some other use, but which malfunctions and transports everyday people, unarmed and uneducated, into The Mutant Epoch™. The purpose of this hair raising adventure would be to show how truly intense and rough this new era actually is, and to add a unexpected twist to a session.

For the GM and players alike, shaking up the expected character generation system keeps the campaign interesting and the players guessing, challenged, and open minded.

** If you have not already read this superb work of fiction The Chrysalides by John Wyndham, then do so. It should be considered required reading for anybody wanting to play The Mutant Epoch. It deals with ghost mutants in a narrow minded, monotheist ruled purist land, sometime in the future.*



PC Generation Vat Fixed Value Allotment

This character generation system is best used by intermediate players of The Mutant Epoch RPG, or other forthcoming Outland System RPGs which use the same mechanic. Only those players who have rolled up previous characters and witnessed how traits operate in a game session will understand how trait value allotment affects their character. The actual trait scores shown below can of course be altered by the GM, but the values noted ensure that characters have at least one strong trait and one weak trait, if not more depending on the 'trait collection' used. The one exception in every case is the Appearance trait, which must always be rolled randomly like a standard character, or perhaps using some other totally random system (like the Double Barrel system where one rolls twice for each trait and picks which ever score is higher). The reason for this exception in regards to character appearance is to deter players from always making their characters ugly. Without such a rule, players will invariably assign the lowest trait score to APP, for at first glance it has less bearing on one's survival than agility or willpower. Of course, depending on the sort of game session the characters find themselves in, one's looks might make the difference between success and failure.

Any one of the four following trait collections can be assigned to the players by the GM, with each trait value (except Appearance) being allotted for each of the eligible 7 traits according to the player's wishes. These collections offer players the opportunity to play individuals with a variety of weaknesses and strengths.

Trait Collection	Values to be Allotted						
Flat	9	18	23	25	27	32	35
Moderate	7	14	21	28	33	34	44
Extreme	4	9	19	29	34	47	65
Very Extreme	2	5	21	42	53	62	71





Player's Perspective

Meeting Comrades: How do the characters know each other?

By Alexander Waby

Illustrated by William McAusland

So you have your characters rolled up, now, why do they know each other? Why are they suddenly a team? Did they just meet in a barter fort's dusty, freak-infested saloon and decide to trust each other with their lives? Establishing a reason for the assorted characters to join is both entertaining and a valuable plot resource employable by your game master.

Depending on the adventure and setting there are a few circumstances whereby the players may not get

to decide on how their characters know each other. For example, if the new characters first meet up because the game master's story demands that the PCs are slaves in a salvage mine, there is no point in the players deciding they all know each other as long lost cousins summoned by a dying uncle with a map to a hidden stash of loot. On the other hand, if the GM wants the players to collectively decide how their PCs know each other, the players can either pick or roll from the options to follow. Alternatively, even without the randomized meetings listed below, the players can create a plausible reason for their PCs to know each other. With regards to the old cliché of RPG characters meeting up in a tavern, there are very compelling reasons to support this. In *The Mutant Epoch* era, saloons, bars, and inns are frequently the only place a stranger to a town can find hospitality. This is because no sane local family would take an armed outlander into their home and there aren't many motels or bunk houses in smaller communities.