

"Myths and legends die hard in America. We love them for the extra dimension they provide, the illusion of near-infinite possibility to erase the narrow confines of most men's reality. Weird heroes and mold-breaking champions exist as living proof to those who need it that the tyranny of 'the rat race' is not yet final."

THINE

—Dr. Hunter S. Thompson, The Great Shark Hunt (1979)

A GREEN RONIN PRODUCTION

Design Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed. and Steve Kenson

Additional Design **Rob Toth** Graphic Design & Art Direction **Hal Mangold** Cover Art **Scott James** Development Jon Leitheusser Editing Jim Long Publisher Chris Pramas

Interior Art MK Ultra Studios, Scott James, Alex Johns

Playtesters Jim Auwaerter, Bob Huss, Galen Mullins, Aaron Sullivan

Green Ronin Staff Chris Pramas, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Steve Kenson, Jon Leitheusser, Evan Sass, Marc Schmalz, and Bill Bodden

First Edition Graphic Design & Art Direction Sean Glenn

Permission is granted to print one copy of the electronic version of this product for personal use.



Author's Dedication: To Julius Schwartz and Stan Lee for ushering us into a wonderful new Age, and to all those who made the Silver & Bronze Ages shine, including Jack Abel, Neal Adams, Dan Adkins, Murphy Anderson, Ross Andru, Jim Aparo, Dick Ayers, Cary Bates, Otto Binder, E. Nelson Bridwell, Sol Brodsky, John Broome, Frank Brunner, John Buscema, Sal Buscema, John Byrne, Nick Cardy, Chris Claremont, Dave Cockrum, Gene Colan, Gerry Conway, Dick Dillin, Steve Ditko, Arnold Drake, Steve Englehart, Mike Esposito, Michael Fleisher, Gardner Fox, Ramona Fradon, Gary Friedrich, Steve Gerber, Frank Giacoia, Joe Giella, Joe Gill, Dick Giordano, Archie Goodwin, Mike Grell, Bob Haney, Don Heck, Fred Hembeck, Carmine Infantino, Tony Isabella, Klaus Janson, Jenette Kahn, Gil Kane, Robert Kanigher, Jack Kirby, George Klein, Joe Kubert, Bob Layton, Larry Leiber, Paul Levitz, Elliot S! Maggin, Bill Mantlo, David Michelinie, Sheldon Moldoff, Doug Moench, Jim Mooney, Denny O'Neil, Jerry Ordway, Tom Palmer, George Papp, George Pérez, Paul Reinman, Marshall Rogers, John Romita, Bob Rozakis, George Roussos, Kurt Schaffenberger, Mike Sekowsky, John Severin, Marie Severin, Jim Shooter, Bill Sienkiewicz, Joe Sinnott, Steve Skeates, Jim Steranko, Chic Stone, Curt Swan, Roy Thomas, Herb Trimpe, George Tuska, Len Wein, Barry WindsorSmith, Marv Wolfman, Wally Wood, Bernie Wrightson, and Mike Zeck.

Christopher McGlothlin's Special Thanks: To the Lord Jesus Christ, my patient wife Tanith, and our dogs Buster, Jackson & Maggie, who together make all good things in my life happen.

Silver Age is ©2010 Green Ronin Publishing, LLC. All rights reserved. Reference to other copyrighted material in no way constitutes a challenge to the respective copyright holders of that material. Silver Age, Mutants & Masterminds, Green Ronin, Freedom City, and their associated logos are trademarks of Green Ronin Publishing, LLC.

The following text is Open Gaming Content: all game stats, except material previously declared Product Identity.

Printed in USA



Green Ronin Publishing 3815 S. Othello St, Suite 100 #304 Seattle WA 98118 custserv@greenronin.com www.greenronin.com www.mutantsandmasterminds.com

The discussion of real world events in this book is the sort of pop history that is often reflected in comics.

Readers should not mistake the material for a nuanced analysis of complicated events or a statement on Green Ronin's political views. **Silver Age** was typeset in ITC Quay Sans, designed by David Quay in 1990, and HTF Gotham Condensed, designed by Tobias Frere-Jones in 2002. THE PARTY

TABLE OF

INTRODUCTION	
CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF SILVER AGE COMICS	
CHAPTER 2: THE SILVER AGE WORLD	
An Overview of America During the Cold War	
Us	
War of the Satellites	
Gee, I Wish We Had One of Them Doomsday Machines	
Bang, Zoom, Straight to the Moon!	
Red Zone Cuba	
The 'Nam	
Fail	
Fraud	
Waist Deep in the Big Muddy	
Give Peace a Chance	
Have You Ever Seen the Rain?	
The Revolution Will Not Be Televised	23
We Gotta Get Out of This Place	
The End	
Sucking in the Seventies	
Win One for the Gipper	
Hollywood Ending	
The Silver Age and Real-World History	
1956-1963: New Frontier	
1963-1975: The Times They Are a-Changin'	
1975-1986: Get Down Tonight	
Life During the Silver Age	
Silver Age Society	
Everyday People Get a Job	
That's Entertainment!	
Silver Age Technology	
The Four Color Universe	
CHAPTER 3: SILVER AGE HEROES	
Starting Power Levels	
Crusading Silver Age Heroes	
Classic Silver Age Superheroes	
Omnipotent Silver Age Heroes	46
Skills	
Silver Age Feats	
New Vehicle Feats	
Powers	
Complications	
Devices & Equipment	
Silver Age Devices	
Silver Age Equipment	
The Silver Age Arsenal	
Heavy Weapons	
Hero Archetypes	
Amphibian Warrior Avenging Disco Godfather	
Bionic Hero	
Feminist Heroine	
Guitar Hero	
Hard Travelling Hero	
Motocycle Daredevil	
Psychic	

C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER 4: GAMEMASTERING THE SILVER AGE	
Silver Age Campaigns	
Fun, Fun, Fun	
Russians	
Radiation Theatre	
Science!	
The Generation Gap	
Old Chum	
The Kids Are Alright	
She's a Lady	
Steal from the Best	
Double Vision	
Encouraging Authentic	
Silver Age Conventions	68
Bronze Age Campaigns	
Hurting Each Other	
The Real Me	
The Needle and the Spoon	
The Lost Cause	
Supporting Cast Archetypes	
Villain Archetypes	
Communist Brute	
Corrupter of Youth	
Fallen Golden Age Hero	
Femme Fatale	
Giant Monster	
Gimmick-Weapon Master	
Toxic Waste Creature	
Transformer	Q2
CHAPTER 5: THE SILVER AGE OF FREEDOM	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History Beginings and Endings	86 87
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History Beginings and Endings	
Freedom City Silver Age History Beginings and Endings Silver Age Heroes	
Freedom City Silver Age History Beginings and Endings Silver Age Heroes The Freedom League	86 87 87 93 93 93 93
Freedom City Silver Age History Beginings and Endings Silver Age Heroes The Freedom League The Mansion: Freedom League HQ	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 93 99 99
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 87 93 93 93 93 93 99 99 100 100
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 100
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 100 104
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 104 104 107
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 104 104 104 107 111
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 87 93 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 104 104 107 111 111 111
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 104 104 107 111 111 111 111 111 111
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 87 93 93 93 93 99 100 100 100 100 104 107 111
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 93 94 104 107 111 111 111 111 111 111 111 111 111 111 111 111
Freedom City Silver Age History	86
Freedom City Silver Age History	86 87 91 92 93 93 93 94 95 95 96 97 92 93 94 95 96 97 96 97 96 96 97 96 97 96 97 96 97 96 97

INTRODUCTION

he "Silver Age" of comic books was the medium's coming of age, with all the attendant signs of adolescence on full display. It was by turns awesome and awkward, profound and silly, praised and condemned, innovative and plagiarized, but most of all, it was *wonderful*. That's what *Silver Age* is all about: bringing that sense of wonder to fans of the superhero genre everywhere-extra-dimensional Norse-god realms and hidden talkinggorilla cities included.

That overriding element of "*anything's* possible" found in Silver Age tales has proven to be the most powerful, indestructible force in comic books, putting even strange visitors from another planet and Canadian

mutants to shame. Its appeal transcends all barriers and even draws in people who've never picked up an actual comic book in their entire lives, as a string of blockbuster movies derived from Silver Age stories attests. Because of this, the Silver Age ultimately defines who and what the vast majority of people think of when "comic books" cross their minds.

Silver Age allows gamers and comic-book devotees alike to explore the era's amazing legacy, using the best-selling *Mutants & Masterminds* as their guide. In these pages, comic books' most beloved epoch meets the World's Greatest Superhero RPG. So all you hard-traveling heroes out there grab your best suit of unstable molecules and climb into our pickup truck-we're going on a trip across America in search of a "mad and beautiful" era.

USING THIS BOOK

All that's required to role-play the *Silver Age* way is a copy of the *Mutants & Masterminds* rulebook, a twenty-sided die, some pencils and paper, and a group of players who know any villain can be defeated by a commitment to truth, justice, and the American Way. Or, failing that, fruit pies (Oh, the flaky crust! The tasty filling!). Feel free to add miniature figures, dry-erase maps, masked animal sidekicks, etc. to the mixture as seen fit.

Silver Age is broken down into six chapters: two covering the era from both the comic-book and real-world perspectives, two on Silver Age gaming (one for players, another for gamemasters), and two on the Freedom City setting during the time frame: an overview, including Silver Age characters, and an introductory adventure.

Chapter 1 provides a brief history of the many milestones that occurred during comic books' second Age. From the birth of a new generation of scientific costumed superheroes in the happy days of the 1950s to the medium's newfound relevancy in the fractious times of the 1970s, the Silver Age mirrored the triumphs and follies of its era. This section outlines how, through good times and bad, the era's hypertalented creators built upon the Golden Age's legacy and took the medium to unprecedented heights.

Chapter 2 describes the many potential campaign uses the world of Silver Age comic books-both real and fictional-can be put to in an *M&M* campaign. Whether it's the red-hunting action of the Cold War, the can-do spirit of the Race to the Moon, or the social upheaval of the Vietnam Era, there are no shortages of challenges even for the most super superheroes. There's also information on how best to incorporate actual history into *M&M* games for an added touch of verisimilitude.

Chapter 3 is all about how to create authentic Silver Age superheroes. Comic books were different back in the days of crew cuts and eighttrack tapes: in style, outlook, and conventions. This chapter provides tips to players on how to create characters suitable for the era and get them ready for some commie-smashing, disco-dancing action. *Chapter 4* gets gamemasters up to speed on everything they need to create adventures set (chronologically or spiritually) in comics' second age. It's an era as diverse as any, and becomes all the more so when its modern reinterpretations are taken into account. This chapter helps gamemasters choose the approach that's most appealing to them and their players.

In addition, Chapter 4 saves busy gamemasters some work. It provides archetypes for all manner of Silver Age regulars, from Snoopy Girl Reporters to fiery Campus Radicals, as well as a plethora of gadgets, vehicles, and equipment, both real and fantastic.

Chapter 5 is for all the Freedom City freaks out there, man, as it takes

a nostalgic look back to the Silver Age of *Mutants* & *Masterminds*' premier metropolis. This section gives you the lowdown on all the most important locations, events and personages of

Freedom during the Cold War era. Whether it is gamemasters who want to run a campaign or adventure set in Freedom during the Silver Age or just add a little bit of the era's style and attitude to a modern-day campaign, this chapter brings the city's glorious past to life.

WHERE IT'S AT, MAN

The only thing Silver Age aficionados seem to agree on is their shared affection for the era. Beyond that, fandom is often bitterly divided over particular arcane happenings in decades-old kids' stories. We know, because we care way too much about them, too. However, for reasons of space and sanity, *Silver Age* is forced to take sides on these parallel-earth-shattering issues. For the record, here's where we stand, so any and all disaffected elements can walk away from this book with purses unscathed and world-views unchallenged.

For our purposes, the Silver Age began in 1956, transitioned into a "Bronze Age" in the early 1970s, then finally yielded to the Iron (or Dark) Age in 1986. Sure, there are good counter-arguments (from Earth-3, perhaps? Or the anti-matter universe?) to be made against this choice of dates. Some even question whether there even *was* such a thing as the Bronze Age. No slight is intended by mentioning the dissenting views only in passing, but that's our (hi)story, and we're sticking to it.

Even by modern standards, the Silver Age was a remarkably diverse period, with superheroes sharing spinner-rack space with horror, war, humor, Western, science fiction, romance, fantasy, educational, religious, and licensed titles throughout. However, these other milieus are not covered in *Silver Age*, which remains focused on capes and cowls. The other genres are better served in other *M&M* books, like *Golden Age* (war) and *Warriors & Warlocks* (fantasy). Sadly, *Hunks & Heartbreakers* (the *M&M* guide to romance comics) remains, seemingly forever, on Green Ronin Publishing's "to do" list.

Many fine superhero comics have been (and continue to be) published outside the United States, but frankly, we've got our hands full just discussing the American ones. No offense is intended, and we apologize in advance to anyone totally appalled by the fact we don't talk more about (say) Finland. It's really just a case of there being only so many pages in a book. So put down the boxing-glove arrow, angry fan-boy from another land, and share some tranya with us. We're all gonna be Old Chums here.

So there you have it: *Silver Age* is just about American superhero comics from the mid-'50s to the mid-'80s, and that's still pretty freaking cool. Now, all aboard the cosmic treadmill- destination: more *M&M*-style retro fun!



CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF SILVER AGE COMICS

he true-life narrative of the superhero comic-book genre from the years 1956 to 1986 is-to borrow a phrase-a tale to astonish. For in this magical yesteryear, the creative folks behind the funny books took chances a-plenty, enriching the medium (if not their bank accounts) for all time. Even when their risk-taking didn't pay off artistically, it was rarely dull, and often unintentionally hilarious.

Our little history lesson is also a classic Hollywood comeback story, so hang around for the part where (spoiler alert!) the scrappy underdogs win in the end. Before we get to that part, naturally enough we have to start at the bottom, with our protagonists face-down in the proverbial gutter.

WORLD WITHOUT HEROES

Back in '56, only the truest of true believers (or foolish fools) could have held out any hope for the once-ubiquitous superhero comic book. During comic books' "Golden Age" of the 1930s and '40s, the printed adventures of the Technicolor long-john set dotted the American landscape from coast to coast and newsstand to newsstand. By the mid-'50s their numbers had dwindled to just three hardy survivors still popular enough to carry their own books: National Comics' "trinity" of Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. Not that fans raised on "The Death of Superman," *The Dark Knight Returns*, or "Sacrifice" would much recognize any of them. Like a bunch of has-been rockers reduced to playing kids' birthday parties, National's once-mighty signature characters were stuck in a series of increasingly silly adventures, all aimed at the youngest dime-toting readers.

This was the era where the formerly Dark Knight's costumes went all Dayglo in *Detective Comics* #241's "The Rainbow Batman" (though the title suggests the Caped Crusader going to the Gotham City Pride Day Parade). Meanwhile, Wonder Woman was busy teaching baseball to a (presumably steroid-free) monkey in "Andy Gorilla-Prize Pupil" (*Wonder Woman* #78). Elsewhere, Superman and a heretofore unseen costumed toddler son played catch with a boulder on the cover of *Action Comics* #212's "The Amazing Super-Baby!" (though to be fair, that issue's still better than *Superman Returns*).

AFTER THE GOLD RUSH

What ended the Golden Age is a tale even older than *Action Comics* #1: a formerly booming product's sales collapsed when its makers failed to adapt to a changing marketplace. To wit: when the millions of American servicemen came home from World War II, this formerly

captive audience for costumed super-folk moved on to other pastimes, like shopping for good deals on backyard bomb shelters.

The kids who were left reading comic books had, by this time, gotten tired of all the "union-suit heroes" foolishness, wowed away by the promised real-life wonders of the Atomic Age and increasingly drawn to more stimulating genres, like crime, horror, "funny animal," and Western books. As a result, sales for superheroes declined for a full decade following the war, with both characters and companies disappearing throughout. By 1956, former bestsellers like Captain America, the Justice Society of America, and Captain Marvel (along with his publisher, Fawcett Comics) were no more.

So just like coonskin caps, virtual pets, and meta-plot role-playing games, comic books were hot once, but then cooled off-arctically so, for the superhero genre. Still, the misconception persists that the blame for ending the Golden Age is more personified, which brings us to...

IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE

Naturally, no comic-book story (or story about comic books) is complete without a megalomaniacal villain, and for many Dr. Fredric Wertham fills the role. Wertham, a respected psychiatrist in his day, had crusaded against comic books since 1941 for supposedly turning America's fragile youth into juvenile delinquents, drug addicts, bondage fetishists, and (gasp!) homosexuals. Comic-book sales soared on unabated until their best customers got their honorable discharges and moved on to more adult hobbies, like (ahem) instigating the Baby Boom (more on that in a moment).

The downturn in superhero comic-books was therefore well underway before Wertham got around to publishing his most infamous treatise, the evidence-free, anti-comics screed *Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954. Caped avengers were clearly going the way of the dodo before Sucker #1 picked up a copy of Wertham's humbug, and it's impossible (even for Wertham) to kill what's already dead. Still, it doesn't stop many from blaming the Teutonic twit from tugging on Superman's cape, forcing Batman & Robin to let Aunt Harriet move in, releasing Wonder Woman from constant bondage, and worse (where *was* Wertham when JFK was shot, hmm?).

Despite being page after page of stuff Wertham pretty much just made up, *Seduction of the Innocent* caused one of the first mass panics of jittery parents and led to a US Senate committee investigating his claims. These hearings cast an unfavorable light on the content of kids' funny books in general, but it shown harshest on the crime and horror comics that had largely supplanted superheroes on the newsstands. Thus, these genres were the prime targets when grassroots and government pressure pushed the publishers to do something to save America's kids and their own phony-baloney jobs.

SANITIZED FOR YOUR PROTECTION

Congress made it clear it wouldn't let a little technicality like the First Amendment stop it from censoring comic books "for the sake of the children," that is, if the publishers didn't do it themselves first. It was a threat that scarcely needed to be made, since jealous competitors soon realized a golden opportunity to throw popular EC Comics and its enchantingly grisly best-selling books under a bus.

With the misplaced outrage of the gullible and vote-hungry focused on crime and horror titles-of the sort that made major bank for EC-added to a group of self-interested rivals, the mission of the industry's new self-regulating body was preordained. The Comics Code Authority sanctioned all sorts of quite terrible and highly interesting things out of funny books, but the circumscribed acts were predominantly the sort of macabre and illicit thrills EC Comics delivered in spades.

In an ending worthy of one of its fabulous creepy-fun stories, EC had its heart, soul, blood, guts, and wallet cut out by the Comics Code. The Wertham-induced panic eventually subsided (as panics are prone to do), and while comic books as a whole survived, wild, wonderful, and oh-so-good EC Comics disappeared into legend. EC had plenty of company on its bus ride to extinction, as the baseless juvenile delinquency charges narrowed the comic book industry to National, Martin Goodman's Atlas Comics, and a handful of others (none of whom, importantly, published any costumed-hero titles).

Strangely enough, the crackpot Wertham and an actual scientific principle-the law of unintended consequences-had ultimately combined to do costumed superheroes a real favor. When a publisher was finally ready to give caped heroes another shot at the big time, horror and crime comics (two of the biggest competing genres) were essentially *verboten* under the Comics Code. The "union-suit heroes" of the '40s would then reemerge in a much less crowded market-place, thanks to Dr. Wertham (yes, *that* Dr. Wertham). Sure, the fake panic he caused with his fake proof could've killed the entire medium, but you know, omelets and eggs.

FLASHBACK

In 1956, Elvis Presley topped the singles charts a second time, the Eisenhower/Nixon ticket won a second term, and comic-book superheroes began their second great era. This third development came at the behest of National Comics editor Julius "Julie" Schwartz, who decided to give the costumed set another try at moving some funny books. Just like Elvis & rock 'n' roll, and Ike & Tricky Dick's Interstate Highway System, Julie's superheroes were something refreshingly new.

The superpowered heroes of the 1930s and '40s Golden Age were primarily derived from that era's popular pulp magazine characters (like the Shadow and Doc Savage), and were consequently a dark, mysterious, mystical, two-fisted lot, by and large. Many great stories sprang from this rich pool of inspiration, but by the mid-1950s it was more than a little played out. Schwartz was savvy to this, and looked elsewhere for the wellspring of his new birth of heroes.

Since the onset of the Atomic Age in 1945, science and its promises of a soon-to-be technological utopia had gripped the public's imagination. This manifested in everything from the US-USSR Space Race to moviegoers parting with good money to see *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*. Julie didn't need a spaceman to know which way the pop-culture wind blew, and thus science and science fiction would be the foundation of his relaunch of the caped set. Not that "space"ing things up was much of a reach for a former literary sci-fi agent like Julie.

The first Golden Age hero to get a sci-fi revamp was the Flash. Back in the Nazi-smashing 1940s, he'd been one Jay Garrick, a college student who performed super-fast good deeds while dressed like the mythological Hermes. This time out, he was police scientist Barry Allen, clad in a crimson costume accented with lightning bolts that wouldn't have been out of place in a cinematic sci-fi potboiler like *Zombies of the Stratosphere*. The new Flash made his debut in the anthology title *Showcase* #4 (cover-dated October 1956), scripted by Robert Kanigher and John Broome with Carmine Infantino penciling.

NEW AGE

The normal three-month delay on sales figures ensued before the verdict on Julie's modernized speedster was known, so in all likelihood, the revamp had its scoffers. Superheroes are a fad just like this newfangled "rock 'n' roll" music all the kids are listenin' to, he was probably told. And who could *possibly* be entertained by the minute details of how cops scientifically investigate crime scenes? As with most things, time proved Julie right. *Showcase* #4 was a hit, and autopsies now constitute fully 50% of all televised entertainment.

The obvious next steps were to give Space Age make-overs to the rest of National's languid library of characters. Green Lantern, formerly radio engineer Alan Scott and empowered by a magic lamp, returned next (courtesy of writer John Broome and artist Gil Kane) in October 1959's *Showcase* #22 as Hal Jordan, a test pilot/intergalactic policeman in the tradition of E.E. "Doc" Smith's *Lensman* series.

Likewise, in March 1961's *The Brave and the Bold* #34 writer Gardner Fox and artist Joe Kubert refashioned Hawkman from the magically reincarnated Egyptian prince he was during the Golden Age into an extraterrestrial cop from the planet Thanagar. Fox and Gil Kane then reinvented the Atom in October 1961's *Showcase* #34 as physicist Ray Palmer. The new Atom left behind his Golden Age roots as a boxer whose super-power is short-man's disease to become a scientist who uses white-dwarf matter to shrink to subatomic sizes (try it sometime-it really, really works!).



When these brand-new sci-fi "re-imaginings" found a firm and eager audience, a new age for comic-book superheroes began in earnest. It wouldn't actually be called "the Silver Age" until 1966 (credit for the name going to a comic-book letter-column contributor, one Scott Taylor of Westport, Connecticut). Long before a suitable moniker was coined, everyone concerned knew a comic-book renaissance had arrived.

MAJOR LEAGUE

After the initial refurbished Golden Age solo acts met with success, National decided the next logical step was to put the band back together. That is, it was time to dust off the "superhero team" concept the company launched back in the '40s with the Justice Society of America and bring it back as the Justice *League* of America.

National's superteam redux was of the same sci-fi persuasion as its other recent hits. The new, superscientific Flash and Green Lantern were naturals for the squad. Ditto for the inherently sci-fi Martian Manhunter, who debuted about a year prior to *Showcase* #4 (leading some to deem him the Silver Age's harbinger, ignoring how little impact the character had, then or now). These Space Age whiz-kids combined with Golden Age holdovers Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Aquaman (speaking of low-impact characters) to form the initial JLA lineup in the anthology book *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (cover-dated March 1960).

Like the Flash before and Green Lantern after, the JLA spun off a potpourri comic into its own regular self-titled publication in October 1960. Through good times (the awesome animated TV series) and bad (the '90s sitcom pilot-c'mon, we *know* you've got a bootleg copy), *Justice League of America* (sometimes sans the last two words) remains one of the company's core titles over forty years later. Impressive, *especially* if you've seen that sitcom pilot.

REARVIEW MIRROR

With Julie Schwartz at the helm and a crew of experienced sciencefiction hands penning stories, every sci-fi plot ever devised (alien invasion, time travel, killer robots, evil computers, post-nukeout pessimism, global disaster, et al) eventually appeared in National Comics publications. The equally well-worn cliché of other Earths in different dimensions where history has gone astray was nothing new by 1961. For one, *Wonder Woman* #59 had teamed the Amazon Princess with her alternate-universe self "Tara Terruna" back in 1953. However, applying it the way National did in the Silver Age was totally fresh.

The key difference was rather than using the mirror-Earths for one-shot "My, wasn't *that* briefly interesting" stories, National used the doppelganger planet gimmick to give the fans something they'd been clamoring for. Thanks to an abundance of cheap, widely available Golden Age comics, many Silver Age fans were well-acquainted with comic characters from the 1940s. Sure, they loved the Barry Allen Flash, but they also let National know how cool it'd be if he met up with his predecessor Jay Garrick. That's pretty much the plot of the classic story "Flash of Two Worlds," written by Gardner Fox and published in *The Flash* #123 (cover-dated September 1961).

The "two worlds" part was key, as it was established that Barry Allen and his JLA cohorts lived on Earth-One but could reach across dimensions to Earth-Two where Jay Garrick and his Justice Society super-buddies were. Many happy fans and dimes in National's coffers later, a summertime meeting between the heroes of Earth-One and Two was made an annual tradition beginning with *Justice League* of America #21 (cover -dated August 1963). Over the years, this led to the discovery of Blue Beetle and the Charlton Comics characters (Earth-Four), Quality Comics' heroes (Earth-X), Captain Marvel and the former Fawcett properties (Earth-S), and eventually even archrival Marvel Comics' universe (Earth-616).

These parallel-Earth stories made every comic-book fan's fondest dream come true by showing that every superhero ever created by any company past or present was in the "multiverse" somewhere, just itching for a team-up to solve this year's crisis. The wish-fulfilling multiverse concept best defines what National was during the Silver Age, if not the whole era itself.

IT LOOKS LIKE A MIRAC...IT'S IN THE HOLE! IT'S IN THE HOLE!

Publisher Martin Goodman was to comic books what Cher is to popular culture: victim of several professional debacles (many selfinflicted), prey for innumerable seas-changes in audiences' taste, but most of all, a survivor of decades in a tough, tough business. Goodman never married Gregg Allman or got a butt tattoo (as far as we know), but other than that, the analogy is spot-on.

Under a bewildering variety of names (including Timely, Atlas, and ultimately Marvel Comics), Goodman's publishing company had survived comic books' postwar market contraction, the Wertham-induced public hysteria, and a disastrous failed attempt to self-distribute his books (a mistake Marvel failed to learn from in the 1990s). By 1961, he was reduced to publishing a handful of *meh*-selling giant alien monster rally titles through (and at the whim of) National Comics, but unlike so many other comic-book companies, he was at least still in business.

Legend has it in 1961 Goodman was out golfing with National's publisher Jack Leibowitz. By the time they'd finished eighteen, Goodman was putting-green with envy after Leibowitz shared the boffo sales numbers *Justice League of America* was doing. Rather than jealously cracking Leibowitz' skull with a nine-iron, Goodman opted for a more constructive response and fell back on what always kept his company afloat: copying whatever trend was most successful at the moment. Goodman tipped his caddy and went off to replicate his own team of costumed heroes.

Nowadays, everyone in a position to know claims this mythical golf game never happened. Still, it's simply too much fun to imagine Martin Goodman teeing off and listening to Leibowitz' boasts while muttering to himself, "Cinderella story. Outta nowhere. A former near-bankrupt publisher, now, about to become *the comic book sales champion*!" for the story to die.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE

Whether he learned it on the links or not, Goodman certainly knew *Justice League* was flying off newsstands, and he tasked his editor/ wife's cousin Stan Lee with filling in the details of "super-group that will sell good like National's." Lee had been the editor for Goodman's comics since 1941, a job he assumed at the tender age of 19. He'd worked in a number of genres, but the three years he spent during World War II serving as an Army playwright (no, seriously) and the postwar market collapse prevented Lee from making much of a mark writing superheroes. At the time, Lee was planning on leaving funny books for something more lucrative (which would be pretty much anything else). With nothing to lose, Lee scripted a different kind of superhero story, just like he'd always wanted to. With input from artist Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four* #1 (cover-dated November 1961) became the result. At a glance, the book's premise was simply a regurgitation of what National had been making bank on (with a particular resemblance to Kirby's *Challengers of the Unknown*). It had a healthy dose of sci-fi (a rocket ship in space runs into cosmic radiation) and some refurbished Golden Age characters (a new Human Torch and a rubber-band guy a la Plastic Man).

However, these familiar elements were the least of the book's considerable charms. Thanks to Lee and Kirby, the FF did what no other heroes had done before. The members were variously best friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, and siblings, and they bickered just like similarly related folks do in real life. Moreover, their superpowers made them feel like freaks and doubt themselves in ways no costumed funny book characters ever had, but actual people surely do. When comic-book fans met the FF, they found an unexpected number of things in common.

The plots themselves were clever enough, but what really separated the FF's superheroics from everything else on the spinner racks was Jack Kirby's art. It's nigh-impossible to convey in a verbal medium how innovative and just flat-out good Kirby was. Even so, his work on the *Fantastic Four* offers ample backing for the widely held opinion that "King Kirby" is simply *the* best artist ever in the comic book medium, 'nuff said (as Stan Lee would put it). Sales on *FF* #1 and bag after bag of positive fan mail more than vindicated Lee and Kirby's new approach, and proved the book's cover claim (first seen on issue #4) of being "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" was way more fact than brag.

COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

In time, Marvel's sales grew to the point it no longer had to rely on its main competitor to distribute its books. Absent the stranglehold of National's strict quotas on the number of rival titles it would carry, the company's stable of characters literally had room to grow. Naturally, it fell to the man largely responsible for the company's turnaround, Stan Lee, to devise the next big thing.

Working with artist Steve Ditko, Lee once again started with National's winning formula of sci-fi elements (radioactive bugs) plus a Golden Age retread (a hero who's secretly a kid the same age as his readers, just like Fawcett's Captain Marvel). The Fantastic Four's success had shown how eager fans were to exchange their dimes for tales of heroes with relatable real-world problems, so naturally the new kid-hero would be dealing with bullies, grades, wisdom teeth, unrequited crushes, and adults who just didn't understand. With these elements in place, Lee and Ditko then broke new ground.

Little-boy heroes aimed at little-boy readers worked great in the Golden Age, but a good chunk of the fan mail Marvel had gotten on *Fantastic Four* #1 came from older members of the "Baby Boom" generation. Lee and Ditko aimed their new audience-identification character squarely at this new Boomer demographic, making him a high-school upperclassman. After briefly considering Crawl-Man, Mosquito-Man, Beetle-Man, Fly-Man, and seemingly the rest of the class *Insecta*, the name "Spider-Man" was finally chosen. Call us biased, but we think Stan made the right call there.

Spider-Man debuted in Amazing Fantasy #15 (cover-dated

August 1962), the series' preordained last issue so Marvel risked nothing if the character flopped. Goodman and company needn't have worried, as comic fans' introduction to angst-ridden orphan Peter Parker and the great power bestowed upon him (accompanied by great responsibility, of course) became one of Marvel's all-time best-sellers. The appeal of the hero who might've been "Crawl-Man" has endured for over four decades, helped teach a generation to read on *The Electric Company*, survived the Clone Saga, and sparked three blockbuster movies (and counting). Told you Stan made the right call.

EXCELSIOR!

It's difficult to overstate the contributions Stan Lee, the wonderfully bombastic writer, made to superhero comic books, but Stan Lee the editor was no slouch either. The light, playful voice of his pitchman prose set the tone for Silver Age Marvel, and his easygoing style proved to be tremendously popular with readers. For generations of comic-book fans, Stan's promises of a "Senses-Shattering Story!" in seemingly every issue became synonymous with Marvel Comics.

As Lee's name and style became Marvel's public front, the man himself (or "the Man," as he was nicknamed) cast the spotlight on the company's other contributors to an unprecedented degree. At a time when most comic books published had either no or pseudonymous credits, the splash pages of Marvel titles listed seemingly everyone who'd had a hand in creating the book, including the previously unheralded letterers and inkers. Because of Lee, fans knew



from the start such Marvel stalwarts as Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko were instrumental to the company's success.

THE HOUSE OF IDEAS

The hits just kept on coming from Marvel's self-proclaimed "House of Ideas" during President Kennedy's anointed "Camelot." After Spider-Man took off, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby co-created *The Incredible Hulk* #1 (cover-dated May 1962), which introduced atomic scientist Bruce Banner and his Jekyll-and-Hyde coexistence with a radiationspawned brutish alterego. It took a while for the gray-skinned (later green, at the printer's behest) goliath to catch on, but eventually readers decided they did in fact like him, even when he was angry. *Especially* when he was angry.

Marvel's Midas touch was such that even characters who bucked the prevailing trends of the day met with reader approval. Though science fiction was seemingly all the rage, Lee, his brother/scripter Larry Lieber, and Jack Kirby made Norse mythology and *faux* Shakespearean dialogue cool again when the Thunder God Thor made his debut in *Journey into Mystery* #83 (cover-dated August 1962). Similarly, Lee and artist Steve Ditko made full-fledged magician Dr. Strange into a surprise Space Age hit (premiering in *Strange Tales* #110, cover-dated July 1963).

The same team behind Thor (plus artist Don Heck) struck gold again in *Tales of Suspense* #39 (cover-dated March 1963) with a character created (on a dare) to be hard for the readers to empathize with. From this came everyone's favorite millionaire playboy arms manufacturer Tony Stark, who left his heart in North Vietnam en route to becoming the invincible communist-smashing Iron Man. His Swiss Army knife-like armor kept Stark's busted ticker beating (with some suspenseful scares, of course) and still had plenty of left-over juice to defibrillate Robert Downey, Jr.'s film career decades later.

Through it all, Marvel's creative folk found ways to keep characters fundamentally real, no matter how outlandish their premise and plots. Bruce Banner's tragic life was emotionally moving years before *The Incredible Hulk* TV show introduced us to "that sad walking-away music." Likewise, anyone who'd ever known the frailty of the human body and spirit could easily identify with Tony Stark's damaged heart, Thor's humiliatingly weaker alter ego, and Dr. Strange's quest to atone for a checkered past. By the time blind but still butt-kicking superhero Daredevil took a winning bow in his eponymous comic (cover-dated April 1964), Marvel was pretty much just flaunting its ability to crank out flawed heroes readers couldn't get enough of.

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE WEIRD TURN PRO

While Marvel was busy redefining what superhero stories could be, the "Distinguished Competition" (as Stan Lee cheekily dubbed National/DC Comics) continued producing solidly entertaining books, many of which are well remembered today. However, largely mired in Golden Age-style storytelling and art as they were, National's '60s output is forever doomed to pale in comparison to the revolutionary books Marvel was simultaneously publishing. To be sure, emulating the Golden Age is nothing to be ashamed of. It's just a far cry from hip and cool to still be doing it twenty years later.

"BUT DOCTOR...I AM PAGLIACCI"

The history of the Silver and Bronze Age superhero comic books is largely an account of the "Big Two," Marvel and National/DC. Of the others publishing genre titles during that period, Charlton Comics is the best-remembered today despite being a perpetual also-ran. The company was notorious as the stingiest in the entire funny-book business, but its greater artistic freedom (a low-cost perk for cheapjack Charlton) and willingness to hire newcomers (ditto) made it an attractive option for some top talents.

Charlton began publishing in 1944 (under a different name), primarily horror titles and properties acquired from defunct publishers (like Fox Features Syndicate's Blue Beetle). The company only dabbled in the superhero genre until 1966 when, bolstered by the acquisition of ex-Marvel stalwart Steve Ditko, editor Dick Giordano launched the "Action Heroes" line. It featured characters like the Peacemaker (an anti-war asskicker), Ditko's the Question (Ayn Rand's favorite superhero), a new gadget-laden Blue Beetle, Captain Atom (another radiation-blessed individual), lady crime-buster Nightshade, and super-genius Thunderbolt (a.k.a. Peter Cannon). Despite the talent behind them, superheroes proved less lucrative than Charlton's licensed titles, and all the company's costumed folk were gone and cancelled by the end of 1967.

In 1983 DC acquired the rights to the "Action Heroes," three years prior to Charlton Comics' demise. Shortly thereafter, writer Alan Moore pitched DC a miniseries with a new, much darker take on the old Charlton characters, one destined to change the medium forever. Just when it looked like the "Action Heroes" were finally bound for stardom, DC talked Moore into using original characters instead, preferring to save the Charlton properties for later. Thus, instead of being the focus of the genre-defining *Watchmen*, the "Action Heroes" went on to twenty-plus years of obscurity and far less revolutionary tales. It's enough to make the Question drop the radical objectivism and cry like a little schoolgirl.

The familiar feel and techniques National's titles displayed were to be expected. Most of the company's leading creators-editors Julie Schwartz and Mort Weisinger, writers Gardner Fox, Robert Kanigher, and John Broome, along with artists Carmine Infantino, Curt Swan, and Dick Sprang-had all been with National since the 1940s. They were among the greatest talents ever to grace the industry, but they were also like Frank Sinatra during Beatlemania-true innovators the kids disrespected as hopelessly square.

National remained stable, but it didn't stand still. The sci-fi bent of the stories remained, but as Marvel's bite of the market share got bigger and bigger, the old pros at National got weird. At least, their stories did. Their ventures into the *outré* failed to find public favor and didn't last long on the newsstands. However, the most unique concepts from this period are still so fondly recalled today the Silver Age doesn't seem complete without them. As Hunter Thompson wrote, these out of the ordinary ventures were "too weird to live, too rare to die."

The first step in National's walk on the wild side was Bob Kanigher's Metal Men, created over a weekend so that *Showcase* #37 (cover-dated April 1962) could go straight to the artist on schedule the Monday following. On this short notice, Kanigher came up with a group of neurotic robots with dysfunctions based on the properties of the specific ore they're made of; probably the last idea anyone would expect to last sixty issues. With the periodic table of elements now a certified hit-maker, the wonderfully iconoclastic writer Bob Haney followed up with Metamorpho, the Element Man in *The Brave and the Bold* #57 (cover-dated January 1965), but his solo title lasted only seventeen delightfully odd issues.

There was also Arnold Drake and Carmine Infantino's Deadman (first appearing in the aptly named *Strange Adventures* #205, coverdated October 1967) who was, well, a dead guy. And things got weirder still.

WAVE YOUR FREAK-FLAG HIGH

In 1963, a new team of comic-book superheroes made its newsstand debut. Its premise revolved around a wheelchair-bound genius who secretly gathers a group of super-powered individuals, all hated and feared as freaks by the world at large. Once united, the members dedicate themselves to protecting a planet that nonetheless regards them with fear and suspicion. Opposing them is an equally freakish

and philosophically opposite group-an Evil Brotherhood, as it werecommitted to conquering the very same globe our heroes defend.

It was an offbeat premise, to be sure, and the slogan "Strangest Heroes" of all was used as a selling point on the covers. Freaky as it was, this group's exploits have been chronicled (off and on) right through to the present day. Over its publication history, this team has attracted such high-profile talents as John Byrne and Grant Morrison.

We are, of course, referring to the Doom Patrol.

The Doom Patrol first appeared in National Comics' *My Greatest Adventure* #80 (June cover date), three months prior to the debut of some other Marvel Comics team you might've heard of in *The X-Men* #1 (September cover date). As for the, ahem, "similarities" between the two, we take no sides in the "Ripoff or not?" debate. For the record, Doom Patrol creator/writer Arnold Drake suspected the former, while X-Men creators Stan Lee and Jack Kirby denied any undue inspiration from the "Distinguished Competition."

Everybody's favorite Marvel mutants and National's strangest heroes shared one other thing in common. The Chief, Negative Man, Elasti-Girl, Robotman, Professor X, Cyclops, Iceman, the Beast, the Angel, and Marvel Girl all had their respective books cancelled due to low sales by mid-1970. Their demise (literal, for the Doom Patrol) was a sign the comic industry was changing yet again.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH (STOP, HEY WHAT'S THAT SOUND)

Stop us if you've heard this one before. There was this Texas cowboy turned President of the United States, best known by his abbreviated name. He invaded a distant country most Americans couldn't find on a map under a widely suspected pretext, then refused to stop the war even after public opinion turned sharply against it, making him one of the least popular chief executives in history. Naahh, doesn't ring any bells here, either

The first time this all happened it was 1965. America's commander-in-chief was Lyndon Baines Johnson, the war was in Vietnam, and the consequences for funny books were threatening and profound. The new audience of high-school and college students who made the Silver Age a financial success was also the demographic getting drafted to fight in the increasingly unpopular military venture. Facing the very real prospect of being maimed or killed at an early age for shaky-seeming reasons, the growing-up-fast Boomers were deciding that comics written by a bunch of old dudes were silly kid's stuff they couldn't relate to.

An increasingly disaffected readership led to slipping sales, and for the first time in a decade superhero titles were being cancelled. National Comics-a perpetual second in the hearts of Baby Boomers-was the hardest hit. The Atom, Hawkman, the Doom Patrol, Metamorpho, the mysterious mystic Phantom Stranger, Steve Ditko's the Creeper, and Golden-Age revamp the Spectre all saw their respective National titles done in by diminishing sales before the end of 1969.

It wasn't just B-listers and C-listers endangered because of reader neglect. The inspirations for ten future blockbuster movies (six of which are even good films) were going the way of the Edsel during the mid.'60s slump. National's former cornerstone Batman was almost killed off in 1964 and his long-running titles cancelled, with only a last-ditch Julius Schwartz revamp saving the Caped Crusader from an early grave. Even Mighty Marvel saw its win streak officially come to an end when it had to pull the plugs on *The X-Men* in 1970 and alienated alien hero *The Silver Surfer* in 1971.

WHY DON'T YOU ALL F-F-FADE AWAY?

With four decades of hindsight, it must be concluded that no one at National or Marvel was hip to what was going on with "the kids" once the 1960s became "the Sixties" of Boomer lore. We have as evidence a large pile of woefully out of touch stories, and hilariously awful attempts by middle-aged guys (who should've known better) to be "hip" and "groovy."

By far the most magnificently egregious examples of this are the primordial tales of National's Teen Titans. The Titans were a conglomeration of underage sidekicks including Robin, Kid Flash, Wonder Girl, Aqualad, and Speedy which debuted in *The Brave and the Bold* #54 (cover-dated July 1964). Their initial stories are (in)famous for plots and dialogue that simply have to be read to be believed. Supervillains who were evil hot-rodders and grotesque parodies of mid-'60s rock acts plus completely over-the-top *faux* hipster dialogue were the order of the Titans' early days. It may have been a deliberate send-up concocted by the brilliantly unhinged imagination of writer Bob Haney, but at the time it did little to endear National to potentially 'Nam-bound Boomers.

Marvel Comics also had its share of missteps in the midst of changing times. For example, December 1966's *The Amazing Spider-Man* #43 had Peter Parker's buddy Flash Thompson getting his draft notice, leading Spidey and his pals to organize a bizarre, cheery pep rally-like send-off to Southeast Asia for their chum. About the time this issue was on newsstands, 20,000 people-most college students like Spidey's teen gang-showed up for a "Human Be-In" in San Francisco. It didn't look like much like a football homecoming, and the newly christened "hippies" in attendance weren't coming together to celebrate anyone getting drafted.

National's stable of square, straight-arrow characters-millionaire playboys, cops, jet jockeys, atomic scientists, and reporters-were naturally out of step with the times, leaving the great innovator of the 1930s and '40s looking stodgy and old in the Vietnam Era. Marvel had similar troubles making proud arms manufacturers like Iron Man palatable to coeds whose professors hysterically warned of

the "warmongering capitalist military/industrial complex." Likewise, Marvel awakened the Stars-and-Stripes-clad Captain America from his Golden Age slumber in 1964 only to find angry young protestors in real life putting Old Glory to the torch just a few years later.

TIME HAS COME TODAY

Change came to superhero comic books in the 1970s. It *had* to, or real-world events would've eclipsed the genre and a second-potentially fatal-fallow period like the post-World War II era would've followed. While the changes themselves are evident and manifest for readers to see, their sum total is a matter of dispute. It's a clash of opinions so bitter only comic-book fans could be driving it.

There are some who say the '70s brought with them a new Age for the superhero genre succeeding the Silver. Taking a cue from the Olympic Games, it's dubbed the Bronze Age by its adherents. Others maintain the Silver Age continued unalloyed into the 1980s. Being into peace, love, and understanding ourselves, we say bless 'em everyone. Nonetheless, this book uses the term "Bronze Age" as a convenient term for the undebatable stylistic changes the genre underwent in the "Me Decade."

Amongst those who argue unequivocally for the Bronze Age's existence, there is still disagreement as to when it began. Some trace it to the acrimonious departures of legendary artists Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby from Marvel Comics. Ditko left in 1966, with Kirby following four years later, and both found work at the former National Comics, officially re-dubbed "DC Comics" as of October 1970 (the name change is a Bronze Age milestone in and of itself).

Others cite later events as the true Day the Comics Got Bronzed, such as the revisions to the Comics Code in 1971, which considerably loosened restrictions on what could be shown and discussed in funny books. One by one, the revoked taboos found their way into comic panels, and more mature and frequently darker stories resulted. This tarnishing of the typically cheerier Silver Age plotting marks the beginning of the Bronze Age for many.

MEET THE NEW BOSS

The onset of the Bronze Age was due to a generational change in the comic book field itself, as the pioneers of the Golden Age gave way to their successors, many of them Baby Boomers who became comic fans during the Silver Age. National/DC began the switchover in 1967, letting go some of its most tenured artists like longtime Superman penciller Wayne Boring, who'd been on staff since 1942.

In time, the transfigurations reached the very tops of the "Big Two" superhero comic companies. After years of trying to get fired from a lucrative job he was ashamed of, DC editor Mort Weisinger (who began his oversight of the Superman and Batman titles in 1941) finally retired in 1970. Over at Marvel, Stan Lee was promoted to publisher in 1972, leaving the hands-on work of editor-in-chief to Roy Thomas. Lee gradually transitioned into Marvel's ever-jolly public figurehead, a pop culture icon, ubiquitous movie cameo presence, and most importantly, creator of *Stripperella*.

As Golden Age creators were put out to pasture (with varying degrees of grace), they were replaced by a new breed of writers well-versed in DC's futurist sense of sci-fi wonder and Marvel's intimate angstridden stories-the best of both worlds, as some would have it. Combining this comic-schooling with a keen sense of the prevailing liberal social consciousness of the day, these newcomers defined

the Bronze Age literary aesthetic as they (unlike their predecessors) moved from Marvel to DC and back again pretty much as they saw fit. Among them were Cary Bates, Gary Friedrich, Archie Goodwin, Tony Isabella, Paul Levitz, Elliot S! Maggin, Bill Mantlo, and Doug Moench.

Bronze Age pencillers and inkers strove for greater realism in their work as well. Such greats as Frank Brunner, Gene Colan, Mike Grell, Marshall Rogers, John Romita, and Barry Windsor-Smith first made their marks during this era. Their work may best define the third era of comics, as one glance at a convenience store spinner rack during the 1970s (no matter how red your eyes were, man) told you comics weren't just for kids anymore.

ONE TOKE OVER THE LINE

In 1971, the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare became concerned that all those dirty hippies might lead cleancut kids everywhere into quitting glee club to take up a life of pills, smack, acid, and (worst of all) the demon weed marijuana. Corruption would not be tolerated by the Nixon Administration, so the Feds asked for Marvel Comics' help keeping the young ones away from the wacky tobaccy.

Despite Stan Lee voting for Humphrey, the company obliged and crafted a storyline for May's *The Amazing Spider-Man* #96 depicting how the use of illegal street-bought drugs just might have negative consequences. One would assume the US Government united with Stan Lee to keep kids high on life was an unstoppable force for good, but they ran headfirst into that classic mega-villain the Comics Code Authority. In its wisdom, the Authority refused to sign off on a story showing illicit drug use, even if said tale made it clear there's a reason why they call it dope.

MONSTER MASH

The last laugh would be Stan's however, as he did what no one had dared do since Sputnik: he published the buzz-killing books without the Comics Code seal of approval. When the sky did not fall (and illegal drug use in America completely stopped) as a result of a kids' funny book, the Comics Code was revealed as the naked emperor of lore. In a turnabout from 1954, it was now the Comics Code Authority that needed to protect its phony-baloney jobs.

It did so with a hasty set of revisions designed to make the Code look a little less like the love-child of panicky irrational moms and corporate assassins. As a result, vampires, werewolves, and other monster-kid favorites were suddenly kosher once more, and publishers could once again intimate that criminal pharmaceuticals are something best avoided. Thus, 1972 became the year the supernatural came back to comic books with a vengeance, with Marvel's *The Tomb of Dracula* and *Ghost Rider* plus DC's *Swamp Thing* debuting and becoming long-running favorites.

(LISTEN TO THE) FLOWER PEOPLE

Much like President Nixon, both Marvel and DC went into the 1970s driven by one overriding question: how do we get the kids to like us? Tricky Dick tried appearing on *Laugh-In* and meeting with Elvis Presley, but many of the Big Two comic-book companies efforts had as much youth appeal as Nixon's attempted deportation of John Lennon. The failures are partly attributable to the Big Two's willingness to embrace quickly dying fads they didn't understand to begin



with. Fiasco followed fiasco as hippies (the squares' version, at any rate), skateboards, truckers & CB radios, disco, roller disco, and break-dancing all found their way into comics with hysterically awful results. More notorious crashes-and-burns followed.

National/DC had sales success (however briefly) with an ABC TV-influenced version of Batman, and elsewhere on that network found inspiration for a Wonder Woman redux. By 1968, the mighty Amazon was slugging it out with Egg Fu (literally, an evil giant Chinese egg), so recasting Wonder Woman in the mold of the sexy, karate-chopping Diana Rigg from TV's *The Avengers*...well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. Diana Prince gave up her super-powers and scanty costume for kung fu and a fully-covered mod look in *Wonder Woman* #179. These intensely disliked and derided changes somehow lasted through issue #204 in 1973, but were thankfully reversed in time for Lynda Carter to don her famed "satin tights" in the 1975 TV series.

Still, the "Slightly Above Average Woman" experiment looked like the Salk vaccine compared to some of their other tries at "getting down with kids." *Brother Power the Geek* #1 hit newsstands in October 1968, retelling the origin story of the Frankenstein's Monster. Only this time, the monster was a wannabe flower child. Believe it or not, a second issue was actually released, wherein the hippie Frankenstein was (appropriately enough) dispatched by conservative California Governor Ronald Reagan.

Brother Power and Captain America creator Joe Simon (wonder which appears first on his resume?) was back again in 1973 with *Prez: First Teen President* #1. It began the saga of adolescent commander-in-chief Prez Rickard and his struggles against a variety of right-wing caricatures including evil industrialist Mr. Smiley and his giant yellow smiley-face head. Sure, the title only survived eight months, but that's still seven more than William Henry Harrison's real-life presidency. Plus, Mr. Smiley might've inspired Alan Moore to create *Watchmen*...but, ya know, probably didn't.

TURN, TURN, TURN

Despite the stumbles, DC and Marvel eventually got their mojo back and successfully reinterpreted their signature characters for the 1970s. Not all the changes took, but all showed a commitment to keeping classic comic-book heroes meaningful in changing times. It echoed the onset of the Silver Age in 1956, and the quest to keep Depression-era kiddie book stars fresh continues into the Internet age.

For DC, there could be none better to orchestrate its Bronze Age creative direction than the instigator of the Silver Age himself Julie Schwartz. Certainly not fellow editor Mort Weisinger, who'd driven Batman's sales to the point of cancellation and Superman's stories deep into irrelevancy. "Unca Mort" hated the hippies and it showed, even when he wasn't busy cancelling flower-child friendly titles like *Brother Power the Geek*. With Weisinger's 1970 retirement, both the Caped Crusader and the Man of Steel were free from "Unca Mort's" ossified insistence that comic books were just for little kids.

RETURN TO THE BATCAVE

Schwartz pruned away Weisinger's Bat-silliness (like Ace the Bat-Hound and the phenomenally annoying "villain" Bat-Mite) when the



Caped Crusader fell under his aegis in 1964, saving his books from the chopping block in the process. Julie's "New Look" approach was turning things around commercially and critically, only to be waylaid by a new campier approach dictated by the success of the Adam West *Batman* TV show.

By 1969, the TV show was no more, Adam West was working van shows, and Julie was ready to get back to work. His chosen team of writer Denny O'Neil and artist Neal Adams made their Bat-debut in *Detective Comics* #395 (cover-dated January 1970), with a simple objective in mind. Their aim was to make Batman the grittier "weird creature of the night" he'd been in 1939, once again fighting homicidal maniacs like the Joker. The influence of their approach is such that it's this version of the character fans have clamored for ever since. This back-to-basics Caped Crusader most successfully translated into other media, such as the beloved 1992 animated series and the blockbuster hit movies of 1989 and 2007.

SUNSHINE SUPERMAN

When he was finally freed from Mort Weisinger's death-grip in 1970, Superman was mired in ridiculous stories divorced from any of the Silver Age's innovations and the notice of any reader above the age of six. By that time, the Man of Steel had sunk so low even scrawny folk-rock singer Donovan was publically bragging he could kick the Kryptonian's ass

Under "Unca Mort," roughly 98% of all Superman plots (by our unofficial count) involved one of three premises: Someone gets his hands on kryptonite (often the transmogrifying red sort), Superman prevents Lois Lane from proving he's really wussy Clark Kent, or another redundantly titled "Imaginary Story." Not that there was much else left to challenge the Silver Age Superman, as his powers had escalated to the point he was tossing planets around like a cat juggler. Clark and Lois were also still newspaper reporters, a vocation that seemed only slightly less quaint than it does today.

Things soon changed on Julie's watch. With Denny O'Neil scripting yet another revamp of a major pop-culture icon, *Superman* #233 arrived with a January 1971 cover date. The storyline that unfolded saw the seemingly infinite supply of kryptonite rendered inert, and Superman's powers were reduced to a markedly less super level. Clark Kent also got a job as a TV reporter, and vowed to stop being a mild-mannered dweeb.

Most of the changes didn't take in the long run (especially the "no kryptonite" stricture), but Superman's move into a more modern style of storytelling certainly did. Thanks to the Bronze Age version of the Man of Steel's influence on the hit 1978 *Superman* film (starring Christopher Reeve), it's arguably the most recognizable rendition of the character of all.

TRUCKIN'

Donovan also called out Green Lantern in his 1966 chart-topper "Sunshine Superman," but the Emerald Crusader was too busy worrying about the plunging sales on his comic book to record an answer track. Fresh from helping Batman get his street cred back, Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams tried to resurrect Hal Jordan's fortunes.

Their first step was to add Green Arrow as the book's co-star. The Emerald Archer's alter-ego Ollie Queen had recently been recast from "Batman with a bow" to a now-impoverished millionaire and outspoken champion of leftist causes. Ollie's new attitude nicely reflected the socially conscious direction O'Neil wanted to take the storylines, and made him a perfect counterpart to Establishment tool/5-0 from space Hal Jordan.

In *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #76 (cover-dated April 1970), the title characters became "Hard-Traveling Heroes," wandering the country in a pickup truck searching for the "real America." Gone were the evil aliens invading Earth and sci-fi trappings of before. Instead, Hal and Ollie battled prejudice, pollution, corporate greed, and many other planks from Hubert Humphrey's 1968 presidential platform. Most memorably, in October 1971's issue #85 the two confronted the revelation that Ollie's crappy parenting had led to his teen sidekick Speedy becoming a heroin junkie.

O'Neil and Adams' topical approach brought the title and themselves much critical acclaim and positive notice from other media. It did not, however, arrest the book's eroding sales, and GL/GA was cancelled with issue #89. Time's been good to their work, though, and it's widely hailed as one of the most innovative, important storyruns in the genre's history. "Hard-Traveling Heroes" may very well be the defining storyline of the entire Bronze Age.

SHE'S GONE

Not to be outdone, Marvel Comics-never averse to making its characters more angst-ridden-was ready to give its signature character another harsh dose of reality. Just as "Hard-Traveling Heroes" defines the Bronze Age for DC Disciples, 1973's "The Night Gwen Stacy Died" (from *The Amazing Spider-Man* #121-122) sets the standard for the Merry Marvel Marching Society.

The tale itself, scripted by Gerry Conway, was simple enough. Spider-Man tried to save the love of his life after his arch-enemy the Green Goblin tossed her off a bridge. When Spidey snared her with his webbing, the fall's momentum snapped her neck, killing Gwen. So it's hero loses, the sweet and innocent heroine dies, and the hero's to blame for it. Fade to black.

Despite the story's title, the Friends of Ol' Marvel were used to the company's hyperbolic titles and cover blarney which never quite delivered what was promised (Seriously, did anyone ever *literally* get their senses shattered?). These issues streeted during comic books' seasonal readership peak in the summertime. So when events proceeded exactly as advertized, the shock was widespread and resonates even today amongst comic-book fans.

It's a bit of an understatement, but in 1973, this sort of thing just wasn't done in superhero comic books. Sure, some poorly selling characters (like DC's Doom Patrol) had kicked the oxygen habit on rare occasions, but for an A-lister like Spidey's girlfriend this was unheard of. Nonetheless, Gwen's jarring death and its aftermath remain a perfect symbol of the times.

WE BLEW IT

Peter Parker lost his dearest love during the time the final US combat troops were departing Vietnam. The fictional costumed hero did what he thought best to save someone who needed his help, and the real-life heroes in uniform had done the same in Southeast Asia. Thirty years later, both are still haunted to a degree by their wellintentioned failures. Taken together, they are a twin-edged lesson that the good guys don't always win, and that schooling never goes down well. It wasn't just the trauma of their first lost war that had Americans feeling less than #1. The Watergate scandal uncovered the never easy-to-love President Nixon's administration as the most corrupt in US history (he's actually got serious competition from Grant and Harding, but only total social studies nerds know that). Not getting at least a lousy tie in 'Nam was tough enough to deal with, but with Americans finding out their president was-despite his assurances to the contrary-a crook, it was just too much.

These cracks in the US' national self-image first appeared years earlier in the hippie counterculture. One of its best-known manifestations was the surprise hit film *Easy Rider* (1969), and in it vagabond biker "Captain America" (Peter Fonda) sums up the spirit of the age for many with the line, "We blew it." Five years later, the comic-book namesake of Fonda's character came to the same conclusion and, in a bit of turnabout, copied him.

In *Captain America* #180 (coverdated December 1974) writer Steve Englehart scripted what was arguably the final world on the post-Watergate national downer. In recent plot-lines, Cap had shut down a powerful terrorist organization, only to find its leader worked at the highest level of American government. While never named, it was strongly implied this leader had a little dog named Checkers and a taste for cottage cheese with ketchup. As a result, a disillusioned Cap shed all his red, white, and blue to become the itinerant "Nomad," leaving comic-book fans to ponder what's happened to the US when even Captain America gives up on it.

WHAT'S GOING ON

With the country feeling let down by its government and military, the traditional pro-American "beat up the fascists" superhero story seemed more inappropriate and less credulous than ever during the Bronze Age. Young Americans had begun to look to the counterculture for role models, and many (including comic-book readers and creators) embraced its struggles. Out of this search for relevancy was born a new dimension to the typical superhero genre story.

Pretty soon, gimmicky bank-robbers and megalomaniac conquerors took a backseat to pollution, overpopulation, and prejudice as comic-book menaces. To be sure, these new threats were personified as ridiculous caricatures (like Prez' arch-enemy Mr. Smiley) just as Nazis were in the Golden Age and communists in the Silver. The Bronze Age difference was the noticeable lack of triumph on the heroes' parts.

Sure, the good guys might save the ozone layer, feed the hungry masses, or save a persecuted minority community *this time*, but in the long run, the real heroes would have to be the readers. On occasion, stories were even so downbeat as to suggest humanity might be past the point of saving, and such sour-note endings became a Bronze Age hallmark.

Super-powered folk also battled much more grown-up inner demons than how no one in study hall "gets" them, like Speedy's fight to kick his smack habit. Marvel's Iron Man had similar problems with alcoholism during David Michelinie & Bob Layton's acclaimed run on his title. The wildly inventive Steve Gerber even had a team of super-villains get into trendy group therapy to regain their malevolent self-confidence in the pages of Marvel's *The Defenders*.

THE MAN THAT WOULD RISK HIS NECK FOR HIS BROTHER MAN

Whether or not people can ever fully overcome bigotry in real life, the Bronze Age was a time of noticeable progress in the depiction of racial minorities in comic books. After decades of being portrayed only as sidekicks and often in the most offensive manner possible, non-Caucasians were shown in a much more sympathetic light during the late 1960s and '70s.

The color barriers in superhero comic books began to fall in 1969 when Marvel Comics introduced the Falcon, the first African-American superhero (the Black Panther, an unhyphenated African superhero preceded him three years prior) in *Captain America* #117. The Falcon never progressed beyond the "Cap's sidekick" role, so it wasn't until Marvel published *Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* #1 in 1972 that an African-American superhero qot to headline a title solo.

By the end of the '70s, Marvel had added even more diversityexpanding firsts to its credits. In 1971, the Cheyenne Red Wolf became the first American Indian superhero (in *Avengers* #80). Two years later, in *Special Marvel Edition* #15, the Chinese Shang-Chi shattered the bar for Asian characters, probably with a wicked-cool flying spin-kick, too. In 1975, the deceptively named White Tiger debuted in *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* #19, likely not the first title to come to mind for the first-ever Hispanic-American superhero to appear in.

It's important to remember that while these important comic-book milestones were often created with noble and larger intentions, they weren't totally about advancing social justice. In many ways,



they are what Martin Goodman had been doing since the 1940s: copying commercially successful trends. It's impossible to imagine Luke Cage, for instance, without the hit movie *Shaft* (1971) and the lucrative "blaxploitation" film genre it established, especially since *Hero for Hire* was basically "Shaft with super-powers." Likewise, the genesis of characters like Shang-Chi and the White Tiger is inseparable from the martial-arts craze of the early '70s engendered by the legendary Bruce Lee's movies.

CHILDREN OF THE ATOM

Take the greater racial diversity and social messages of the Bronze Age and cross them with radiation-spawned sci-fi heroes just like they created 'em in the Silver Age. The result is *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (cover-dated May 1975), and the series it spawned fulfilled the promise of all that was good in the Silver and Bronze Ages and paved the way to the subsequent Iron Age. Rumors abound it has also done okay financially for Marvel over the years.

The X-Men returned from their Silver Age oblivion a changed lot, thanks to writer Len Wein and artist Dave Cockrum. Ultra-whitebread Cyclops was back as team leader, but the rest of the team was (relatively) new and totally multi-national: the Russian Colossus, Kenyan Storm, German Nightcrawler, Irish Banshee, American Indian Thunderbird, Japanese Sunfire, and Canadian Wolverine (created the year before by Wein as a one-shot Hulkfoe). Wein left after the debut, and the writing chores were handed over to former Marvel gofer Chris Claremont. In 1978, Cockrum departed and was replaced by John Byrne.

The results of the Byrne-Claremont pairing were simply magical, and a major commercial and critical hit ensued. Success came mostly because the two of them were very, very talented, but also because they managed to tone down the subtle-as-a-flying-sidekick social messages of the Bronze Age into true metaphor. Their chosen simile for the X-Men was simple and profound, as the team's atomic-mutant members became humanity's latest hated minority. They became storyline proxies for every persecuted group in history, often poignantly so.

This take on the material meshed nicely with Claremont's gifts for scripting super-powered soap opera (male fans protest the label, but there's too much emoting going on for it to be otherwise). In time, the inevitable imitators followed, with varying degrees of accomplishment and skill. Perhaps the best example of others triumphantly melding soaps and supers is writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Pérez' sublime work on DC's *The New Teen Titans*, another failed Silver Age title which they resurrected in 1980.

"I JUST WISH YOU HAD THE POWER TO LEAVE MY STORE"

Part of the reason the more adult approach of *The X-Men* and *The New Teen Titans* was so well-received had to do with yet another market shake-up. Comic books had been ubiquitous on store news-stands almost from their inception despite their relatively small return for retailers. As long as they sold well, that disadvantage was overcome and shopkeepers ordered funny books by the gross.

However, by the late 1970s comic book circulation was clearly in decline, the Bronze Age having failed to bring a new generation to the medium to the degree the Silver Age did. Kids snapped up four-color adventures when they were the traditional dime per book back in the early '60s, but were hard-pressed to do so when cover prices hit fifty cents in 1980. When the young ones cut back on funny-book purchases, vendors began to drop them in favor of more profitable publications, as witnessed in 1978's "DC Implosion," which saw the cancellation of an astounding twentysix titles. In that number were six books killed even before their launch, and things were so tough that Batman's longtime home *Detective Comics* was nearly victim #27.

DC and Marvel had begun selling their books through directmarket channels in 1972, and as the newsstands abandoned their wares in ever-growing numbers, they became comics' life support. In time, comic books could only be found in specialty stores, often well beyond a bike ride's distance away and not always run by the most kid-friendly folk ("I have no time to converse with you-I must be first to register my disgust on the Internet regarding the new *McBain* film").

When they could no longer find them, afford them, or understand their mushy arcane plots, kids simply stopped buying comic books. Where Frederic Wertham failed, the industry itself ultimately succeeded. As the 1980s wore on, only an ever-aging segment of the population made up of hardcore fans was getting comic books. Only they had the necessary disposable income to purchase them and the free time to comprehend their decades of back-story.

CROSSING OVER

In 1984, word leaked out that DC was planning something huge for its coming anniversary, a tale so big it would take every comic in its publishing queue to tell it all. Rival Marvel Comics, under Editorin-chief Jim Shooter, was not to be outdone or beaten to the punch, and thus gave birth to the first modern crossover series *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars*. For the Silver and Bronze Ages, it was a sign of the end times.

From 1984 on, comic book sales became increasingly driven by such crossover events, requiring readers to pony up for stack after stack of comics just to follow one epic tale. While grand storytelling of that scale can be truly awesome (as *Secret Wars* turned out to be), more often than not it's just a drain on the reader's patience and finances. For an example of the latter, comic-book fans had only to wait until *Secret Wars II* came out. More pricey disappointments would follow, all putting comic books further and further out of reach for younger readers like those whose dimes fueled the Silver and Bronze Ages.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD (AS WE KNOW IT)

DC Comics was hit harder by the late '70s/early '80s market shrinkage, and consequently felt more pressure for change. The search for a culprit/scapegoat pointed to the parallel worlds concept which had so delighted fans back in 1963, but was now seen as a needless complication that made DC's books harder for new readers to grasp. A decision was then made to commemorate DC's fiftieth anniversary by blowing up the duplicate Earths along with everything else seen in its comic books since 1935. The plan was to start fresh from there with just a single Earth and one set of heroes, just like Marvel's better-selling fictional universe.

The 1985 miniseries that laid waste to everything from Action Comics to The Adventures of Jerry Lewis was entitled Crisis on Infinite Earths, and as its storylines crossed over into every DC title, it left no Silver Age milestone unturned. Barry Allen, the Flash who ushered in comic-book's second era, was killed off. The remnants of Mort Weisinger's Superman legacy (including Supergirl and red kryptonite) were done away with. Even the venerable parallel-Earth pals in the Justice Society were ushered off into limbo like so many senile grandpas dumped off at a retirement home.

Other Silver Age stalwarts fared little better. Batman's sales hit an all-time low in 1985, and his comrade Green Lantern was once again thrust into a team book in an attempt to bolster his numbers. The Atom became a tiny divorced barbarian, and to this day no one seems to understand exactly what his pal Hawkman's post-*Crisis* deal is. In the end, for every successful relaunch (e.g., John Byrne's Superman revamp), *Crisis on Infinite Earths* seemingly left a dozen other major DC characters in a baffling web of tangled continuity. Fans were left wondering precisely which (if any) of their previous adventures still "counted" ("OK, I'm down with the fact Lois Lane doesn't know Kryptonian kung-fu anymore, but how about *The Adventures of Bob Hope*? Those still canon or not?").

The changing of the Silver Age guard was not limited to the printed page, as DC pink-slipped most of the last living links to that era like long-running Superman artist Curt Swan. Most tellingly, 1985 saw the retirement of the very architect of the Silver Age, Julie Schwartz himself. Truly then, a new, much darker age was upon comic books, one as hard and cold as Iron.



SILVER AGE



CHAPTER 2: THE SILVER AGE WORLD

If the tired old Boomer clichés about 1956 through 1986 being "a time of change" and "a time of turmoil" are pretty much true. Sure, that era's got nothing on, say, the Black Death or the Thirty Years War, but people back then weren't smart enough to put their "change" and "turmoil" on TV. So yeah, take *that*, Thirty Years War!

The 1956-86 period also looms larger in our history than the bubonic plague simply because there are more people from the 1950s still around, and not just because the Black Death was, ya know, full of filth and rats and death and all. Thus, for the modern comic-book writer, it's a lot easier to get a nostalgia pop from the audience by including Spiro Agnew in your stories rather than Arthur Schopenhauer.

For many, this era is "when it all went wrong" in America, and it's a perception that cuts across every imaginable political, social, and economic paradigm. Therefore, it's one of an author's main "go to" periods when the reader needs a flashback sequence to explain why there's a present-day mess for the protagonists to clean up. It's an even more appealing period for comic-book writers because, thanks to time travel and its ilk, costumed heroes and villains have a chance to prevent (or cause) the mess in the first place.

This chapter serves as a guidebook to this amazing era for *M&M* gamemasters and players. It details the ins and outs of being a hero during this period, and provides some suggestions on how to bring the Silver and Bronze Ages to life without having to go as far as actually burning your draft cards and boogying all night at Studio 54.

AN OVERVIEW OF AMERICA DURING THE COLD WAR

ike World War II in the preceding Golden Age, the historical time-frame of the Silver and Bronze Ages is marked by and influenced top-to-bottom by the Cold War. Whether it manifested as struggles by other means like the Space Race or bloodier affairs like the Vietnam War, the period from 1956 to 1986 was one of near-constant strife between the democratic United States, the communist Soviet Union, and assorted allies. This chapter begins with a summary of the major events of what became America's longest war; one never officially declared but real nonetheless.

THEM

Many things about the Cold War are debatable. The side that needed to lose is not one of them. Even today, many tenured folk and those who need their course to graduate recoil at this notion. Importantly, none of them ever actually had to live under a communist regime. Kids, there's a reason why when the Berlin Wall came down, no one packed up their stuff to move to *East* Germany. And yes, they did all know about the East's free health care, zero unemployment, and guarantee of no discrimination.

It's important to remember that Nazism with the overt racism replaced by promises of equality for all equals communism. All the other trappings of fascism are still there: rule by a one-party elite who live well at everyone else's expense, and plenty of secret police and death camps for the complainers and might-be complainers. Jobs and doctors abound, but basic necessities and quality care do not. There's also the small matter of no fundamental freedoms other than what the elite choose to loan out from day to day.

So yeah, for all the deniers out there, living under communist rule pretty much sucked and there are about a billion or so corpses to prove it. To make matters worse, the Soviet Union was determined to remake as much of the rest of the world as possible in its dire image. The deniers dispute this even today. Only a few hundred tons or so of Soviet government documents made public since the end of the Cold War contradict them.

It's not easy for some to accept, but the Soviet Union really did spend decades of time and untold fortunes in efforts to undermine non-communist governments around the world. The USSR attempted to use espionage, propaganda, two-headed transplant operations, blackmail, the Olympic Games, murder, kidnapping, ESP, military force, drugs, lies, imprisonment, ballet, torture, terrorism, and an army of half-man, half-ape soldiers (no, we're not making any of this up) to make the globe turn red. Those commies really did want to take over the world, were quite ruthless about it, and non-jackasses should be supremely grateful they failed.

US

Now we're clear on how the commies wore the black hats (you know, the furry ones with the earflaps), some are assuming the good ol' US of A must've been wearing the white hats. Well....that actually *is* a matter for debate. Seriously, we're not bucking for a professorship by saying that-it really does depend on an individual's point of view on the timeless paradox of war.

Every nation goes into a war (even the Cold kind) defending certain principles, and many eventually face the dilemma of either maintaining those ideas or losing the war. Are strongly held beliefs worth anything if the country is lost and the winners ordain their opposing ideas by force? Does a nation really win if it triumphs in the struggle but compromises its core values so badly it's no longer worth saving? Our official answer: search us, we don't know-we just write role-playing games.

If the Soviets had won the Cold War, their system would have been imposed on us and (for a start) many of us smart-ass gamertypes would be gulag-bound. Instead, the United States won, and we all seem to be better off for it on the whole. Sure, there are those who say America is a fascist country, but here's a test for them. If a person can criticize his government for being fascist without winding up dead or in jail, *it's not really fascist*. Moreover, everyone who has lived in a real totalitarian state earns the right to punch them for trivializing their plight.

The previous section outlined a litany of sins the USSR committed during its losing effort in the Cold War. It's a matter of public record that the US and its chosen allies did pretty much all the same things to win (no half-ape super-soldiers, though). To be sure, it was often for shorter periods of times and in smaller numbers, but it happened all the same. Was it worth it for the sake of democracy, etc.? Did the US become just another set of bad guys in the process? Again, we're just game designers-you're on your own with these questions.

WAR OF THE SATELLITES

By 1956, questions of who started the Cold War made (and continue to make) for good debates, but were irrelevant to matters at hand. Whoever shoved who first, by the mid-1950s it was *on*. All that was left for the US, USSR, and the countries who had their respective backs was win, lose, or draw. Thing was, just like irate junior-high boys, their desire to fight was outweighed by fear of the consequences. Instead of after-school detention, any fisticuffs could lead to atomic war and the end of human civilization.

Because of this mutual trepidation, actual conflict was mostly limited to name-calling, vague threats, drinking contests, street racing, and acts of petty vandalism designed to save one's rep-or the equivalent international actions thereof. In 1956, the biggest drag race of all was to see who could put the first artificial satellite above the Earth. Truthfully, all it would prove is which country had captured (and quickly pardoned) the better group of ex-Nazi rocket scientists, but the participants still fully believed it would show the world Who's Really Number One.

America's Project Vanguard missiles were still blowing up on the launch pad when on October 4, 1957 the Soviets surprised the world and sent the basketball-sized *Sputnik 1* into orbit. The resulting shock in the US was almost incalculable, and the realization that America was in fact #2 (at best) did not go over well. Naturally, the search for a scapegoat followed, with the government, spies, the military, and public schools all getting a share of the blame. When the first dog, mouse, rat, rabbit, guinea pig, fungus, plant, dummy and eventually (on April 12, 1961) cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin all followed *Sputnik* into orbit courtesy of the Soviet space program, Americans' demand for blame and action only grew.

GEE, I WISH WE HAD ONE OF THEM DOOMSDAY MACHINES

There was much more to Sputnik than just bragging rights, because along with assorted house pets the Soviet satellites carried with them an implicit threat. Before Sputnik, the main way to get an atomic bomb from your country over to some other poor sucker's was to fly it there in a long-range bomber. Well, either that or FedEx it, but then the charges are outrageous and it's really embarrassing if the enemy doesn't sign for it.

We're not hating on bombers, but they're big, relatively slow, easy to see coming, and there are many, many ways to shoot them down before they force anyone to duck and cover. That's where the US and USSR's nuking capability stood until October 4, 1957. On that day, the Soviets showed they had a missile that could both send cute little Sputnik sky-high and plant an A-bomb right in Mamie Eisenhower's

EVE OF DESTRUCTION

Gamemasters who want to take their *Silver Age* campaigns in a really un-Silver Age direction can alter the course of history and have the Cuban Missile Crisis explode into World War III. Of course, players being like they are, any patriotic superheroes hanging around the scene in October 1962 may decide to take action on their own and blunder the world into an atomic holocaust despite any gamemaster plans.

The world fully expected doomsday at the time and still had no idea just how close it was to actually arriving. In real life, cooler heads in the American and Soviet governments were able to talk their way out of it, but several lower-ranking military officers on both sides had nuclear weapons and the authority to use them under certain circumstances. Among them was the captain of the Soviet submarine *B-39*, who came under attack by quarantining US warships near Cuba on October 26, 1962 and was preparing to retaliate with a nuclear torpedo before better senses overruled him.

Naturally, gamemasters are free to use the Crisis as the flashpoint for World War III in their campaigns and from there to make up whatever consequences they see fit. Given the way 1960s comic-book science worked, an atomic war might even turn out to be a good thing. One glance at the origin of a score of Silver Age characters could easily lead one to conclude exposure to hard radiation and nuclear blasts are some of the best things anyone could ever have happen to them. A-bombs = super-powers for everybody!

If the gamemaster wants to go in a more realistic direction, the consequences are more dire, but vary nonetheless. By late 1962, Kennedy had more than closed the Missile Gap, and the US had roughly a 5,000 to 300 edge in nuclear warheads over the USSR. Make no mistake, a guy can do a lot of damage with 300 nukes, but unless the gamemaster or players intervene, the Soviet Union is definitely going to get the short end of the Armageddon stick.

The other effects depend greatly on who shoots first and how many shots are taken. As above, an all-out exchange means bad news for America and not even a glowing memory of the Soviet Union left, with plenty of radioactive fallout for its neighbors in Europe and Asia. Planetary cooling from the "nuclear winter" effect may lead to worldwide famine, unchecked epidemics, and many other scary, Bronze Age-style outcomes.

A more limited exchange might cripple both countries, ending their status as superpower nations. Such a world might be a wiser one, having learned a hard radioactive lesson about the necessity of peaceful coexistence and thus reflecting some of the typical Silver Age optimism. Alternately, the post-WWIII multi-lateral world might be one divided between many competing countries, all jockeying for prominence in a campaign where the hyperpatriotism of the early Silver Age is a global phenomenon.

lap. Unlike bombers, missiles are small and fast, and by the time you see them coming, you've barely got enough to time to kiss your butt goodbye. Worst of all, even in 2009 the US is only *kinda* sure it can shoot one down; back in 1957 it wasn't even that certain.

The hysteria generated by Sputnik was spoken of in terms of a "Missile Gap," and all America's fears about falling behind the Soviets in any field of endeavor coalesced around that expression President Eisenhower responded by doling out millions to science and technological programs, and creating the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958. Despite these measures, the "Missile Gap" still had enough public cachet that John F. Kennedy's promises to close it helped him narrowly beat Ike's would-be successor Richard Nixon in the 1960 presidential election.

BANG, ZOOM, STRAIGHT TO THE MOON!

Once the US got its space stuff together under just one bureaucracy, NASA and its Project Mercury soon had America running a close second to the Soviets in the so-called "Space Race." While Belgium would've been thrilled with placing, in the US second just means first loser. JFK and his promises to win the Space Race rode such sentiments straight to the White House in 1961, and he aimed to finish first by changing it from a sprint to a marathon.

Skipping details like whether science could actually do it or the country could pay for it, JFK declared that by 1970 America would put at least one guy on the moon then (as a recruiting tool) bring him back alive. We weren't around, but we've always pictured the NASA guys hearing that and doing spit takes. At any rate, America's best and brightest nerds had a decade-minus to cash the check JFK's mouth had written. Kennedy himself then busied himself with other affairs of state, like Marilyn Monroe. Not to spoil it for you, but while JFK wasted his time on women, the geeks saved the day (as usual)

and made the moon landing happen with a good six months to spare on July 20, 1969.

Forty years on, the Apollo 11 mission has become America's national equivalent to that time we were back in high school and the football team went to state. That's a true shame, because it does a great disservice to the incredibly brave men who were crammed into a tiny metal box, forced to drink Tang, crap inside their suits for a week, and pray a computer with less power than a pocket calculator could keep them on course. Let's also not forget the brainy types who figured out how to do all this and the Apollo 1 astronauts who died in 1967 when they got it wrong.

So what were the Soviets up to while Neil Armstrong was screwing up his big speech on the lunar surface? They dithered for years over whether or not to even attempt a moon shot, simply because they didn't have the cash. By the time the answer became a definite *da* in 1964, the commies were way behind. Two years later, their #1 rocket man Sergey Korolyov died from a heart attack, and thereafter the shoddy Soviet moon rockets became really expensive coffins. When the US won the moon race, the Soviets officially gave up and concentrated on far-less-cool space stations. Hey, there's a reason more people watch *The Next Generation* than *Deep Space Nine*.

RED ZONE CUBA

While the US and USSR traded paint in the Space Race, in 1962 the whole Missile Gap thing threatened to blow up in everyone's faces, quite literally. The whole kerfuffle stemmed from the US missiles stationed in the USSR's neighbor Turkey. From there they could land as far away as the heart of Soviet Kazakhstan faster than you can say, "I like sex. Is nice!" Turnabout being fair play, the Soviets put their own missiles in US neighbor Cuba. From there commie H-bombs could land on Miami and points north faster than you can say "Larry Csonka." The commie missiles would also deter the US from invad-

ing Soviet ally Cuba, as pretty much everyone expected (with ample good reason) it would do.

US spy planes photographed the Cuban missile sites in early October 1962, and on the 16th JFK got his first look at the pictures. On the 22nd, Kennedy went public with them, and declared a naval quarantine of Cuba barring any more Soviet weapons. A day later, US nuclear forces went to Defense Condition (DEFCON) 2–one short of actual war–and the line was officially drawn. Crossing it meant nuclear holocaust, and–stay with us, now–that's really, really bad. For the next week, people waited for the end of the world.

On October 28th, the Soviets announced they were removing their Cuban missiles in exchange for a "don't invade there" promise from the US, and just like that the Missile Crisis was over. Kennedy looked like the smartest, ballsy-est man ever for making the Soviets back down, while the commise looked like total wusses. Truth was, JFK had agreed to quietly remove the US missiles in Turkey as a quid pro quo. Both Kennedy and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev deserve credit for working out a doomsday-free deal, but the perception persists that JFK was just way more badass and scared the commise into giving up.

The Cuban Missile Crisis remains the closest we as a species have come to deliberately blowing ourselves off this little planet of ours. There were some accidental near-misses in the years to come, but never again was a nuclear first-strike seen by either government as a desirable option. The "well, you're gonna lose a few" attitude about atomic warfare prevalent in the 1950s was no more. From then on, the Cold War was one of words, proxy fights, and behind-the-scenes espionage.

THE 'NAM

While JFK celebrated one more Cold War win for the Good Guys—probably with some clam chowder and really fabulous babes trouble brewed in an obscure land known as Vietnam. It seemed like a minor problem in a minor nation, and other countries might've just stepped away from it entirely. But that's the downside of having a tough-guy rep like the US: you don't keep it by walking away from trouble. As Kenny Rogers warns, then everyone considers you the coward of the county.

The US government's worry over Vietnam started in 1940 when the French Army-believe it or not-gave up and waved the white flag. Up until then Vietnam had been a French colony, but under pressure from their new Nazi overlords, the cheese-eating surrender monkeys handed it over to Imperial Japan. The Vietnamese retaliated with a masterful guerilla war against the Empire led by one Ho Chi Minh. When the defeated Japanese gave Vietnam back to France in 1945, the communist Ho simply continued the same struggle against the replacement would-be masters.

Ho's campaign worked just as well against the French until they too-wait for it-surrendered and went home in 1954. Suddenly, yet another country was poised to fall under communist control, and a minor worry the US was delighted to have the French handle instead became a serious concern for America. From the beginning, Vietnam would be an issue the US tried to resolve on the cheap as its attention focused on the seemingly bigger fish it had to fry elsewhere.

Since Vietnam was an undesired problem for which the US wanted a discount solution, the American response was the now time-honored tradition of negotiating a bogus peace deal with fake elections no one had any interest in honoring. Like Korea, the Geneva Accord divided Vietnam along a parallel into a communist North and a notcommunist South. America could call the whole thing a draw, and the phoney armistice would give it time to somehow magically make South Vietnam into a real-live country, just like Pinocchio. Really, how could this plan possibly fail?

FAIL

In a development that should've shocked no one, Ho Chi Minh simply moved his 2-0 guerilla campaign onto a third target, the ever-so-shaky government of South Vietnam. After outlasting worldclass powers like Japan and France, taking down South Vietnam was going to be like a cage fight with Andy Dick.

The American response was to keep pumping foreign aid dollars into South Vietnam until its government actually worked, and to keep sending in military advisors until the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) could win a fight. Shockingly, just spending more money on the same crappy ideas failed to achieve results.

This "just keep shovelin' cash" approach was doomed because it fundamentally misread the Vietnamese people, who were overwhelmingly poor, uneducated rice farmers and devoutly Buddhist. The leaders of the North Vietnamese regime were a communisteducated and consequently atheist minority, but had mass credibility because they'd achieved two popular goals: running the Japanese out of town and running the French out of town. By contrast, South Vietnam's leadership was a French-educated, Roman Catholic minority whose only accomplishments involved sticking it to the Buddhist majority.



In plain terms, Vietnam was an ass-kicking contest, and the US bet billions on the one-legged guy who was also considered kind of a jerk. For twenty years, America would blow a fortune and sacrifice thousands of lives on this same losing proposition. But in this troubling situation, at least the American people knew their government would be honest with them.

FRAUD

By 1963, the millions of dollars in aid and scores of advisors had only managed to make South Vietnam collapse more slowly than before. Under fraudulently elected President Ngo Dinh Diem, it was a state ruled by corruption, incompetence, and nepotism, and seemed capable only of further antagonizing the country's Buddhists. Worst of all, it flunked the minimum-standard test for any government by being unable to provide any sense of security for its people, as communist guerillas from the North known as the Viet Cong assassinated government officials, teachers, and doctors in the South with impunity.

A JFK-approved coup both removed Diem from office and the mortal coil on November 2, 1963; twenty days prior to Kennedy himself joining the choir invisible. The changes in leadership ultimately helped neither country resolve the situation in Southeast Asia and by 1964 it was clear only direct military intervention could save South Vietnam. Further complicating matters was the simple fact the American public was deeply opposed to any commitment of American troops to some place they'd never heard of.

Americans were thus relieved when JFK's successor Lyndon B. Johnson quickly drawled out an election-year promise to keep their boys home. LBJ managed to convince the voters his opponent Barry Goldwater was a nut-job just itchin' to get American soldiers onto the front lines in Southeast Asia then nuke the jungle 'til it glowed. On election day 1964, LBJ beat the seemingly crazy warmonger Goldwater in a landslide, thanks in part to the votes of young men fearful of being sent off to war. The following March, several of those same young men would be in Marine uniforms, stepping off troop transports at Da Nanq, South Vietnam.

The rules lawyers are no doubt wondering how LBJ managed to pull off this particular attack of opportunity under the US Constitution 1e rules. It was made possible the previous August after North Vietnamese gunboats twice attacked the destroyer USS *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin, leading Congress to pass a resolution authorizing Johnson to intervene militarily in South Vietnam. LBJ accepted this authority even after he learned (but didn't share) the second, more outrageous attack never actually happened. Essentially, Johnson got a blank check from Congress on shady pretenses to do whatever he wanted for as long as he wanted. Really, what could go wrong?

WAIST DEEP IN THE BIG MUDDY

The American strategy in Vietnam was riddled with flaws, all stemming from the fact that LBJ would've much rather spent time on his good intentioned but massively expensive "Great Society" programs. Johnson wanted Vietnam over and done cheaply and quickly to free up some cash for completely eradicating prejudice, poverty, and health-care shortages in America. Thus, in Vietnam Johnson was always mounting another half-assed effort to score a fast tie in a game with an opponent prepared to win at any cost. When each half-measure failed, LBJ once again acquiesced to the pleas of his Cabinet and commanding general William Westmoreland and authorized just a few more soldiers and a few more dollars-"We'll get 'em next time," writ large in blood. Just like Wile E. Coyote and the Acme Company, LBJ always gave in for just one more try no matter how many times he got burned, blown up, fell off a cliff, etc.

The crappy strategy LBJ repeatedly signed off on involved using American ground troops to destroy the Viet Cong and provide security in the South, while strategic air power bombed the North into accepting a draw. However, despite the troop level increases, winon-the-cheap LBJ never deployed enough boots on the ground or commanders trained how to win a guerilla war. Moreover, randomly dropping high explosives on a country of rice farmers to any great effect is problematic at best. The strategic bombing mostly created civilian casualties, made American airmen prisoners of war, and handed propaganda victories to the enemy.

Sure, the US might've gone the old-fashioned route and actually tried to *win* the war, but that option had problems beyond LBJ's disinterest in victory. America could've used its superior ground forces to invade the North and old-school conquer the enemy, or dropped bombs on the Red Chinese factories that kept the North in supply. However, both moves risked an even bigger war with a nucleararmed China, so instead the US spent the next four years pursuing a doomed strategy in a war it wasn't actually aiming to win in any traditional sense.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

Public opposition to US involvement in Vietnam predated the conflict itself, but a majority or plurality of the American people still supported the intervention through August 1968. Even after that, public opinion polls showed greater frustration with the government's handling of the war than the conflict itself. As late as the 1972 presidential election (the first where all drafteligible men could vote), creepy, shifty pro-war Richard Nixon buried the brainy anti-war George McGovern in a 49-state landslide, the biggest presidential butt-kicking in history.

None of this is intended to suggest Everybody Loves the Vietnam War. It's only meant to correct the popular misconception that all Americans besides LBJ and Tricky Dick were draft-card burning hippies. In fact, a major source of anger for many Americans wasn't the war itself, but that the US wasn't doing enough to win it. Intervention in Vietnam was never popular, but defeat was even less appealing for a lot of people. It remained so even as anti-war protesters took to the streets in increasing numbers and using increasingly violent tactics.

The anti-war movement ultimately succeeded in its major aim, but prior to that it was often a self-defeating effort as its methods scared at least as many people into opposing it as it won converts to its cause. Many in the counterculture never quite figured out why, say, burning the college ROTC building to ground didn't convince folks they were totally after peace, man. In the end, Americans gave up on the war because the hippies told them it was, like, immoral *and* the "credibility gap" created by one too many government promises meant that the next escalation of the war would be the clincher.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RAIN?

America had been in unpopular conflicts before Vietnam (like the Revolution, War of 1812, and Korea), and the US' total combat losses (officially 58,159) in eight years of war are only sightly more than the three bloodiest days of the War Between the States. The US military had previously fought and won a long, brutal guerilla war in an Asian jungle during the fourteen-year Philippine Insurrection. Even the much-publicized (and occasionally fabricated) accounts of atrocities committed by American soldiers were, sadly, nothing new.

What ultimately turned the American public against the Vietnam War was the unprecedented, uncensored, and immediate depiction of events provided by television. For the first time, people who'd never been within 3,000 miles of a battlefield got daily televised doses of the war's prime elements: blood, sweat, rain, mud, and terror. Gazing upon the grim reality of battle shocks and horrifies even when fighting for a popular cause. Over time, eight straight years of "if it bleeds, it leads" news coverage of seemingly endless and ineffectual slaughter took their toll on Americans' already shaky support for the Vietnam War.

In the end, the cold facts that America had been in longer, costlier, and less popular conflicts were no match for the visceral impact of seeing the terrible toll of war in living color on a never-ending loop. A more able commander-in-chief might've convinced Americans the blood-soaked film they were shown on TV every single night was for a worthy cause, but no one actually elected was up to the task over the long haul.

THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED

The ultimate testament to the power of television during the Vietnam era is the effect it had during the 1968 Tet Offensive, which proved to be the turning point of the war. A better example of "perception is reality" simply may not exist.

On January 30, the North broke an announced cease-fire for the Vietnamese New Year, launching simultaneous Viet Cong attacks on all the South's major population centers. Instead of ringing in the Year of the Monkey, the always-rickety South Vietnamese state was fighting for its life against a completely unexpected offensive. It was a huge gamble by the North, but if it successfully provoked a general rebellion against the little-loved regime in the South, it would be game, set, match for the commies.

The caught-with-its-pants-down ARVN and its equally unsuspecting American allies were initially hard-pressed, but repelled the attacks by early April, and repeated their success against two later "mini-Tets" in May and August. By any objective measure, the North Vietnamese ultimately lost, and lost big. They failed in their goal, and the massive casualties suffered finally broke the back of the Viet Cong. So the commies got beat. Super Bowl XXIV beat. Neal Peart's drums beat. *Bambi Meets Godzilla* beat. Now just imagine the North's reaction when the US media began reporting a major communist *victory*.

Reacting to the shocking Viet Cong success in the early going, many leading newsmen-most famously *uber*-credible CBS anchor Walter Cronkite-declared America's war effort to be a lost cause. Despite this statement being completely at odds with the battles' actual results, truth was ultimately no match for "the most trusted man in America." At the very moment South Vietnam finally got a



Cong-free chance to establish internal security and become a viable country, a majority of Americans finally and permanently turned against the war.

WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE

The Tet Offensive stuck a fork in Lyndon Johnson's political career, and opposing candidate Richard Nixon's vague secret plan to end the war was enough to cost LBJ's vice-president Hubert Humphrey the presidency in 1968. Nixon's plan was known as "Vietnamization," and the most shocking thing about it was it might've actually worked. It was a longshot to be sure, but still a noticeable upgrade from the doomed strategy that preceded it.

Vietnamization was to build on America's everywhere-but-theheadlines victory against the Tet Offensive. With the Viet Cong now a non-factor, the civilian population in the South would finally have some sense of security provided by their government, which they would hopefully grow to love and be willing to fight for. As the ARVN got bigger and better, the US could gradually withdraw its ground forces and eventually the South Vietnamese would take over the war entirely. Sure, that's technically still just a draw, but in an era where Tet was called a communist victory, an honest tie would be as good as a win. All the plan needed was time.

Nixon was prepared to act as crazy and ruthlessly as it took to provide that time, and unlike LBJ had no fear of provoking Red China by trying too hard to win the war. The North Vietnamese had long violated neutral neighboring countries to use as safe havens for attacks into the South, and Nixon ordered the bombing of enemy bases in Cambodia in 1969 and invasion of Laos in 1970. As much military sense as these moves made, their political cost was considerable, as the infuriated anti-war movement grew with each expansion of the war.

Ultimately, it was this lack of political acumen that eliminated any chance for Vietnamization to succeed. A trusted, charismatic president might've sold it to the American people as a real chance for victory and peace. Instead that job fell to the hated, paranoid Nixon, who was busy dealing with the fallout from the Watergate scandal and his other political miscalculations just when the plan needed him most. As a result of the public outcries he himself provoked, Nixon was compelled to continue troop withdrawals even after a series of major defeats proved the ARVN was far from ready to stand alone.

THE END

In late 1972, secret negotiations between the Nixon Administration and the North Vietnamese government were ready to bear fruit. The North, persuaded by a renewed American strategic bombing campaign and the South's continuing instability, promised to stop its invasions and somehow managed to hold back a snicker while doing so. America agreed to a total pullout from South Vietnam, but vowed to resume bombing if the North welched on its end. Elections to determine Vietnam's final political fate were promised, because they worked so well back in '54.

Nixon went public with the Paris Peace Accords and signed them on January 27, 1973. The following summer, Congress enacted legislation barring any further US military action in Vietnam. America's war was over, but South Vietnam and its two-to-one military advantage over the North and a signed peace deal remained. The North waited until the next dry season in January 1974 to go back on its word, knowing there was nothing the sinking Nixon and hapless Ford Administrations could do about it. Despite being bigger and better armed than ever, the ARVN folded up like a card table just like it always had, and the North completed its conquest of the South on April 30, 1975.

In the end, the Vietnam Conflict was won by no one; certainly not the over six million dead and maimed, plus those emotionally shattered by their war experiences. The United States ended up with nothing to show for its sacrifice of blood and treasure other than a wounded and divided national psyche which took decades to heal. Even North Vietnam's triumph was short-lived, as its thirty-five years of struggle earned it just a decade of gloating before world communism collapsed. There's still plenty of communism's trademark poverty and oppression to go around there, but it's doubtful anyone's exchanging high-fives because of it.

SUCKING IN THE SEVENTIES

En route to becoming the most hated president in American history, Richard Nixon mixed his war-making in Vietnam with peacemaking in Red China. This shiny happy Nixon manifested as part of a policy of relaxing Cold War tensions known as detente. In truth, Nixon simply leveraged the Soviet-Red Chinese rivalry over which was King of the Commies, alternately buddying up to one while extracting concessions from the jealous other. It was a tricky policy (appropriately for Nixon) to manage, but he was more than enough of a sneaky bastard to pull it off.

Not so the well-meaning failures that followed him into the Oval Office. Like the American people, the communists couldn't even begin to take Nixon's unelected successor Gerald Ford seriously. Jimmy Carter followed Ford in 1977, and his obsequious, indecisive presidency plus America's post-Vietnam "malaise" suggested the time was right for a Soviet comeback.

When even fifth-rate powers like Iran started pushing Carter-run America around, the Soviet Union had the US pegged as a country that couldn't keep its own lunch money anymore. In December 1979, the Soviets invaded neighboring Afghanistan, and waited for America's response. Carter got mad, mean mad, and in a furor announced a US boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The Soviets responded by crapping themselves from laughing so hard.

WIN ONE FOR THE GIPPER

Epic-fail President Carter became beloved ex-President Carter in 1981, losing the leadership of the free world to the leading man in *Bedtime for Bonzo*. The chimp's former co-star came to office with a plan to bring down the Soviet Union and end the Cold War, and then lift a Chrysler Cordoba over his head with his bare hands. OK, we made up that last one, but at the time way more people believed that ex-movie star Ronald Reagan could do the latter than the former.

Reagan's strategy was similar to how America won the race to the moon in that its centerpiece involved outspending the Soviet Union. Under Reagan's leadership, the US embarked on a massive peacetime military buildup which left the already wheezing Soviet state-run economy sputtering to keep up. Thanks to Reagan's renewed war of words, quitting the arms race in shame was not an option, and by the mid-'80s the heart of the Soviet economy was ready to blow out like an old tire. The war of words was as controversial as it was lopsided. During Reagan's movie career, he'd appeared in more crap than corn, but that still gave him a megaton more charisma than any of the fastdying Soviet leaders of the early '80s, all of whom looked like discarded Muppet monster prototypes. Therefore, when Reagan delivered his message that American democracy was cool and ruled while Soviet communism sucked and was evil, it sounded way more convincing and eloquent than this sentence.

HOLLYWOOD ENDING

Reagan's words persuaded many he was a senile old warmonger and World War III was at hand, but when Pope John Paul II echoed his sentiments, the deeply Roman Catholic people in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe were inspired to push for their long-denied freedoms. Keeping them in line would cost the Soviets big money, and before they finished counting their change, Reagan announced the US was starting work on a phenomenally expensive space-based missile defense system. Critics mocked the idea as "Star Wars," but the Soviets believed America could pull it off as surely as they couldn't. At long last, the Soviets' first and biggest Cold War triumph-the intercontinental ballistic missile that carried Sputnik-would be rendered impotent.

By 1985, the disheartened and broke Soviets knew the Communist Party was over. That year Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in the USSR, and with all other options gone, he set the country on a path towards greater economic and political freedom. Soon Reagan and he were talking nuclear-arms reduction, and the world began to speak of the Cold War in past tense. Not bad for a guy with a funky splotch on his head and the dude who made four films as "Brass Bancroft," counterfeiter-smashing action-hero agent of the US Treasury Department.

When even the USSR wasn't communist anymore, the bad guys officially lost. All it cost the US was a massive multi-trillion dollar national debt plus a few years of scaring the living hell out of everyone everywhere. Still, for those who can recall any of the fortyodd years the Cold War kept the world on the edge of doomsday, it seems like a decent bargain.

THE SILVER AGE AND REAL-WORLD HISTORY

he time period encompassed by the Silver and Bronze Ages of comic books is a mere grain of sand in the hourglass from a historical perspective, but in the space of those thirty years, the United States of America endured a bewildering series of reversals of fortune. Those three roller-coaster decades mirror the three-act dramatic structure so perfectly it's a natural fit for *M&M* campaigns.

America began the mid-1950s as a scrappy heroic fighter battling an evil and equal counterpart in the name of truth, justice, and all that good stuff. In the mid-1960s, America's shining armor tarnished, and to many the champion of freedom became a murdering imperialist bully. By the mid-1970s, the US' self-esteem and international prestige hit rock bottom, and the former moon-landing hero looked like a broke and incompetent zero. Then, as the epoch ended in the mid-1980s, America regained its self-respect and finally won the big fight against its longtime antagonist. Sure, there are no explosions at the end, but that's a dull Armageddon-free ending most people can deal with.

Much thicker books than this one have been written about the events of 1956-86, and *Silver Age* can't outdo more academic tomes in level of detail (although it *does* have more occurrences of the phrase "hidden city of talking gorillas"). Instead, this section focuses on how to use elements of real history to create more entertaining superhero adventures.

The pivotal event of this era in American history is the Vietnam War, so much so that it serves as a clear chronological divider. Therefore, we examine the Silver and Bronze Ages in terms of the prewar period, wartime, and the postwar years.

1956-1963: NEW FRONTIER

Adventures set in the happy days leading up to the agonies of the Vietnam War offer up a heady mix of wondrous super-science, tense Cold-War espionage, and the limitless potential of "our friend" the atom to both save and doom humanity. Just like the comic books

of this period, the heroes exploits are likely to be healthy serving of *The Right Stuff* topped with *Goldfinger* on a delicious bed of *Dr. Strangelove*.

CONQUEST OF SPACE

The Space Race is the foremost element in any pre-'Nam *Silver Age* campaign or any genre game set in the late 1950s or early '60s. Americans were firmly convinced the future was in space, and eagerly devoured media reports about the easy livin' days just ahead when they'd all be backyard barbequing on the moon. While waiting for their personal hovercraft to roll off Detroit's assembly lines, Americans closely followed every missile test, rocket launch, and orbital mission undertaken. When NASA succeeded, the whole country walked a little taller and the apple pie tasted just a little sweeter. If the godless Soviets somehow did something good in space, a national day of grumbling and bitter recriminations followed.

For this oh-so-brief time, the US was a utopia for nerds, as rocket scientists like Dr. Wernher von Braun were respected household names, and no one was mean-spirited enough to bring up the whole "he made V-2 missiles for Hitler" thing. NASA's clean-cut, athletic, go-getter astronauts were among the most closely watched celebrities, before America wisely moved on to reality TV show stars and vapid debutantes.

In addition to the promise of robots that mow lawns and showing up our Cold War enemies, there was significant scientific and technological progress being made. The world got its first sub-camera phone quality pictures of the lunar surface (thanks to the no-good Soviets, but still), and unmanned probes returned information about conditions on other planets. Evaluations were also done of mankind's prospects for survival in space, but they, like the rest of the burgeoning space science discoveries, were a secondary public consideration. More than anything else, the Space Race was all about getting to yell, "In your face, commies!"



THERE'S A STARMAN WAITING IN THE SKY

In a traditional *Silver Age* campaign with all the trimmings, the player characters spend a fair amount of time on Space Race-related matters. The classic superheroes of the era eagerly want to be a part of it, and moreover the public and the government expect them to be involved.

Brainy scientific types are bound to be working on something space-y, perhaps even slapping together their own missile to the moon or points beyond. Less bright but equally patriotic superheroes are going to be asked to guard important assets like rocket scientists, spacecraft, launch facilities, and research laboratories. All are prime targets for enemy agents, supervillains, and alien invaders throughout the Silver Age.

Heaven help the heroes if they drop the baton in their leg of the Space Race. Failure can mean jeopardizing America's standing in the Cold War, allow vital technology to fall into evil scheming hands, or just flat out kill a lot of innocent people. Screwing up with liquid oxygen and letting tons of white-hot metal fall from the sky does have a tendency to do the latter.

Silver Age comic books frequently featured space technology well beyond actual human capability (then or now), but the writers were always careful not to let any of the super-high tech survive the story. Whether it's done by accident or to keep it out of enemy hands, any device capable of pushing NASA beyond its real-life doings was as good as scrap before the last panel. Gamemasters looking to avoid entering the realm of alternate history are advised to hold to the same stricture.

SPACE ODDITY

The larger question of how great a difference super-powered individuals make in the Space Race must also be considered. Typical Silver Age heroes are bound and determined to see America be first on the moon, and gamemasters should be prepared to gently thwart these ambitions, distract them with more worldly crises, or accept a timeline where the lunar landing precedes the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan*.

Heroes being heroic and all, they are likely to attempt to avert fatal space-related accidents like the Apollo 1 disaster and the nearloss of Apollo 13. Again, the prospect of changing history looms, as well as the natural human tendency to learn only from mistakes. Future launches in a world where superheroes solve all apparent difficulties, yet everyone is more careless creates the possibility for even more terrible disasters.

An interesting story idea for well-meaning history meddlers lies in the disasters that befell the Soviet space program, such as the fatal mishaps during the *Soyuz 1* and *Soyuz 11* missions. It's great gamemaster fun to watch patriotic Silver Age heroes wrestle with the dilemma of launching a merciful rescue mission that will help out the bad guys in the Cold War. The risk of angering the Soviets with their unwanted assistance and the reward of improving US-USSR relations make it a scenario well worth running.

As a final thought, gamemasters who want to keep their player characters Earth-bound have great allies in the laws of science and the rules of *M&M*. Gamemasters should never lose sight of how hard it is to get to space and back and not die, and can work to keep all the heroes within these areas of risk by carefully monitoring purchases of the Immunity (life support) power and the like. See *M&M* pp. 168-170 for more on how space kills.

ATOMIC RULERS OF THE WORLD

During the early Silver Age Americans realized winning the Space Race alone wouldn't solve all their problems, but that plus nuclear energy surely would. Urged on by media reports of the day, people saw atomic power as a cheap source of unlimited energy that would never run out, or close enough, at least. Our friend the atom would do everything from curing cancer to beaming *Gunsmoke* into our TVs and launching us to Mars.

Atomic power and weapons enjoyed a level of public support in the late 1950s and early '60s unfathomable to later generation of Americans schooled on Hiroshima, Chernobyl, and other irradiated places they probably can't spell. However, getting into a mindset where nuclear power is entirely consequence-free and H-bombs are "just another weapon" puts a gamer head first into the Silver Age.

Much like space technology, nuclear technology is much soughtafter by all the worst people: commie spies, super-powered megalomaniacs, and evil little green men. Naturally, only the player characters can stop them, and the price of failure is about as high as it gets. The malevolent applications for stolen atomic weapons secrets are as obvious as they are terrifying, and heaven only knows what world-threatening device a super-villain will charge up using purloined nuclear power sources.

Real history is scarily replete with incidents where atomic bombs could've fallen into the wrong hands, and they can provide excellent springboards for adventures where the heroes must prevent that from happening. The best-known incident in the US is the "Tybee Bomb," an H-bomb lost in the waters near Savannah, Georgia after a midair collision on February 5, 1958 and never recovered to this day. Even more unnerving is the number of missing Soviet nukes, which some place as high as *forty* (you're welcome for that infosleep well!).

THIS IS NOT A TEST

Using atomic energy in *M&M* is not about nuclear-powered dice, as cool as that would be. Rather, an authentically Silver Age campaign is going to have a lot of atomic-related stories. Some are variations on the Space Race plots outlined above (e.g., protect atomic scientists and tech from the bad guys). Others acknowledge on some level the danger H-bombs pose, such as when the player characters are called upon to stop a nuclear missile before it lands on Moscow, either because of an accidental launch or crazy supervillain.

Perhaps more than any other plot element, the question of what happens if the heroes fail looms large. However, both reality and comic-book conventions provide several outs for gamemasters who don't want to role-play Armageddon in a four-color superhero campaign. Atomic weapons are famously complicated devices and are often broken down into several components for transport to lessen the chances of a mishap. In the event the player characters screw up royally and let the bad guy trigger a stolen nuke, the gamemaster can avert disaster by "revealing" the detonator had been removed "all along," and the overconfident villain didn't bother to check. Lucky for them, eh?

It's not all bad news if a commie agent or megalomaniacal supervillain does set off an A-bomb, at least according to Silver Age comic books. All that helpful, healthful radiation is bound to give everyone exposed to it super-powers. Sure, some become evil mutated monsters and atom-powered villains, but nuclear energy isn't perfect in the early 1960s, just nearly so. For the gamemaster in need of a score of new bad guys or a bored player wanting a radical redesign of his character's powers, a nuclear explosion or two here and there can be a real boon. And if all else fails, the heroes can just hide safely inside a fridge until the blast subsides.

The bottom line is while split atoms should be a constant presence in a *Silver Age* campaign, they're (blindly) seen as nothing but a good thing. Only if the Wrong People get hold of it can anything go awry, and the player characters need to be given every opportunity to see they don't. The gamemaster should of course scare the bejesus out of the players (who are hip to nukes being bad) along the way. Even if things do go horribly wrong, the wacky world of Silver Age comic-book science allows gamemasters to turn even an atomic explosion into a good thing: the birth of a new superhero.

SECRET AGENT MAN

Senator "Tailgunner Joe" McCarthy was exaggerating about there being a red under every bed in the early 1950s, but as declassified Cold War documents prove, there were numerous communist secret agents inside America's highest institutions. The myth of the so-called communist "witch hunt" accurately describes the tactics employed, but unlike witches, there really *were* Americans selling out their country. Most notorious was Julius Rosenberg, executed in 1953 for passing A-bomb secrets to the Soviet Union and ending America's nuclear monopoly.

Increased internal security imposed by President Truman in the late 1940s led to the demise of the most damaging Soviet spy rings, and by the late 1950s the "McCarthyism" their discovery hysterically fueled was dying out. Of course, anyone learning American history from Silver Age comic books would see none of this, as every top-secret project in the four-color world was infiltrated by at least one enemy agent. The only real question was would the heroes unmask him (or sometimes her) before his sabotage caused a democracy-destroying disaster. If a chase scene was needed, there was the added suspense of trying to stop the commie spy before he was safe behind the Iron Curtain with a briefcase full of stolen documents.

In real life, Soviet secret agents were mainly after diplomatic secrets, economic data, and military defense plans, but files full of barley crop yields are way too boring a MacGuffin for kids' funny books. Instead, the favored aims for comic-book spies were space and nuclear technology, with nuclear space technology being a double espionage delight (don't laugh-spacecraft powered by atomic explosions was an idea with real cachet at the time). Lucky for the defenders of baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie, those were the very things most likely to have superheroes assigned to guard them, and a thousand Silver Age comic-book stories were the result.

The usual setup has a number of never-before-seen characters working on the secret project, with one incredibly guilty person and one puppy-dog innocent among them. Naturally, it's always the one the heroes least suspect who's either a deep-cover foreign spy or an American turncoat. Depending on the writer involved and recent reallife events, the secret agent might be explicitly working for the Soviet Union (and include a cameo by a buffoonish Nikita Khrushchev). Otherwise, more subtle Silver Age scribes have the infiltrator working for "an unnamed foreign power" which tends to be a vague hybridization of America's Cold War rivals, sort of like a "Chinovakia."

SMILING FACES SOMETIMES

A campaign paying any homage to the Silver Age needs to incorporate the commie spy plot at least once. The trouble for gamemasters is their players are likely to be quite a bit older than the kid audience such stories were designed to keep in suspense. Even if the players aren't yet Silver Age comic-book fans, they've probably seen enough melodramas from other media to know it's never the obvious red herring. Therefore, the gamemaster may want to consider changing up the formula a bit.

Before doing that, the gamemaster should be able to rule out the presence of any diehard Silver Age fanatics who'll be livid over any deviation from the era's tropes (trust us, loony genre fundamentalists do in fact exist). Once that's done, the first possible change-up is to make the most obvious suspect the real culprit. Odd that the "twist ending" of the most innocent character being guilty has become the cliché, but if the players are planning on the same shopworn denouement, disappointing them can be a real surprise.

Another way to inject some genuine suspense into the same tired old resolution is to make the guilty party an unwilling traitor. It's a plot that harkens back to the Golden Age, but one worth polishing up and bringing back. Maybe the guilty party is being blackmailed or the no-good Bolsheviks kidnapped one of their loved ones. Either way, players can enjoy the sudden twist of a "slap the cuffs on the commie spy" plot suddenly becoming a hostage rescue mission. If the victim was taken behind the Iron Curtain, the player characters are in for some real excitement they didn't anticipate.



A final option is a bit of a cheat, and isn't easy to pull off, but rest assured we won't rat you to your players, gamemaster. Really sneaky gamemasters can structure the plot so the evidence points towards both the red herring and least likely suspect, and whomever the players accuse, it's not him. Told you it was kind of a jerk move, but again no one else needs to know-least of all the surprised players, hopefully entertained by the twist. In this situation, the gamemaster definitely owes the player characters a fair chance to catch the real spy before they get away. Not doing that is too big a jerk move even for us.

1963-1975: THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

On November 22, 1963, the KGB, Clay Shaw, a cabal of international bankers, three fake hobos, the CIA, some Cuban exiles, E. Howard Hunt, the Mafia, Lyndon B. Johnson, Fidel Castro, the Israeli government, the Dallas police, General Edwin Walker, the Secret Service, the FBI, Robert Easterling, and/or Lee Harvey Oswald orchestrated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Maybe. Or not. We *still* want to know what Frederic Wertham's alibi is.

All kidding and conspiracy theory horsecrap aside, the murder of JFK was the beginning of a dark time for America. After an age of unprecedented progress and prosperity, the once proud, supremely optimistic US was shaken to the core by the brutal murder of its young charismatic president. After Kennedy proved to be just the first in a decade-long bloodletting which claimed thousands of young men and brutally silenced those who called for peace and reconciliation. America would ultimately endure and regain its former glory, but it would never be the same again.

The question for gamemasters is how much of this trauma to visit upon their *Silver Age* heroes. If their objective is to maintain the lighthearted fun of the era's comic books, the answer is likely none at all. On the other hand, the presence of super-powered beings during the momentous events of the 1960s offers up some fascinating story possibilities for those who find the time period itself more interesting than its funny books.

ABRAHAM, MARTIN, AND JOHN

Some of the great "What If?" questions in American history revolve around President Kennedy surviving his real-life assassination, partly because this non-occurrence has become an empty vessel for Boomers to pour all their unrealized dreams into. Un-assassinated JFK, they tell us, would've kept America out of Vietnam, ended racial strife, spared us the Nixon presidency, stayed true to his wife, invented a time machine and saved Lincoln, then won an NBA Slam Dunk Contest or two.

It's all speculation of course, just like what we're going to postulate here. However, there are doubtlessly *M&M* gamemasters out there who are planning to have their *Silver Age* campaign travel to Dealey Plaza, ready for the heroes to make a difference. These gamemasters need to know a little more about who Kennedy was before wondering who he might've become.

First off, gamemasters are free and welcome to make saving Kennedy's life a desirable goal above and beyond preventing an innocent man from being murdered. A superhero's timely kick to Lee Harvey Oswald's batch can alter history for the better in any way gamemasters wish. If that's case, the costumed good guys may later rescue Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy (JFK's obvi-

THE CALL UP

Authentic Silver Age comic books by and large kept their young costumed protagonists close to home, or at least far away from the Vietnam War. Mostly this was done to avoid taking sides (and alienating readers) on a very controversial issue. It was also a reflection of an insoluble storytelling paradox.

The more powerful comic-book heroes should've been able to win the war in time for brunch, but couldn't do so without creating some weird, freaky alternate reality no one would get (at least until 1986's *Watchmen*). Thus, costumed heroes usually kept their civilian jobs and blissfully went about business as usual, often without a word said about how the younger ones avoided the draft.

An authentic *Silver Age* campaign can proceed accordingly, simply taking for granted any male characters in the prime superhero-ing ages of 18 and 26 don't have to worry about being called into military service and sleep soundly as the war continues without their direct help.

Some players are going to wonder about this, especially in Bronze Age campaign where the war should be an issue. Sooner or later they're going to ask about the draft, even if none of the non-player characters do. In such cases, the section on new **Silver Age Feats** explains the ins and outs of the new Benefit: Draft Exemption feat. It lists a number of good reasons for perfectly healthy young male heroes not to be in uniform. One of them is bound to fit each of the homebody heroes in a given campaign.

ous successor when he's term-limited out in '68) from their senseless slayings as well. After that, feel free to call off the Vietnam War, keep Tricky Dick out of the White House, get Jimi, Janis, and Jim into rehab, quash disco music, spare us from Oliver Stone, and otherwise make the '60s and '70s as great a time as Silver Age comic books depicted.

Tearing up the history books in this fashion may make a mess (look out, it's the teacher!), but it does lay the groundwork for a campaign where the Silver Age goes on forever. The merry spirit of early '60s comic books never goes away, and at the same time the campaign doesn't ignore real-world events (it just radically alters them). Doing so keeps the campaign a little more grounded in reality, opens up some (alternate) historical story possibilities, and avoids the game getting all heavy and gloomy once the '70s arrive.

THE ASK NOT WALTZ

The other option is perhaps the more intriguing one, and that's the possibility that Kennedy's survival makes things worse. It's a lot less far-fetched than some of the happier outcomes imagined by others, like avoiding the Vietnam War. Indeed, it seems likely that under the Kennedy Doctrine ("pay any price, bear any burden" to fight commies) JFK would've sent troops to Southeast Asia sooner than LBJ did, kept them there longer, and in greater numbers. Maybe the US wins (with super-powered help, perhaps) and then things escalate into World War III. Alternately, America still loses and the real-life divisions in 1960s society become even deeper and longer lasting.

In any case, the longer JFK stays in office after November 1963, the greater number of political enemies he makes. They will include segregationists (as his pushes his civil rights agenda), and either Soviet sympathizers like Oswald (as JFK pushes his anti-communism) or Red-hating hawks (if he pursues detente with the USSR instead). As Kennedy angers more and more people, the bigger the chance an enemy will uncover his many known (but unreported by the media) extramarital affairs and go public. Americans of that era would probably react to such a breach of trust with greater outrage than they did the Watergate scandal, and thus JFK's survival ultimately takes the shine off the Silver Age sooner than in real life.

The most likely comic-book result from this ironic twist of history is causing a Bronze Age that never ends. It's certainly an era that has its fans, and if your players are among them, this set-up can provide plausible, surprising reasons for why the characters are still waiting in long gas lines to stop President Nixon and his greedy corporateally goons from busting up the anti-Vietnam War demonstration in 2010.

THE FIGHTIN' SIDE OF ME

Despite being the one occasion during the Silver Age when the Cold War got hot for the US, the actual fighting in Vietnam drew little notice from contemporary superhero comic books, especially when compared to the past omnipresence of World War II in their pages. It was a reflection of the American public's initial ambivalence about-and later opposition to-the country's involvement in Southeast Asia.

This certainly doesn't mean this significant event in American history has to pass by your *Silver Age* campaign without fanfare, of course. In fact, the Vietnam War opens up some story possibilities not available in any other setting. Its inclusion may be as simple as a quick "no, thank you" from the player characters when the government asks them to smash the Cong before the heroes go back to their usual array of goofy costumed bank-robbing foes. By contrast, some characters may be more eager to stop the spread of international Marxism-Leninism in Southeast Asia.

When the Marines first set foot in Da Nang, some patriotic characters may want to grab their red, white, & blue costume and go fight the marauding commie hordes. Others may want to help the war effort to prove their flag-waving skills beyond a shadow of a doubt, repairing their *bona fide* All-American image from any damage suffered during the McCarthy era. The risk these characters run is the government may not ask for or even want their help. Those heroes who most desire (or feel the need) to beat the Cong back across the 17th parallel may be kept at arm's length by the government. They may be asked to stay home and bolster domestic support, or ordered to stay out of the internationally touchy "limited war" while the conflict drags on and thousands die.

RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE

During the Silver Age, superhero exploits in Vietnam typically involves sneaking behind enemy lines for sabotage or rescue missions. These are pretty much the standard "attack the villain's fortress hideout" plot with the trappings changed (North Vietnamese soldiers rather than costumed goons, for instance). Politics don't enter into things any more than the typical Silver Age supervillain bash.

BRING THE BOYS HOME

Contemporary comic books have offered up several different explanations as to why costumed heroes stayed stateside instead of ending the war early. In most Silver Age comic books, for example, costumed heroes have counterparts representing the Soviet Union and Red China. The combination of super-powered communists plus the might of their country's military machines can logically cancel out any and all interventions by the American heroes.

Another potential explanation involves the propaganda value of superheroes. The US government may fear for the blow the already shaky national morale would suffer if such a visible symbol of national power as a costumed hero was killed or captured. It's also quite in keeping with history to rule that LBJ doesn't allow super-powered individuals in Southeast Asia because he fears Chinese and Soviet retaliation. Nixon, on the other hand, is just too paranoid to trust anyone wearing masks and likewise the heroes are kept away from the front by presidential decree.

Alternatively, the threat of communist infiltration and sabotage may be greater in your campaign than it was in real history, just like the level of menace portrayed in Silver Age comic books. Superheroes, uniquely capable of rounding up such miscreants, could be ordered to remain on the home front where they can do the most good. This good also includes doing what celebrities did best, raising the troops' morale and selling the war to a skeptical populace.

Finally, some stories posit a comic-book reason for the lack of direct superhuman involvement in the fighting, inventing some technological or magical obstacle uniquely menacing to costumed heroes. Perhaps this obstacle suppresses any superhuman ability, or instantly brainwashes the good guys into becoming bad guys, or simply turns costumed heroes into children or monkeys. Whatever the reason, it's a line the heroes cannot cross.

Bronze Age infiltration missions are nastier affairs, possibly foisted on the player characters through blackmail or deception and with morally dubious aims. "Victory" for the heroes may mean abandoning their assignment once they realize its less-than-cricket nature. They may even go so far as to blow the lid off their formerly secret mission and alert the media about the "dirty tricks" the American government was ready to employ.

WAR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

By gamemaster design or player accident, the heroes may find themselves "in country," just them and Charlie, eyeball to eyeball. Gamemasters running a classic Silver Age style campaign may want to run these encounters as All-American commie-bashes or take other extraordinary steps to ensure bloody warfare never spoils the gee-whiz fun. In a more realistic Bronze Age campaign, battles are dire struggles for survival, and a single taste of them may be enough to send the disgusted costumed heroes back home for the duration.

Player characters are most likely to get the call (or the itch) to get involved during the war's most desperate hours, like the Tet Offensive or the fall of Saigon. At these critical junctures even the most powerful, battle-tested heroes find themselves outnumbered by conventional forces and the hordes of super-powered operatives likely to be found in the communist ranks. Nothing should come easy for the characters during these times, and the rewards for success are bound to be few, just as it was for the average fighting man.

Once directly involved in the Vietnam Conflict, the heroes find their range of actions limited just as the soldiers and generals did. For instance, there's no need for the gamemaster to worry about the characters flying to Hanoi or Beijing and ending the war in a day, because they know as well as anyone that doing so will provoke the Soviet Union's wrath and lead to all-out nuclear war.

THE BATTLE HYMN OF LT. CALLEY

Gamemasters running Bronze Age campaigns may want to incorporate the atrocities committed during the war, such as My Lai and other massacres of civilians suspected of enemy sympathies. They don't have to be described in great detail or experienced firsthand by the characters, as that really takes things to the edge of the superhero comic-book genre. Still, at least a mention of them among all the other things that anger and depress Bronze Age heroes seems appropriate.

Similarly, unlucky player characters may get to experience the horrors of the notorious prisoner-of-war camps run by the communists. In a comic-book setting, captured superheroes may be subjected to horrible scientific experiments, brainwashing, or worse. Again, this may be better handled "offstage" as part of a character's backstory, but the number of Bronze Age characters whose origin is Vietnam-related is too great to ignore this possibility completely.

No matter how grim and gritty a Bronze Age campaign is intended to be, exposing the characters to actual combat in Southeast Asia is probably best done rarely if at all. Naturally, gamemasters and players are free to proceed in whatever fashion is most fun for them, but anyone wanting to role-play the superhero genre in a war comic setting are bound to miss their favorite tropes sooner or later. Moreover, the amount of entertainment to be derived from a long, bloody guerilla war in the jungle is limited. Just ask anyone who was there.

That said, the jungles of Southeast Asia are fair game as settings for the sort of plots that *M&M* and the superhero genre do handle well. Using costumed heroes for search and destroy missions is kinda dark, but if something more comic-book like happens, the pure fun quotient increases. Just imagine if evil aliens launch their invasion of Earth at the 17th parallel, or zombies and vampires begin wandering the jungle (after the Comics Code is amended, of course). As long as the actual war is put aside for the moment (or at least not trivialized), the four-color adventure elements can bring the fun and the setting just provides a layer of timely interest.

I AIN'T MARCHING ANYMORE

One way the player characters can avoid the horrors of Vietnam from spoiling their superhero-ing is to join the burgeoning anti-war movement. They may do so because they're morally opposed to the conflict or just a bit unsure what good the US and they can accomplish in Southeast Asia. Even those who more than did their part during World War II or Korea are probably in no rush to experience the horrors of war all over again and thus may harbor some trepidation about Vietnam.

I WANNA BE ELECTED

Even before the electorate wised up and voted a comic-book fan into the White House, America's Silver Age chief executives were making appearances in the pages of leading superhero titles. Their four-color portrayals varied tremendously, and were sometimes at odds with their true historical selves. For gamemasters who want an extra degree of comic-book verisimilitude in their *Silver Age* campaigns, here's how POTUS #35-40 fared back in their respective days.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

The "Camelot" myth held firm throughout the Silver Age, and at times comic-book JFK seemed almost like a superhero himself. Kennedy was always ready to assist needy costumed folk, whether it was helping Superman protect his secret identity (by posing as Clark Kent) or giving words of support to the fearsome but sympathetic Hulk. Thus, a true Silver Age JFK should be a vigorous, inspiring, charismatic *deux ex machina* (and rarely used in games for that reason), with no hint of his real-life womanizing or poor health.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Despite being one of the more important occupants of the Oval Office, LBJ was nearly invisible in comic books during his presidency. Since Johnson is also one of the most controversial chief executives, writers and artists avoided depicting him because it was impossible to do so without offending half the readership. Comic-book LBJ is then a shadowy, never seen or spoken of figure, with other (usually fictitious) government agencies filling in for him when an appearance by the Feds is needed.

RICHARD NIXON

Even before Watergate, Nixon was depicted as a ruthless, treacherous individual, ready to throw anyone else (including Vice-President Agnew) under a bus to save his own skin. Nixon therefore makes the perfect embodiment of Bronze Age cynicism about the aims and means of government. Comic-book Nixon's cowardice and suspicion can make him the ultimate plot complication for the player characters or (if the campaign is *really* Bronze-Age bleak) he can be an out-and-out super-villain. Once the characters make his enemies list, super-villain Nixon can be a joke (as he's depicted on *Futurama*) or the heroes' deadliest foe, one they frankly may not have the resources to defeat.

GERALD FORD

Unlike his predecessor, Ford didn't suffer many harsh comic-book portrayals. This was partly because the prevailing attitudes of the day were so deeply suspicious of government there was little need to personify them. Ford's bland, nice-guy image also didn't loan itself to a sinister profiling the way Nixon's creepy persona did. Comic-book Ford then is the ultimate non-player character, a nondescript mini standing on the dry-erase map with "PREZ—>" hastily scrawled next to him.

JIMMY CARTER

Beloved humanitarian Carter was nowhere to be found in comic-books. Instead, the popular image of him as a drawling pantywaist prevailed, ever ready to surrender the country to invading aliens, marauding supervillains, or any other menace that happened to be passing through DC. When he's not on page, comic-book Carter's very name becomes shorthand for government's seeming inability to do anything right in the late '70s.

RONALD REAGAN

The former star of TV's *Death Valley Days* created a quandary for comic-book creators. His right-wing politics were the very antithesis of Bronze Age ideals, but the natural impulse to turn him into a Nixon-like villain had to be tempered by the fact the American people (comics buyers included) by and large liked him. Even heavyweights like Alan Moore preferred to kick Nixon around some more in *Watchmen* rather than openly mock "the Gipper." Reagan was rather like LBJ in that he was surprisingly absent from comic books for a figure of his historical importance. When Reagan did show up in four colors, he was usually shown as a genial, well-meaning but out of touch individual, needing the superheroes' help and counsel to avoid making good-natured mistakes like blowing up the world.

Whatever the reason for their opposition, these are the types of heroes who are the most poetically suited candidates to be asked (or ordered) to give a direct hand to the US and ARVN forces engaged in Southeast Asia. The government may accept their polite "no," fearful of the public backlash prosecuting beloved costumed heroes would cause. Thus, it can be a one-and-done issue in campaigns that want to keep their Silver Age shiny and happy. Of course, the government may insist, and after that their next moves are bound to be very interesting indeed.

In the war's early years, an utter refusal to help out in 'Nam is going to be controversial, to say the least. The player characters may see their legal sanction revoked, and say goodbye to any other type of formal or informal help from Uncle Sam. Characters whom the government knows it has a legal hold over, like military personnel, men of draft age, and resident aliens. All can all have the legal screws put to them. As for the public, the anti-war movement will quickly embrace the heroes, but many will hate them for years after as draft-dodging cowards (see the new Cult Hero feat on page 50 for more game info).

Public scorn decreases during the Bronze Age, but with "Tricky Dick" in the White House the real problems for peacenik heroes are just beginning. They are prime candidates for the president's enemies list, and may then be hit with the full force of Watergateera dirty tricks. Player characters with secret identities may have shadow-ops teams trying every means at their considerable disposable to unmask them. If they succeed, a flurry of blackmail threats, draft notices, tax audits, innuendo, wiretaps, and late-night visits from G. Gordon Liddy is sure to follow. Anything they've ever done wrong or that just seems so is going to be leaked to the media and it happens in a primitive time before people just shamelessly enjoyed the attention.

NOW WATERGATE DOES NOT BOTHER ME

Once the heroes figure out it's the White House "Plumbers" after them, the stage is set for the concluding scene in the *Silver Age* era's troubled middle act. There's a cancer in the presidency alright, and it's time for the heroes to become...whatever that stuff that cures cancer is called. At any rate, the player characters will be looking to slam Watergate shut on Tricky Dick.

Speaking of tricky, the heroes are faced with a situation where their usual tactics won't work. The good old-fashioned trash the villain's base, beat up his goons, and hand him over to the campaign's acronym super-agents is probably not going to fly, at least not without some proof. How they go about getting the goods on the most powerful man in the world is ultimately up to the gamemaster, and (no pressure) the players are going to be counting on him to deliver something special. The key thing for the gamemaster is staying focused on the comic book elements.

In real life, the Nixon Administration was brought down by a long, slow process of journalistic legwork which is the exact opposite of



what people usually sign up to see in a superhero role-playing game. While some investigation on the characters' part is in order, bending reality in a comic-book direction is bound to more fun. Making the president's "dirty tricks" squads into traditional costumed goons, guarding a hidden mountain fortress full of high-tech weapons and the incriminating files is one suitably four-color option. Adding some super-villains on the payroll of the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP) spices things up even more.

What the player characters do with the "smoking gun" can make for a number of interesting finishes. They may quietly slip the files to Mark Felt or Woodward and Bernstein and let them do the rest, and then snicker for years after at any mention of "Deep Throat." Alternately, events may dictate a more direct approach and force an attack on the White House, starting a fight with the US military and their superhero colleagues trying to prevent an apparent assassination attempt. The odds for the lone good guys are long, but that's a classic Bronze Age theme. Plus, the prospect of a *very* paranoid megalomaniacal enemy with his finger on the nuke button may not leave them any choice.

1975–1986: GET DOWN TONIGHT

Americans began getting their priorities all out of whack at the dawn of the '70s. The Baby Boomers who once wanted to change the world with peace and love turned radical and violent, mutating into the Weather Underground and the Manson Family. Otherwise, they became 9-to-5 working stiffs with families to support-a Deadhead sticker on their station wagon the sole reminder of their membership in the "Woodstock generation."

In 1975, the war in Vietnam was over, Nixon was back in Yorba Linda working on his memoirs, and counterculture values dominated education, politics, and the media. Yet somehow, utopia still wasn't at hand. At the very least, it was really tough to see from the back of an endless gasoline queue, or just tough to appreciate with the economy in the toilet. Unsure of what to do next, the Left's majority fractured politically, but many soon came to the same conclusion individually: it was time to do a lot of coke, get it on, and shake their collective booty. The "Me Decade" had earned its label.

By any measure, it was one hell of a party, one that lasted a whole decade. Like a lost weekend in Vegas, the Boomers eventually woke up with a mean hangover and stuck in a regretful quickie marriage they didn't remember. Instead of a doughy cocktail waitress, the aging ex-hippies found themselves bound to a government run by Ronald Reagan and the New Right. Those in the comic-book industry soon channeled their impending middle-age rage into pitch-dark stories that pulled the genre into the Iron Age. However, back when the self-celebration was still going strong, there are ten years of tales worth retelling in *M&M* campaign.

BOOGIE OOGIE OOGIE

As outlined earlier in this chapter, many things of consequence happened in the years 1975 to 1986. However, like a tree falling in an uninhabited forest, there were relatively so few people paying attention to them it was as if they never happened at all. In popular memory that ten-year period is an era of one ridiculous fad after another. It's a decade that comes in wearing bell-bottoms and leaves with parachute pants on, with nothing of note happening in between. The superhero comic books from this span of time do little to alter this perception.

Typical Bronze Age stories that plead for social justice never entirely went away. Even as late as the mid-'80s, books were still calling attention to child molestation and African famine relief. However, for the most part burnt-out and frustrated creators were as tired of telling this type of tale as the shrinking readership was of buying them. As a consequence of the falling circulation, comic book companies desperately dove head first into whatever the kids were digging this week. The result became a late Bronze Age staple: a classic super-villain fight with a trendy angle.

This formula provides the surest way for a gamemaster to put the players' mindset firmly in the late '70s-early '80s. It may take form as an adventure where the heroes use their CB radio to learn their super arch-enemies are going to hire some streakers to distract people while they steal the solid-gold pet rock from Studio 54. Tens years later, the heroes may find themselves in a Rubik's cube-shaped death-trap, trying to escape before an evil break-dancing super-villain kidnaps Boy George.

The most obvious reason to run a campaign during this time frame is its comedy value. Trust those of us who were around then: there are plenty of laughs to be had, even if we have to blush a bit while sharing them. Any long-running characters who survived an early '70s campaign are certainly entitled to a chuckle or two and every gaming group needs a silly evening every now and again. This time frame provides whimsy in spades, and that's a valuable commodity in the deadly earnest Bronze Age.

SEX & DRUGS & ROCK & ROLL

Me Decade fads don't have to be all frivolity, of course. While the late '70s were viewed as a consequence-free time, much of the late '80s was about disabusing people of this fallacy. With just a little bit of comic-book magic, even the silliest bit of Carter or Reaganera pop culture can turn into a satisfying night of gaming. All the gamemaster has to do is look at history book pages using comic-book eyes.

For example, the rumors are true: people did a lot of drugs back in the '70s and '80s. We're not just talking about burning a little hippie lettuce while watching *H.R. Pufnstuf* or *Lidsville*, either. They did cocaine by the shovelful because there's no way it could have any side effects and if a drug did hurt somebody (like heroin), well, that person just didn't know how to handle their stuff like *they* did. After rolling their eyes at this attitude, comic-book fans are reminded of a dozen potential four-color results, from new super-villains to an evil undead army. Really, what could be more fun than smashing up a disco to kill some zombies?

The 1975-86 time period includes a significant part of the cultural "window" between the development of the birth-control pill and the onset of AIDS and herpes. During that time, people did it. A lot. With people they barely knew, just because they fancied them a bit. As a result, pornography, key parties, swingers clubs, and many other things we don't want to get into in an *M&M* sourcebook flourished. Not to sound like a bunch of jealous, judgmental Gen-Xers who missed out, but what if an evil extra-dimensional demonic entity was helping this "moral decay" along to suit its own ends? Finding out would require the most interesting investigative work the characters will ever do, and stopping the meddling devil will require the heroes to come off as small-minded prudes during the gettin' it on-est time

in American history. Assuming they *want* to stop all the naughtiness, of course.

With a little imagination, pretty soon every *I Love the__Os* show VH-1 airs will give you a dozen ideas for plots. You'll have Geraldo Rivera menaced by the horrible tentacled Monster from Al Capone's Vault and the country threatened by the secretly evil mystic incantation "Two all-beef patties, special sauce," etc. in no time.

IT'S A HEARTACHE

In total contrast to the mercifully short-lived influence late Bronze Age fads like disco had on the genre, the monumental self-absorption of 1970s America did leave a lasting mark on superhero comic-books. It manifests in the form of innumerable plot twists cribbed wholesale from soap operas. Not that you can say that out loud around the fan boys, of course-much too icky and girly. Still, it's as true as it is ubiquitous in the comic books published in the last thirty years.

To be sure, heroes getting all mopey about their personal lives got started at the dawn of the Silver Age. The Bronze Age twist was taking comparatively normal interpersonal happenings and throwing in an over the top comic book element. This sort of thing is likely so ingrained in readers' conception of what the superhero genre is about it's probably a part of their campaigns regardless of the era they're set in. Just to illustrate our point, here are some examples:

- The hero's boyfriend or girlfriend dies...then comes back from the dead thanks to an evil sorcerer or cloning mad scientist! And it happens only after the hero's found a new love!
- The hero breaks up with a boyfriend or girlfriend...and it drives the ex into becoming a crazy costumed baddie!
- The hero locates their long-lost parents...and they're wanted rebel space pirates in a galaxy far, far away!
- The hero fights a longtime archenemy...only to find out it's her long-lost sibling she never knew she had!
- The hero finds out he's adopted...and his real parents are supervillains!
- The hero's archenemy turns good...because she's fallen in love with him!
- The new brash young super-villain that's driving the hero crazy... is really the child he never knew he had!
- The hero's best friend and confidante betrays them and becomes a super-villain...out of unrequited love and jealousy over the hero's new wife!

See how all this stuff fits in *Hunks & Heartbreakers* as well as it does *Silver Age*? And these are just the basics, of course. Throw in some more comic-book genre tropes and then you're really Bronzing it up ("and she's a ninja!" or "and he's a mutant!").

Of course, the gamemaster isn't obligated to include all this mushy stuff in his campaign, but he may be surprised how un-Bronze Age the proceedings feel without it. Even so, the gamemaster needs to make sure the soap opera supports and motivates all the expected superhero goings-on, like fights. Otherwise, the players really are in for a *Hunks & Heartbreakers* campaign...not that there's anything wrong with that, of course.

LIFE DURING THE SILVER AGE

laying *M&M* in the Silver and Bronze Age time span means experiencing a mix of the real world and the four-color reality that existed only on the comic books page. One or the other may predominate, but both have distinctive elements that can really bring the setting to life for the players. Like a nitro-burnin' funny car, the precise fuel mixture is up to the gamemaster, but either way it's bound to take you someplace interesting. This section offers some suggestions for making the run down the quarter-mile all it can be for the players.

SILVER AGE SOCIETY

As with all forms of art, comic books are reflections of the era that produced them. Like all mirror images, however, the result is distorted; when people stare at it, they tend to see only the best and worst elements. This section is intended to help campaigns replicate these most (un)flattering depictions or real history as the participants see fit.

The time frame of 1956-70 is a mix of socially conservative morality and behavior that was politically incorrect by any modern measure. It was an era where books and films could be banned, and women were fair game to be ogled and chased around their desk, lest their ovaries bring chaos into the workplace. Distrusting anyone physically or philosophically unlike yourself was still okay and a martini or two was a great anytime meal. Divorce was still considered scandalous, and cigarettes were smoked by the gross.

In short, the real-life counterpart to the Silver Age was an often uneasy balance of reaching for the stars with one hand, and using the other to beat on the Different People. Campaigns set during this era must either reflect this volatile mixture, or—like gazing into the looking glass-choose which aspect to emphasize.

HOMEWARD BOUND

While typical player characters are nuking burritos in the microwave aboard their orbital satellite headquarters back in 1956, the folks down on Earth aren't as lucky. The good news for non-costumed people is the Silver Age was the time they closed the "Convenience Gap."

Household items like electric kitchen appliances, stereo record players, refrigerators, color televisions, and air conditioning went from being luxuries in the 1950s to essentials in the '60s, fueled by the era's unprecedented economic prosperity and the onset of the consumer culture. By the end of the 1970s, such modern musthaves like microwave ovens, home computers, video recorders (tape instead of digital, but still), cable TV, CD players, and video games become more commonplace and by 1986 join the list of "bare necessities."

FASHION

The *Silver Age* manner of dress for both men and women was much more uniform than it is today. Rather than serving as yet another means by which people "uniquely" advertise which sub-culture they belong to, folks strove to look their best at all times. Only bare necessity could make them dress any differently. Men venturing out in public did so wearing a snappy fedora or similar hat, an overcoat, a suit and tie, a pair of slacks and leather shoes. Only when a man was relaxing around the house would he think of dressing down to a long-sleeve button-up shirt, his chinos, and a pair of leather loafers.

Women wore dresses or skirts down to their calves, plus the mandatory hat and white gloves if she was going out. Capri pants came into style in the early 1960s, but for many ladies trousers were right out, unless they were gardening or the like.

Tweeds, plaids, and solids were the norm for all articles of clothing. Only the willfully rebellious, like women of ill repute or comic-book superheroes, wore any bright or loud colors.

More modern-style clothing items could be found, but wearing them sent a message—and not necessarily a positive one. Blue jeans were worn only by blue-collar laborers like plumbers and ditchdiggers, as well as teenagers wanting to be non-conformist in a conformist kind of way. Tennis shoes were worn only when actually playing tennis, basketball, or the like. Berets were a no-no, except for beatniks. Only motorcyclists and thugs sported black leather jackets, and that's a major help to superheroes looking to round up the usual suspects after a crime's been committed.

THIS IS MY SCENE AND IT FREAKS ME OUT!

The national dress code underwent a radical revision as the 1960s became "the Sixties" and the Silver Age gave way to the Bronze. It was still possible to go out in public with a buzz cut and khaki slacks, but doing so made you look like a square, or even worse, part of the Establishment. To be sure, a lot of *Silver Age* heroes really are Establishment squares, but as the Bronze Age dawns, they may not want to dress the part.

Mid-'60s youth fashion gave rise to the miniskirt, flared trousers, Beatle boots, anoraks, Nehru jackets, bell-bottoms, and other accouterments of the Space Age "Mod look," replete with loud, fluorescent colors. This gave way to micro-miniskirts and go-go boats for ladies, and the Edwardian look for men (think *Austin Powers* and you've got it, baby). It was also considered to be silly kids' stuff by the older generation, but the later style changes wrought by the hippie counterculture were seen as a dangerous assault on decent society.

EVERYDAY PEOPLE

The social progress America made in the years 1956-1986 is on balance astounding. Things were never perfect, but they got better to an almost unbelievable degree. The reality faced by women and minorities during this period, both the good and bad, wasn't always seen in comic books, but this section provides some suggestions on how best to portray it in your *Silver Age M&M* campaign.

SAY IT LOUD - I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD

In 1956, African-Americans were at best strictly segregated from the rest of society, and at worst were the targets of state-sanctioned violence and terror. Just over a decade later, the civil rights movement had successfully campaigned for a battery of effective federal legislation that shattered the long-standing societal barriers. More importantly the movement's moral leadership, embodied by Martin Luther King, Jr., had turned the hearts and minds of most Americans against racial prejudice. Where once society made being non-white a source of shame, pop culture icons like Muhammad Ali and James Brown colorfully and eloquently illustrated the growing sense of black pride in America.

The legal and ethical victories won by African-Americans in the 1950s and '60s bore fruit for all racial minorities, tearing down barriers for Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and American Indians. With the fight for legal equality won, these groups spent the 1970s and '80s battling for economic parity, a much trickier goal that remains elusive even today.

ALMOST CUT MY HAIR

Beyond the obvious and prevalent racism in 1950s America, there was a growing belief among America's youth that the most free and prosperous nation in world history had somehow gotten it all wrong. The aforementioned prejudice and crushing conformity made them believe the country wasn't all that free, and the vapid consumer culture spawned by the prosperity just left them feeling spiritually empty. Empty and beat. When artists like writer Jack Kerouac and poet Alan Ginsberg gave these feelings voice in their seminal works, the beatniks were born.

Whatever the merits and demerits of beatnik thought, the larger culture soon co-opted it, mocked it, and reduced it to a pop culture cliché. The beatniks were beaten as a force for social change, but the discontent they channeled grew and mutated into the hippie counterculture. Where the larger culture made the beatniks seem fatuous and silly, the hippie counterculture was animated by the growing anti-Vietnam War movement, a serious issue impossible to mock into irrelevancy.

When it became clear the hippies weren't going to be laughed away, the larger culture went reactionary and hit them. A lot. And occasionally shot them. Not that the hippies themselves weren't above a bombing or two, or a bit of arson here and there, it's just indicative of the social divide that erupted because of the counterculture and the reaction to it. Suddenly, the length of a young person's hair or style of dress made them nearly as despised as blacks during the "Jim Crow" years. Hippies weren't lynched, but beatings and harassment (including some involuntary crew-cuts) were real risks for flower children.

As odd as it may seem, the hippie Baby Boomers, part of the first generation to be largely free from want and blessed with opportunities previously undreamt of, became a hated minority by choice. Call it a principled stand or an arrogant pose (or mix thereof), but the end result of a generation that didn't trust anyone over 30 (and vice versa) was a deeply wounded nation poisoned against itself.

I AM WOMAN

In the 1950s, women were considered to be guardians of home and family life, playing critical roles as mothers and homemakers. When much larger families were the rule and household chores had to be done nearly appliance-free, such feelings are somewhat understandable but grew more nonsensical as time wore on.

Chauvinism truly became evident when ladies chose a different path than home and family. Only certain occupations considered "women's work" were open to them, like secretary, nurse, or school teacher. Even when women worked at the same jobs as men, they



were paid far less and advancement was nearly out of the question. This was done partly to protect what was seen as a man's role as the family breadwinner, and partly out of the widespread belief that women lacked the intelligence and decisiveness to do many jobs.

Women had gotten a taste of economic freedom working in place of drafted men during World War II, and many found it preferable to being housewives. In 1963, this longing for something more coalesced into Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, and it became a rallying call for what became the "Women's Liberation" movement. Its aim was to open the doors of economic opportunity for women and have them recognized as equals, two battles ultimately won for the most part. The Women's Libbers took on other fights, like the push for abortion rights, but even when legal battles were won popular acceptance of its later causes remains elusive.

REBEL REBEL

Homosexual desires during the 1950s and '60s truly were "the love that dare not speak its name." Psychology manuals diagnosed homosexuality as a mental disorder. Anti-sodomy laws made homosexuality a criminal act in many states, but even the potential punishments the law carried seemed mild compared to the social ostracism gays and lesbians faced.

In the face of such social approbation, homosexuals became part of a sub-culture the average American knew nothing about. Gays and lesbians continued to meet in secret, away from public view but still under constant threat of discovery by the police or media. Most trusted only other homosexuals with their secret life, as well as their closest friends and relatives-though sometimes not even them.
Openly gay people were rare, usually limited to the few who had the strength of will and the resources to withstand the worst sorts of abuse and societal mistreatment imaginable.

This began to change in the late 1960s, most famously with New York City's 1969 "Stonewall Riots" where gays rebelled against continued police harassment. It was the culmination of homosexuals' struggle to even be recognized in American society, and began their fight against legal and social discrimination. While many of the aims of the gay-rights movement remain unfulfilled, it has plenty of fight left for a struggle it finally seems to be winning.

WHY CAN'T WE LIVE TOGETHER

To a large extent, the gamemaster's handling of the era's bigotry defines the sort of campaign he's running. Classic Silver Age campaigns barely touch the issue at all, save for the occasional lecture to the kid readers about treating everyone the same, regardless of race or religion. Less traditional series might also touch upon notable historical events like "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama and the 1968 Democrat Party Convention in Chicago.

Bronze Age campaigns, on the other hand, typically have prejudice as a key element, with violence against blacks and other minorities as a frequent plot point. Typically, player characters wind up in a small town, small foreign country, or an alien planet; all populated by unsubtle metaphors. The heroes are the only ones above the community's everyday bigotry, along with a handful of local friends and allies. No one they come into conflict with is so enlightened. Bigot butts are then kicked, speeches are given, and the situation may or may not be improved as a result.



The best rule of thumb for how much prejudice influences the campaign's goings-on is the players' tastes. A lot of people enjoy role-playing games precisely because of their unreality. True life problems like racism are likely to interfere with the very reason these folks show up every week, die in hand. These good people are prime candidates for a Silver Age campaign. Other players complain long and loudly (frequently on the Internet) if elements such as race hatred are not included, finding things too "unrealistic" when they are absent. These people were born to role-play in the Bronze Age.

Of course, no one gets to know the players better than the gamemaster and he's usually the best judge of how much human ignorance to include. If the gamemaster isn't sure, the remedy is simple: talk to the players beforehand and ask them. Most gamers are not shy about telling you what they want out of a campaign.

WE CAN BE HEROES

To whatever degree the era's unenlightened aspects figure into a campaign, the player characters are entitled to some satisfaction in the face of such ugliness, and by that, we mean some racistbutt kicking. The gamemaster needs to make sure any characters who're the victim of the Prejudice Complication (see *M&M*, page 123) get the hero point they've got coming to them. Further, the whole group deserves a chance to put an all-American beat-down on bigoted villains, particularly from those whom the bad guys targeted out of prejudice.

SUPERHEROINES

Female superheroes, no matter how powerful their abilities, are likely to be treated condescendingly until well into the Bronze Age. In a classic Silver Age campaign, they may accept it (to a degree), but in other settings they're more likely to use it as an impetus to prove the chauvinists wrong. Whatever the case, it's important for the gamemaster to know in advance how much the player behind a female character wants to deal with everyone thinking her life-risking superhero career is "cute" and an endless succession of ogling from lonely losers. If it starts to interfere with the player's enjoyment of the game, the gamemaster can have the character's heroic exploits finally earn acceptance from the public at large (super-villains excepted) and tone down the sexist elements.

MINORITIES

Minority superheroes are in an even tougher fix during the Silver Age. Do they hide behind a mask and costume rather than deal with the hatred and ignorance of society at large, or do they wear their heritage proudly, perhaps in an effort to inspire others of similar backgrounds? It's definitely the latter during the Bronze Age, but the answer's not so clear cut in earlier times.

Plausible reactions to non-white superheroes vary during this era. While some are grateful for their help, large parts of American society resent it. It's not to every gamer's taste, but there's a lot of dramatic potential in role-playing situations where the heroes are duty-bound to help people who hate them so much that danger is preferable to their assistance. It can even result in the player characters winning over and redeeming the bigots with their heroics.

The types of ignorance a particular player character can encounter vary. Black superheroes can become targets of the same sorts of scurrilous charges made about African-Americans during this time, from rampant drug and alcohol use to raping white women. In some areas of the country, they may have to rescue people who (as above) flat out don't want to be saved by a black person. In those places, people may go as far as helping the white super-villains against the black superheroes, based on color alone.

Jewish and Hispanic heroes fare better than other minorities, but still come across any of the hateful responses listed above. This is particularly true for Latinos in the western parts of the country, where Mexican-Americans were widely assumed to be poor, uneducated criminals, and in areas where hate groups flourish. An openly gay hero risks his entire costumed career in this era, as such a person gets treated much like a known child-molester would be today. Hippie counterculture heroes are viewed as indolent drugged-up draft-dodging communist traitors, ungratefully selling out their country and its brave soldiers in Vietnam.

PEOPLE GOT TO BE FREE

It's vital for the gamemaster to remember that role-playing games are supposed to be fun, not long, nasty historical polemics. Though it may be anachronistic, it's often better to discard elements of the era's bigotry than to irritate and offend the players. Also, it's important to bear in mind that not everyone in 1950s and '60s America was a sheet-carrying member of the Ku Klux Klan. There were good people around in that era, and some of them were even white and male. Don't forget about them, gamemaster, or all your players may lose sight of whom they're fighting for.

Player characters who proudly show off the fact they're non-white, not male, not straight, or hippies are likely doing so to inspire others of their kind and prove the bigots wrong. Gamemasters should give them plenty of opportunities to do both, as changing hearts and minds may be the only thing that truly makes up for the abuse they suffer. And lest we forget, one person making a difference is *the* classic comic book theme.

GET A JOB

As with all other aspects of American life, the economy underwent major changes during the Silver and Bronze Ages of comic books. The hard days and lean years of the 1940s gave way to good times and living off the fat of the land in the 1950s and '60s, much like the seemingly recession-proof superheroes always seemed to be doing in the comic books. By the Bronze Age '70s, however, the never-ending quest for relevancy led to depictions of costumed good guys with spotty employment that couldn't pay their bills in the face of stagflation.

The Silver Age era was marked by permanent changes in how Americans earned and spent their money. Beginning in the prosperous 1950s, the demand for consumer goods skyrocketed. Factories responded by rolling out new automobiles, refrigerators, radios, vacuum cleaners, television sets, and other household appliances to satisfy the wants of a society that could afford such items as never before. Industrial jobs at good wages were plentiful and highly sought after. From 1950s into the '70s, pretty much anyone who didn't have a well-paying job was either out of work by choice or essentially barred from gainful employment by the prejudices of the time.

Things changed during the bad economic times of the "Me Decade." A lethal combination of bloated union contracts and a

lack of managerial innovation cost American industry the competitive edge it had taken for granted since World War II. This led to plant closings and layoffs becoming commonplace, and America's increasingly barren industrial heartland decaying into the "Rust Belt." Suddenly, scores of Americans with no more than a highschool education went from decades on the job to unemployment with no prospects.

Agriculture had once employed millions of Americans, but the lure of better pay elsewhere and technological advances combined to rapidly shrink the number of farm laborers needed. Despite this, American farmers continued their critical work of keeping a substantial portion of the world fed unabated.

Service sector jobs became increasingly predominant in the economy and proved to be the most resilient during the era's economic downturns. The simple truth remains that as bad as things get, people still need doctors, lawyers, police, firemen, and teachers. And of course, the government always seems to manage to stay in business and keep its many workers employed if not busy.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY...MONEY!

Whether or not the optional Wealth rules (see *M&M*, page 132) are used in a campaign, knowing the real-world value of an item can still be useful in adding a degree of period flavor to the game. Otherwise, the gamemaster is stuck describing the paper boy who's hawking the early edition by exclaiming, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Get your paper here! Only a Wealth check Purchase Difficulty of 2! Extra! Extra!"

Inflation soared throughout the 1970s. Well, in the late '70s it was actually *stagflation* (inflation plus a shrinking economy), something economists previously said was impossible (it's like social science fiction!). Still, even at its lowest point a dollar enjoyed more purchasing power than it does today. The chart below provides some rough guidelines for converting today's high prices to the groovy rates of yesteryear.

Please note that the effects of inflation do not factor into the normal *M&M* Wealth rules. In all cases, the normal Wealth Bonuses and DCs remain unchanged.

DOLLAR/PRICE CONVERSION

YEAR	Value of one 2008 Dollar	2008 PRICE MULTIPLIER
1956	\$0.13	x0.1
1961	\$0.14	x0.1
1966	\$0.15	x0.2
1971	\$0.19	x0.2
1976	\$0.27	x0.3
1981	\$0.43	x0.4
1986	\$0.52	x0.5

To get a rough idea of how much a modern item cost back in the day, take the going rate and times it by the appropriate Price Multiplier. For example, a hamburger off a 21^{st} century dollar menu is going to set a hungry player character back one thin dime ($\$1 \times 0.1 = 10^{\circ}$) in 1956. A gallon of petrol the author bought on August 7, 2009 cost \$2.60 (sadly, they wouldn't swap a signed copy of *Noir* for free gas). Taking the 1976 modifier ($\$2.60 \times 0.3 = 78^{\circ}$) gives

SEVEN WORDS YOU CAN NEVER SAY ON TELEVISION(...OR IN SUPERHERO COMIC BOOKS.)

One of the funnier contradictions of the Bronze Age was the era's attempts to move towards more gritty realism in storytelling while still under the strictures of the Comics Code. While the Code did relax its injunctions against plot elements like illegal drug use, swear words remained taboo.

Unable to use today's ubiquitous reality show bleep sound and unwilling to go with the time-honored "@#\$%!" from newspaper comic strips, Bronze Age scribes developed their own naughty vocabulary. Gamemasters and players who want an extra dash of period verisimilitude can make it a point to substitute these authentic comic-book swear-word substitutes for more modern potty-mouth terms. Particularly clever uses of these quasi-curse words can even net the witty player a hero point if they're good enough to beak up the room.

"Sweet Christmas": expression of surprise, widely considered the "to be or not to be" of the Bronze Age.

"Crud," "cruddy," "crud face," and "bull crud": the kid-friendly substitute for everyone's favorite biological waste euphemism.

"Holy sheep": replaces a similar-sounding expression of sacred excrement.

"Mother-hugging" and "mother-hugger": bustin' on somebody's mama, as Approved by the Comics Code Authority.

"Spit": handy substitute for the name of another bodily excretion; one that doesn't officially exist under the Code.

us the nearly dollar-a-gallon gas that had shocked and angry roller disco-era motorists backed up for miles behind the pump. Applying the 1956 modifier ($2.60 \times 0.1 = 26$) gives us the two-bit per gallon fuel our grandparents love to gloat about.

The value of some items has outpaced inflation, and they do break this quick-and-dirty conversion system. Comic books are a great example, as there's no way to account for how today's higherquality paper and printing have escalated the cost of the more cheaply produced 10¢ funny books of the Silver Age. Gamemasters who are looking for total authenticity in their fake RPG monetary transactions are encouraged to check out any number of great online and off-line resources. Newspaper and magazine ads as well as vintage mail-order catalogs are great places to start and can provide specific numbers as to how much a given item cost at a given time.

I FOUGHT THE LAW

For players with an eye for the finer points of the law, the Silver Age is a time where catching crooks is a much different proposition than they're used to. In 1956, most of the defendants' rights drilled into our collective unconsciousness by infinite TV cop shows exist only in certain states. The mantra of guarantees recited by everyone from Joe Friday to Starsky & Hutch went nationwide only gradually as the Warren Supreme Court mandated them on a caseby-case basis.

Therefore, gamemasters are free to make the (usually unnamed) state of their *Silver Age* campaigns less considerate toward accused parties if it suits their purposes, at least for a spell. Search warrants (in cases where evidence is not at risk of being lost) become mandatory in 1961, and penniless defendants are guaranteed lawyers in criminal cases in 1963. The famous "Miranda rights" ("You have the right to remain silent...") are established in 1966, and prosecution for obscenity remains a real concern for writers, film-makers, and (probably) scantily-clad superheroes until 1973.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

Human beings have craved diversion ever since they first got the whole "food, clothing, and shelter" thing nailed down and still had some hours left in the day. Popular entertainment from the 1956-86 time span has taken on a uniquely mythic quality because of its unprecedented ubiquitousness and the deep impression it made

on the biggest chunk of America's population, the Baby Boomers. Thanks to fifty years of Boomers reliving their childhoods, way more people can name the crew of the starship *Enterprise* than can list the men who actually walked on the moon.

Of interest to *M&M* gamemasters is how the era's entertainment underwent an evolution not unlike that of contemporary comic books. By incorporating some retro pop culture in *Silver Age* campaigns, gamemasters can emphasize the tenor of the campaign's times and underscore its themes.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

As they had done throughout the 20th century, motion pictures from 1956-86 reflected and defined the popular culture. Viewing a few films from and about this era can give gamemasters and players a good impression of what life during the Silver and Bronze Ages was like. It's also perhaps the most entertaining way of researching the kind of period details that bring a *Silver Age* campaign to life.

MAKING MOVIES

Like a really lame superhero, the mid-50's movie industry was getting soundly thrashed by its archenemy, television. As the detestably free of charge television continually threatened to keep parents at home, the major studios tried to out-big the "boob tube" in a frantic effort to pry people off their couches. This meant wider screens, fuller sound, more stars, escalating budgets, and more prestigious subject matter.

Adaptations of critically acclaimed books and plays were shot, such as Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) and *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962). Really long, really expensive historical epics like *Spartacus, The Alamo* (both 1960), *Lawrence of Arabia, The Longest Day* (both 1962), and *Cleopatra* (1963) alternately thrilled audiences, bored them senseless, and bankrupted major studios. This period was also the last great gasps of the now lost musical genre, finishing it out with films like *The King and I* (1956), *West Side Story* (1961), *Mary Poppins, My Fair Lady* (both 1964), and *The Sound of Music* (1965).

While the major studios targeted finicky moms and pops, the independents aimed pictures at movies' most reliable remain-

HOLY PRICELESS COLLECTION OF ETRUSCAN SNOODS!

The best contemporaneous example of a company catching the mid-1960s zeitgeist came from, surprisingly, the venerable National Comics. National had enjoyed success in the 1950s with the kid-beloved but cheapjack *Adventures of Superman* TV series starring George Reeves, and so jumped at the chance to get a Batman show on ABC (America's "We'll broadcast *anything*!" network). The pilot aired in full garish color on January 12, 1966, with results no one was prepared for.

Producer William Dozier had opted for a campy, pop art approach to Batman and Robin, played (respectively) to the hilt by stars Adam West and Burt ("Holy______, Batman!") Ward, who battled a host of name-actor "special guest villains." The show was fresh, exciting (to kids), hilarious (to adults), and unlike anything being done in mainstream comic books at the time. It was also an immediate, phenomenal hit. For the next year, Batmania ruled the country, and retailers couldn't keep anything emblazoned with the Bat-symbol on the shelves, comic books included. Not bad for a character nearly cancelled and killed off a couple years earlier because of lack of interest.

Batman was bigger than the Nehru jacket...and ultimately, just as faddish. Batmania started to subside midway through the show's second season, and was quite dead by the time the show limped to the end of its third and final season. It nonetheless left a lasting legacy, as it proved to be many people's only exposure to superheroes. For decades afterwards, the popular perception of the entire genre was shaped by the *Batman* show. With the truly god-awful film *Batman and Robin* as proof, people as late as 1997 still associated comic books with gaudy colors, scenery chewing, goofy plots, and "POW! BAM! ZOK!" action. The Batnipples were all Joel Schumacher's, though; Adam West is wholly blameless.

ing audience: amorous teenagers. Right through the early 1980s, America's drive-in theaters were packed with teens, more affluent and mobile than their parents ever dreamed of being at that age. For youngsters on the make, the ozoners served up such titles as *Attack* of the 50-Foot Woman (1958), Beach Blanket Bingo (1965), and The Legend of Boggy Creek (1972) that kept the smoochers coming back to the outdoor "passion pits" for more.

EASY RIDERS, RAGING BULLS

Much like contemporary comic books, major studio films of the late 1960s had a hard time reaching younger audiences as the older creators were largely baffled by the new-fangled "Sixties." Both media opted for the same solution and turned production over to a new generation of creators who wanted to tell more adult, relevant, and offbeat stories. Out went cheery unreality like musicals and larger than life stars, and in came edgier fare and chameleon like actors who inhabited their onscreen characters.

The young outlaws only got a decade or so to call the shots, but during that time "the New Hollywood" made some of the best and best-remembered films ever. They reflect the Bronze Age sensibility better than anything other than the comics themselves, and if nothing else serve as the era's pop culture touchstones. In short, fire up the DVD player and watch them, *Silver Age* gamemaster!

Bonnie and Clyde (1967), The Godfather (1972), and The Godfather Part II (1974) can give a whole new perspective on how to portray "bad-guy" characters, just as The French Connection (1971) is a defining statement on the Bronze Age "last good man in a corrupted world" theme. Easy Rider (1969) is a window into the counterculture mindset and a master class on the Bronze Age downbeat ending. MASH (1970), The Exorcist (1973), Nashville (1975), Network, Taxi Driver (both 1976), National Lampoon's Animal House (1978), Apocalypse Now (1979), Caddyshack, Raging Bull (both 1980)-it's a film-making era not to be missed.

I'VE SEEN THAT MOVIE TOO

Seven weeks after the fall of Saigon and months of struggling with a shoddy mechanical shark, *Jaws* (1975) opened in theaters. It scared the bejesus out of millions, made millions for the studio, and busted a cap in the ass of the New Hollywood. When *Star Wars* (1977) hit even bigger, the pattern was set. No more sad, complicated endings

or ambiguous anti-heroes-from here on, movies were going to be big, expensive crowd-pleasers released in the summertime for maximum box office and popcorn sales. The awesome, empty-headed blockbuster was born.

That's not to say there aren't good and/or fun blockbuster films. They are, however, of limited utility to Bronze Age campaigns beyond being timely references. Strangely, their simple, uncomplicated heroics and triumphal nature make them great primers for Silver Age games set a decade prior. They will also revoke your geek credentials if you haven't seen the likes of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Back to the Future* (1985), and *Ghostbusters* (1984).

CELLULOID HEROES

In addition to some timely film references, a Silver Age game can be livened up with some mention of the era's most popular and well-regarded movie stars. Popular actors of the day included Kirk Douglas, Rock Hudson, Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Burt Lancaster, Steve McQueen, and Gregory Peck. Their leading ladies included Elizabeth Taylor, Doris Day, Sophia Loren, Katherine Hepburn, and Natalie Wood.

The "New Hollywood" departed from the traditional "movie stars" in favor of actors and actresses who subsumed their own personas in their roles. They included the likes of Al Pacino, Jill Clayburgh, Robert DeNiro, Faye Dunaway, Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep, and Jack Nicholson, though many ironically made careers out of essentially playing themselves in later years.

PLAYING WITH THE BOYS

Sports became big business during the Silver Age of comic books, thanks in no small part to its omnipresence on the growing medium of television. TV changed American's longstanding tastes in sports, as baseball lost its former dominance to the faster-paced (and more television-friendly) action of football. Other sports like basketball, hockey and soccer that never translated well over radio found bigger followings thanks to television.

The increased media coverage allowed a select few athletes to transcend sports and become genuine cultural figures. Among the notables are heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, whose mix of charisma, controversy and extraordinary skills made him perhaps the era's defining sports icon. Ali's conversion to the radical Nation of Islam and subsequent refusal to submit to the Vietnam draft made him a supremely polarizing figure. Along with US Olympians Tommie Smith and John Carlos' raised-fist salute during the 1968 games, Ali symbolized that even diversions like sports were not above the divisive politics of the day.

Womanizing, pantyhose-endorsing New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath was nearly as outspoken as Ali and every bit as confident, famously guaranteeing (and delivering) a massive upset win in Super Bowl III. The Cleveland Browns' Jim Brown and Buffalo Bills' O.J. Simpson broke rushing records and parlayed their success into movie careers. Ever versatile, Simpson later became a famed real-life detective hot on the trail of his ex-wife's elusive killers. In baseball, the Atlanta Braves' "Hammerin' Hank" Aaron rose to fame in 1974 as he broke Babe Ruth's longstanding career home run record.

Wilt Chamberlain became the most dominant player in basketball history, scoring 100 points all by himself in a 1962 game and even more impressively sleeping with over 20,000 women. Chamberlain's achievements-the on-court ones, at any rate-were eventually eclipsed by Michael Jordan, who made his pro debut with the Chicago Bulls in 1984. Hockey saw the arrival of its greatest player ever six years prior when Wayne Gretsky debuted for the Indianapolis Racers. Gretsky was traded away to the Edmonton Oilers after playing only eight games, a move so boneheaded the Racers folded out of embarrassment. Or at least they should have.

TV DINNERS

The growing influence of television during the 1950s is best illustrated by the popularization of "TV dinners," heat-and-eat meals designed to minimize a person's time away from the "boob tube." Even with just three networks broadcasting, there was still plenty on that people wanted to see, much of it reminiscent of contemporary comic books.

From 1956 into the early '60s what people wanted to see was Westerns, a genre echoing Silver Age superheroes with its black and white morality. During this period prime time oaters like *Bonanza* and *Gunsmoke* were as inescapable as reality shows are today. At their peak in 1958-59, thirty-one different cowboys shows were on the air, an ubiquitousness that eventually pretty much killed the genre dead on the small screen. Maybe we'll be as lucky with reality shows.

For the remainder of the 1960s, shows continued to ape comic books with a fun, carefree attitude; or, if you prefer, were just plain dumb. This was the era Paul Henning's legendary "Hooterville Trilogy" of *The Beverly Hillbillies, Petticoat Junction*, and *Green Acres* ruled the airwaves. It was a time when such scary situations as internment in a Nazi prison camp (*Hogan's Heroes*), joining the Marines during 'Nam (*Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.*), and hopeless exile in the void (*Lost in Space*) were played for laughs.

Television had its own "relevancy" period starting in the late '60s, as topical satirical comedies like *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, *M*A*S*H*, *All in the Family*, and *Maude* tried to make Vietnam and Watergate funny. By the mid-'70s, "relevancy" was too much of a bummer and gave way to nostalgia and really big breasts in shows like *Happy Days*, *Laverne & Shirley*, *Three's Company*, and *Charlie's Angels*. As the Bronze Age of comic books drew to a close in the mid-'80s, TV showed how the societal scars of the Vietnam era had healed. America was once again ready to confidently show off its money (*Dallas*), drive around like drunken rednecks (*The Dukes of Hazzard*), and gun down the bad guys (*The A-Team*) without anyone getting hurt in the process.

YOUTUBE

Television's powerful influence on the events of the day may cause problems for *Silver Age* superheroes. With live satellite telecasts increasingly common after 1962, TV is able to instantly cover many major public events of the sort super-villains like to attack or rob. Costumed heroes may find themselves fielding tough reporter questions about their actions, especially once they've been broadcast straight into America's living rooms. They may learn the hard way, just as Nixon did in the 1960 presidential debates, that TV often does not catch people at their best and the ramifications thereof.

The late 1970s saw *The Incredible Hulk, Shazam!, Wonder Woman, Super Friends, The Amazing Spider-Man,* and reruns of *Batman* and *The Adventures of Superman* airing regularly. Some player characters may follow suit and have shows on the air based (loosely, at least) on their in-game exploits. This can serve as an amusing sidelight to more serious adventures, as people confuse a hero with his madefor-TV self ("But on your Saturday morning show, you hang out with an old dude in an RV!"). It can also be the impetus for storylines all their own, such as when an archenemy decides he wants to cancel a character's show by blowing up the actors and the network that broadcasts it!

Television can also serve as a quick and direct method of getting the player characters where the gamemaster needs them to go. This is particularly easy if the heroes remain tuned to that classic dramatic staple, the All Plot Point Station ("This just in: President Jimmy Carter has just been attacked by an angry rabbit...").

IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL (BUT I LIKE IT)

Elvis Presley and Julius Schwartz are tough to confuse, but both profoundly changed their chosen media in 1956. Julie of course repopularized the comic-book superhero, while Elvis popularized rock and roll music for a wider audience. Previously, rock and roll had been the exclusive province of black audiences and black artists like Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, leading the South's surfeit of inbred morons to label it "race music." Elvis was a white, incredibly talented but seemingly humble country boy, and gave rock and roll (a slang term for gettin' it on) music just enough respectability for parents to allow the teenage masses to listen to it. From then on, an army of eager and affluent teens kept rock and roll 45s and LPs flying off record store shelves.

Rock and roll was denounced as filthy dirty, dismissed as a fad, and declared a threat to white American society by the Ku Klux Klan. Despite this opposition and losing leading artists like Elvis (drafted in 1958) and Buddy Holly (killed in a 1959 plane crash), rock survived and became America's pop music by the mid-1960s. It was at this point rock and roll again mirrored comic books and began its own quest for larger cultural relevancy. Comic-book creators also changed about this time, as the middle-aged writers who crudely derided rock and roll gave way to Boomer scribes who treated it with equally crude reverence. To them, rock music really *could* change the world. For all the ham-fisted portrayals, both approaches still contained some truth. Early rock and roll was largely silly and disposable (but fun). It was uncomfortably close to the fuddy duddy comic writers' conception of it as primitive noise wailed by untalented, opportunistic hacks. By the same token, socially conscious rock and roll never had anywhere near the impact Bronze Age writers attributed to it. Most noticeably, forty years' worth of soaring vocals and kick-ass guitar solos against war, poverty, prejudice, and pollution haven't made a dent in any of them.

In real life, it was the late '60s/early '70s artists who could combine relevancy with a rocking pop sound that made the greatest popular impact, like the Beatles, Elton John, the Rolling Stones, Credence Clearwater Revival, Bob Dylan, and Led Zeppelin. They outsold more (arguably) purely innovative artists such as Jimi Hendrix, the Beach Boys, Janis Joplin, the Doors, and Pink Floyd, and enjoyed more staying power than once-popular bubble gum acts like the Monkees, the Jackson 5, and the Osmonds. While comic books mostly showed the extremes, *Silver Age* gamemasters are welcome to adopt a more balanced and accurate recreation of rock's greatest era.

SILVER AGE TECHNOLOGY

Technology in the Silver Age is primarily mechanical and chemical in nature, with electronics just beginning to achieve preeminence at the close of the Bronze Age. Computers and atomic power are the cutting edge hope for the future, while in the meantime most people get by with slide rules and fossil fuels.

How far past the cutting edge a super-smart, scientific genius character is allowed to go is up to the Gamemaster. This section outlines what was technologically feasible in real history during the Silver Age. These parameters can serve as a baseline for just how outlandish the gamemaster wants comic-book science to be in his campaign.

COMPUTERS & ELECTRONICS

At the dawn of the Silver Age, integrated circuits are "the next big thing." They didn't actually appear until 1959, but the technology that employs them (like cell phones) helped bring about the Digital Age in the decades following. The most immediate impact integrated circuits had was on the nascent field of electronic computers.

For an overview of what is (and isn't) possible with computers, see the discussion of the Computers skill in **Chapter 3**. Short version: *Silver Age* characters aren't going to spend much time complaining about stuff on Internet message boards, and not just because they've got better things to do with their time.

MEDICINE

Without MRIs (first used on humans in 1977) and the like, Silver Age doctors were reliant on exploratory surgery for diagnosing many internal maladies. Once discovered, physicians then had to rely on a few proven drugs and further surgery to cure a patient with a major illness.

The great breakthroughs in this time span were in organ transplants. In 1967, a liver and a heart were successfully swapped out, and by the early '80s, doctors were two-for-one-ing the procedure (heart and lung, two lungs, etc.). These medical miracles gave life to many who would have otherwise died, and handed comic-book writ-



ers a classic plot ("an innocent person needs a new organ in a hurry, and only the heroes can guarantee it makes it there on time!").

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

During the Silver Age, the biggest development in the Armageddon field was the increased number of countries with the Bomb. France got its first nuke in 1960 (not called "*Le Grand Fromage*," but it should have been), and Red China followed suit in 1964. While Israel still won't 'fess up to it, it has A-bombs, probably since 1967 (legend has it "Never Again" was carved on the device). Not to be outdone, India got its doomsday on and set off nuke #1 in 1974. Lastly, apartheid South Africa had at least a few A-bombs during the 1980s as part of its ongoing campaign to piss off every single person on Earth.

Atomic weapons began the Silver Age as unguided bombs dropped from huge strategic bombers like the B-52 Stratofortress, or as field artillery shells with nuclear warheads. Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) joined the atomic holocaust family of weapons in 1957 with the Soviet R-7 (the US counterpart, Atlas, followed four months later).

In 1960, the US launched the first submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), and it truly made global thermonuclear war a game only won by never playing. Prior to this, a nuclear power might've rationalized that a surprise attack might catch all or most of an enemy's bombers and ICBMs on the ground and wipe them out. Being underwater, mobile, and stealthy, nuclear submarines are nowhere near as vulnerable, and thus destruction became mutually assured-"MAD," as it was appropriately abbreviated.



ROBOTICS

In 1961 Unimate became the first gainfully employed robot, punching a time clock down at the GM plant. It was greeted by all the expected fears of putting men out of work, and the unionization of these anxieties made the US auto industry slow to automate. The Japanese had no such cyberphobia, and by the 1970s they were the ones putting American auto workers on the dole. *Domo arigato*, Mr. Roboto. Jerk.

The bright side for characters without robot insurance is that cranking out new Chevys was pretty much the extent of automaton abilities during this time. Robots capable of much more than that (like, say, going on a rampage) remained the stuff of comic books throughout the Silver Age.

THE FOUR COLOR UNIVERSE

As much as the real world of the Silver Age needed Cape Canaveral, Max Yasgur's farm, and Studio 54, any superhero campaign set during this era has to have some far out locations not found on any map. Each is a relic of the "no appropriated plot point barred" style that typifies the Silver Age.

Granted, these places don't make much sense when put side by side, and any atlas of a *Silver Age* campaign setting is bound to look like the product of one seriously confused cartographer. It's just the sort of unbridled storytelling that makes the era so much fun for readers and players. Gamemasters are bound to appreciate the number of adventure ideas to be extracted here, too. So read on, as we push geography into the realm of mad social science.

IN THE CITY

Few superhero genre settings are complete without a major metropolitan area that's just lousy with capes and masks. In real comic books, they come in two varieties.

The first type is a real-world city complete with its actual landmarks, with just a few additional buildings here and there to accommodate the local superhero community. New York City was most commonly used since both Marvel and DC Comics are based in Manhattan along with most of their employees. It was easy for creators to write and draw what they saw every single day, and occasionally poke a little fun at local municipal affairs. Gamemasters who live in (or near) a large city are wise to follow suit for these same reasons.

Other comic-book burghs are as made-up as Fakeville, North Fakeolina, and offer up their own possibilities. The most liberating of them is the ability to pick and choose which elements best suit the needs of the campaign setting. If a gamemaster needs, say, a city with a major seaport, a world-class jai alai team, the world's largest cubic zirconium, and a large Hungarian population, he's free to slap it together and use it. Even the satirical aspect of using real-world people is possible, using thinly veiled substitutes (and thus is lawsuit proof). A made-up Bronze Age city can have a crack-smoking mayor named Barry Marion, for instance.

WE ARE THE WORLD

The Bronze Age particularly saw a marked increase in the number of multinational characters, and any recreation of that era won't be complete without an occasional appearance from Captain Canada, the Djibouti Destroyer, Mister Montenegro, and their non-American pals. What's in question is how close to period depictions a gamemaster wants to make them.

While the increased diversity was welcome, and the lack of truly degrading portrayals even more so, there was still an obvious lack of sophistication. Bronze Age creators tended to start with the broadest national stereotype, extrapolate a power, and then call it a day creatively. Thus, 1970s and '80s comic books are replete with Middle Eastern Guy with a Flying Carpet and Scimitar, Magical Australian Aborigine, Snotty French Villain with an Inspector Clouseau Accent, Inscrutable Kung Fu Guy Dressed like a Chinese Dragon, and New Zealand's own protectors, the Kiwi Sheepherders (Luke and Butch).

Silver Age gamemasters are free to create international characters with a little more nuance. It's as simple as creating a character they find cool and interesting and *then* giving them an element of diversity. On the other hand, outrageous foreign stereotypes can be a source of humor (the French in *Monty Python & the Holy Grail*, any-one?) if done with good taste and for the benefit of a gaming group who're all in on the joke.

FOREIGNER

Once Bronze Age comic-book scribes started thinking globally and acting locally (or whatever), they also began to use more tact in their portrayals of international relations. They wanted to be relevant in spades, but they also didn't want to sour young minds against Certain Countries and thus hurt chances for future peaceful coexistence. Therefore, whenever real world concerns like expansionist communist nations and Middle East terrorism figured into comic books, they were shown to originate in fictional simulacra of the real deals.

In that spirit, *Silver Age* gamemasters may wish to create their own made-up stand-ins, which combine so many disparate clichéd elements they seem at once to be familiar and unrecognizable. Communist fill-ins can this be Eastern European in architecture but populated by Asians-"Chinovakia," if you will. Fake Middle Eastern nations can be oil rich, terrorist laden, and ruled by sheikhs while having no overt Islamic influences. All they need is a suitable hoax name like "Kerblapistan" and it's ready for use in your *M&M* campaign.

WAY DOWN BELOW THE OCEAN, WHERE I WANNA BE

It's a testament to the cheekiness of comic-book creators how easily they disregard basic tenets of geology, biology, and physics to depict an Atlantis that not only existed, but only suffered a minor setback when it sank. The people became amphibians, you see, and kept all the wondrous technology and magic legend attributed to them. Being submerged did make the Atlanteans a bit surly (or maybe it was that Donovan song), but it did make them an important dramatic staple: the Ancient Thing Mankind Was Not Meant to Tamper with.

Comic-book Atlantis can then be any number of useful things for a gamemaster. It can provide powerful enemies once the Atlanteans tire of the air-breathers' meddling. At the same time, they are not unreasonable, and letting the player characters talk their way to a mutual understanding can make a powerful Bronze Age-style statement about the futility of violence and the need for tolerance. Atlantis' mystic and scientific wonders can also be a valuable source of Plot Devices, character origins, and *deus ex machina*'s as the campaign requires.

WELCOME TO...ROMAN TIMES

Like a Japanese soldier still fighting World War II in the 1970s, some historical folk in comic books didn't get the memo that things have changed. If player characters looked hard enough in the Silver Age world, they could find lost colonies of Romans, isolated pockets of Aztecs, and wondering Phoenicians sorely in need of a GPS.

Heroes tend to find backward, brutal civilizations from yesteryear after a plane crash, shipwreck or the like–anything that levels the playing field between superpowers and slings. The player characters then have to use their wits to avoid being tossed in the gladiatorial arena, sacrificed to Xt'Tapalatakettle, or what have you.

The appearance of player characters in their midst usually meant the time-lost denizens' luck had run out. These lost civilizations seemed alarmingly volcano-prone, and a last-panel eruption (just after the heroes escape) was their usual end, leaving the heroes only a fantastic tale and maybe a souvenir gladius for their troubles.

HOW NATURE POINTS OUT THE FOLLY OF MAN

While comic-book writers were busy mocking all other scientific disciplines, they figured why not go ahead and stick it to paleontology while they were at it. Thus, in some faraway corner of the comic-book world like darkest Africa or even Antarctica (continuing the theme of unbelievable bull) dinosaurs still walk the Earth.

Even better, they're dinosaurs from entirely different epochs, mixed in with some the artist just made up while trying to hit a deadline (work with us, here). Throw in some cavemen from their pre-insurance plugging days and you're good to go, gamemaster.

As you can see, it's not a locale long on plausibility, but it *is* chock-full of big freakin' dinosaurs. That's way better, not least of all because it presents the superheroes with a real challenge. Seriously, check out the T-rex's game statistics (see *M&M*, page 235). Just strand the player characters in the lost world of raptors and they'll soon be using their capes to wipe away their scaredy-cat tears.

Dinosaurs equal box office, so it's only a matter of time before the big lizards escape and menace suburbia. Once again, the heroes have to save the day, only this time they have to worry about innocent civilians and collateral damage. Unless of course the adventure is set in Japan. There, the giant monsters are probably the good guys.

THE MOLE PEOPLE

Sooner or later *Silver Age* characters are bound to notice a strange rumbling beneath their feet, or they may just get suspicious when giant sinkholes start gobbling up critical defense installations. Either way, the obvious answer is a technologically advanced civilization living beneath the Earth's surface. Trust us, it's in geology books and stuff.

Most subterranean comic-book folk are a lot like Atlanteans, only you need a shovel instead of water wings to get to them. They're angry for the most part, and a lot more barbaric than their underwater cousins, typically having another, more sympathetic race enslaved. Blowing up the surface world is their usual goal, so the heroes are usually racing against the clock to save apple pie and other above-ground delights. Inciting a slave revolt greatly enhances their chances for success, and makes for a happier ending.

Underground conquerors sometimes have a vulnerability to bright lights. This is by far their most scientifically plausible element, but a potential dramatic liability. After all, it's no fun for a gamemaster to work hard on an adventure only to have his main bad guys taken down by a lousy flashlight.

THE MOON RULZ #1

By the Silver Age, there was enough popular science about the moon that no one, even comic-reading kids, would buy the possibility it was inhabited. Rather than just fold up the tent and move on, comic-book creators just added an extra layer to the old storylines. There really are Mooninites, they imagined. We just can't *see* them is all.

How the Mooninites remain unseen varies. They may live under the lunar surface, have advanced cloaking technology, stick to living on the far side, or just be really, really tiny. Be they invisible or teensy-weensy, moon people are generally of two categories.

First are the advanced, aloof, but basically benevolent lunar residents, who gaze down on us bemused, as if humanity is nothing more than silly, crap-flinging apes, so dirty and foul. These Mooninites appear every now and again to tell us to get off their moon-yard, or save us from some lunar mess we got ourselves into. The only break we get from their smugness is when the player characters demonstrate some advanced trait (like mercy) and they begrudgingly admit humanity might not be hopeless after all. Otherwise, it's word balloon after word balloon about how much better the moon is.

The second kind of lunar dweller is Neil Armstrong's worst nightmare: the classic evil space invader. They sit up there on the moon, all superior like, just biding their time and waiting to come wipe us out with their spaceships and Quad Lasers. This sort makes great recurring villains, as the vacuum of space gives them an escape route most player characters can't follow.

LIFE ON MARS?

While the existence of Mooninites is ridiculed, Martian life has never left either scientific possibility or the public's imagination. The same plots work for both sets of extraterrestrials, only Martians draw a lot fewer derisive remarks from the more credible sort of players. Of course, Silver Age comic-book writers were never ones to let scientific truth hold them back. Gamemasters should feel similarly free to have alien incursions from Mercury, Pluto, Titan, or even more ridiculous points of origin like Jupiter.

BREAK ON THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE

No *Silver Age* campaign worthy of the title is complete without an infinity or two of parallel worlds. Other Earths tended to show up in high-stakes adventures where the fate of one or more universes would be decided, requiring heroes from several Earths to save the day.

This type of adventure creates a unique opportunity for gamers to stretch their role-playing abilities, giving them an opportunity to play alternate versions of their normal characters. Saving the worlds might require the heroes to split into teams mixing natives of different parallel Earths. One of the teams can be, say, Character A from the campaign's usual Earth, Character B's twin from "Nazis won WWII" Earth, Character C's doppelganger from "Everybody's Evil" Earth, Character D's counterpart from "Everybody's a Monkey" Earth, the version of Character D from "Anthropomorphic Animal" Earth, etc. Team #2 (and so forth) offers up a different mix and all new role-playing possibilities.

It may be advisable for gamemasters to save the parallel worlds for special epic adventures, but it's a plot element that can work on a smaller scale. A villain from an alternate Earth can try his luck on the player character's dimensional stomping grounds, for instance. One or more character's goatee-wearing Evil Twin from Evil Twin Earth can impersonate them, causing all sorts of entertaining trouble and wacky misunderstandings for the genuine articles.

THE MONKEY TIME

Nothing sold better during the Silver Age than comic books with apes on the cover. The experts have all sorts of explanations, but none make more sense than the simple fact that people love monkeys. It's why the hidden city of talking apes is one of the era's most beloved institutions.

In many respects, the chatty chimps are a lot like furry Atlanteans. The apes have a cheerier disposition, though, and are almost all benevolent. Lucky for us humans-they've got thumbs, you know. Mankind would be totally screwed if the talking monkeys went bad.

On a smaller scale, one evil monkey, a renegade from the better members of his troop, can make a great supervillain. Check out the classic Silver Age archetype the Sinister Simian (see *M&M*, page 223) for an example.





CHAPTER 3: SILVER AGE HEROES

Il ready to put on your bell-bottomed supersuit and kick Khrushchev right in the jimmy, hero? Great! This chapter will have you busting the 'nads of Marxism-Leninism in no time. Best of all, it only takes a few minor adjustments to the existing *Mutants & Masterminds* rules to get them ready for the challenges of the twentieth century. Unless this book tells you differently, all the standard *M&M* rules are in full effect.

STARTING POWER LEVELS

silver Age comic books feature central characters of varying degrees of superhuman ability, from hyper-competent heroes who fight crime with nothing more than guts and smarts to nigh-omnipotent alien beings who juggle planets like birthday-party clowns. This section outlines how these differences translate into the *Mutants & Masterminds* rules.

CRUSADING SILVER AGE HEROES

Some Silver Age superheroes seem like Golden Age holdovers because by today's standards, they just weren't all that "super." For the most part, all they had was a mean right cross and a neverending crusade to fight for. Depending the character, it might be avenging a loved one's murder, a hyper-patriotic fight for America, or kicking heroin dealers out of the ghetto.

Though they didn't lack for heart or commitment, even the crusading heroes who had some unusual abilities were typically possessed of what might best be described as "neat tricks" rather than full-blown super-powers. Therefore, crusading Silver Age heroes typically begin the campaign as PL 8 characters with 120 power points to allocate.

More rarely, these type of characters are so supremely good at everything their putatively mundane abilities act more like true superpowers-Stealth skill that seems more like the Invisibility or Teleport powers, for instance. These "super normal" characters start at the usual PL 10 and 150 starting power points found in standard *M&M* campaigns.

SILVER AGE ABILITY BENCHMARKS

Abilities work pretty much the same way in any comic-book era, but if they'd had character sheets back in the '60s, one couldn't have helped but notice some point-allocation choices that are distinctly Silver Age. This section gives some details on these choices for those who want to do authentically retro characters; all others are free to spend their points building their *Silver Age* heroes however they see fit.

Silver Age superheroes tend to favor mental characteristics over physical ones. Intelligence is a musthave in the 1960s given how much time heroes spent facing problems only (pseudo-) science can solve. Wisdom (or just a high Notice skill) is handy for stories where solving a mystery (scientific or otherwise) is far more critical than brute force, which during the Silver Age is pretty much all of them. Charisma (and its related skills) is needed to impart important life-lessons to young Silver Age readers (knowing *is* half the battle). It's even more critical in the Bronze Age for everything from quelling campus unrest to squeezing information out of streetgang members.

Keeping these guidelines in mind not only adds some Age-appropriate flavor to the campaign, it can be invaluable in mixed-PL campaigns. Doing so allows room for the moon-tossing heroes to specialize in doing their strong-man thing, while allowing high-Intelligence super-scientists, high-Wisdom detectives, and high-Charisma tricksters free to engage in their own particular idioms.

In a Silver Age campaign, there are no limits on how high abilities can go, mainly because characters in that era were pretty much as strong or smart as they needed to be for the sake of a fun story. The Bronze Age, by contrast, was all about limits and fallibility, even for supposedly "super" heroes. Gamemasters aiming for the later era's downbeat tone should be wary of characters with too many ability scores above 25, as they will quite bluntly succeed too often to maintain the '70s "Good Guys don't always win" vibe.

CLASSIC SILVER AGE SUPERHEROES

Most Silver Age heroes were amazing by anyone's reckoning. They were powered by super-science and super-sorcery and could do truly extraordinary things, like flying, moving at super-speed, and zapping criminals with their magic jewelry. They start at PL 10 and 150 power points as per the *M&M* campaign norm.

OMNIPOTENT SILVER AGE HEROES

A few Silver Age characters had abilities bordering on the godlike. Such characters were capable of dispatching their enemies by hitting them with the sun, or casting them into Hell (or similar dark dimensions and otherworldly nether regions). They start at PL 12 with 180 power points, and go up from there. These seemingly omnipotent heroes were sometimes seen as part of a super-team, though in hindsight, one wonders why they needed any sort of backup. Still, a gamemaster who's running a mixed-power level campaign can allow them to join the group if he doesn't mind the challenge of keeping all these differently-abled heroes simultaneously occupied.

The easiest way to use such powerful entities in an *M&M* game is as the focus of a campaign with a small number of player characters, perhaps even a solo-hero setup. Obviously, this situation is not preferable for every *M&M* gaming group. If a mixed-power level campaign is similarly unpalatable, then omnipotent heroes are going to work best as occasionally seen non-player characters.

That said, omnipotent characters can be a nice change of pace for a long-running campaign, even as a one-shot digression from the normal set-up. The weeks when not all the players can be there for the regularly scheduled game are perfect for giving the people who do show up a shot at playing the team's omnipotent ally. Letting the lucky few in attendance take on an entire supervillain team all by themselves can definitely liven up what could've otherwise been an off-week.

BALANCE OF POWER

Just like today, Silver Age superteams had members of noticeably different power levels, from the PL8 boxers-in-tights to PL12 types who can throw Australia at the bad guys. If the gamemaster and players want authenticity more than they want to begin at the same potency, their characters can represent a similar mix of power levels (extra-powerful heroes are a great way to get new players into roleplaying games, after all). In these cases, it's important to make sure that lower PL characters have skills and feats no one else on the team has so they can remain vital contributors to the group's efforts.

The key for gamemasters is to have a firm handle on what the characters can do. Starting at character generation, players should be encouraged to diversify their characters' abilities and make each as unique as possible. For example, a group with a brainy guy, a brawny dude, a charismatic rogue, and a versatile mad man is capable of dealing with a wide variety of problems regardless of their respective power levels, but only when working together. Plus, they kinda sound like *The A-Team*. How cool is that?

Before every game session the gamemaster needs to make sure every member has a challenge only they can handle. Maybe the PL12 powerhouses in the team have to hold off an army of giant robot spiders while the PL8 scientific geniuses and ace detectives work on finding their Achilles' heel through kitbashing and legwork. Whatever the scenario, the gamemaster needs to make sure the circumstances are such that all the characters each get a moment in the spotlight.

SKILLS

he things each skill allows your character to do are mostly unchanged in *Silver Age*. Unless otherwise stated, a given skill works exactly as described in *Mutants & Masterminds*. Here are the exceptions.

COMPUTERS

At the start of the Silver Age, third-generation computers using transistors and integrated circuits (microchips, in the parlance of our times) were finally supplanting earlier vacuum-tube models. Previously, computer applications were limited to compiling the census, plotting artillery ranges, breaking enemy codes and other strictly numbercrunching tasks. With integrated circuits making significantly smaller and faster models possible, computers were capable of guiding rocket ships to the moon and ICBMs onto godless communists. They were still the size of refrigerators, but you know, baby steps.

Despite these and other important advancements, during the Silver Age '60s use of the Computers skill is limited to Write Program (DC 25) simply because the technology of the time doesn't allow for anything else. Even then, the +2 bonus applies only to situations where it's beneficial to have many very large numbers computed relatively quickly. "Programming" involves putting the requested operations onto paper punch cards, which takes at least a day or more, depending on the complexity.

Of course, depending on the campaign, there may very well be enough Silver Age super-geniuses about to come up with computers that resemble those found in the 21st century. There may also be computers that are pure science fiction even today, like artificial intelligences. In either case, such machines allow more of the uses of the skill listed in *Mutants & Masterminds*.

As the '70s Bronze Age progressed, computers began to take on a form more recognizable today. Thanks to the development of the microprocessor, fourth-generation models appeared with keyboards, monitors, and-for a lucky few-a connection to ARPANET, which eventually became the world's repository of porn and *Star Trek* trivia known as the Internet. By 1974 (or thereabouts), it's possible for *M&M* characters to use the Computers skill to its fullest. Still, it's extremely rare to find all the required hardware outside a major university or *Fortune* 500 company until later in the decade.

Funky '70s computers work as follows.

• *Find File:* Familiar systems need a minute of game time and a DC 13 check. Unfamiliar systems go by the chart below.

Size of site	DC	Тіме
Small office system	15	5 minutes
Large office system	20	10 minutes
Massive corporate or government system	25	15 minutes

- Defeat Computer Security: Unless it's a very rare set of computers both connected to the proto-Internet of the 1970s, using the skill this way requires physical contact with the targeted system. Which is cool for the gamemaster, because otherwise it's way too dull.
- Defend Computer Security: It's possible, but cutting off access is mostly just yanking plugs out of the socket. Small systems require a DC 13 check and two minutes. Bigger systems need a DC 15 check and ten minutes, which is probably more time than it would take to just walk over and shoot the hacker.
- *Degrade Program:* Follow the revised chart below.

SCOPE OF ALTERATION	DC	Тіме
Crash computer	20	5 minutes
Destroy programming	25	20 minutes
Damage programming	30	20 minutes

• Operate Remote Device: Follow the revised chart that follows.



Type of Operation	DC	Тіме
Shut down passive remote	25	5 rounds/remote
(including cameras and door locks)		
Shut down active remote	30	5 rounds/remote
(including motion detectors and alarms)		
Reset parameters	35	2 minutes/remote
Change passcodes	35	2 minutes
Hide evidence of alteration	+10	2 minutes
Minimum security	+0	-
Exceptional security	+15	-
Maximum security	+20	-

By the 1980s, home computers like the Apple IIe or Commodore 64 were widespread. Characters are then finally able to use those machines' 64k might to play *Global Thermonuclear War* in the comfort of their own basements or any other needed task. As before, it's also possible for more advanced, history-bending models (like, say, *Colossus: The Forbin Project*) to be around in the days of *Ms. Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong* if the gamemaster needs them to be.

KNOWLEDGE (PHYSICAL SCIENCES)

For the most part, there's nothing different about this skill in *Silver Age*. You like test tubes and beakers, but hey, that's okay. We won't make fun. Some schoolyard bully might, but not us.

Things only get interesting if your character's got high skill ranks and is really into nuclear physics or anything else Bomb related. Yeah, that's the capital "B" Bomb or "A-" or "H-Bomb," if you prefer.

People who know about doomsday stuff are like solid gold bricks during the Silver Age. There aren't many of them, and they're all kept locked up tight by our government or the commies. So spend your points on something safer like Concentration, or be prepared to role-play one of the most wanted persons on Earth.

SURVIVAL

The Vietnam Conflict and countless other Cold War proxy battles left millions of homeless refugees in their wake as the clashing armies devastated cities and villages. In addition to those whose residences were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, there were places like Red China during the "Great Leap Forward" where the inhabitants endured calculated suffering.

In these desperate circumstances, people were often forced to learn to eke out an existence from the rubble. To simulate this hardearned knowledge, the Survival skill can be used to stay alive in urban as well as wilderness settings.

The specific uses remain the same from *Mutants & Masterminds*; only the methods change. In urban settings, instead of feasting on nature's bounty for dinner, characters are looking in trash bins for leftovers. Similarly, characters are counting on broken pipes instead of clear-running streams for water. They can also use this skill for Navigation when the surrounding city landmarks have all been bombed into an unrecognizable state.

SILVER AGE FEATS

he following feats are meant to add a little *Silver Age* flavor to player characters and help them better cope with the often harsh realities of the time. Some of these feats' utility outside the Silver and Bronze Ages is limited, and this is duly noted in their descriptions where applicable. Still, with the gamemaster's permission characters residing in a different era can purchase these feats.

Existing feats work in *Silver Age* campaigns just as described in *Mutants & Masterminds*. Some are better suited for one era than another (such as Rage, which fits better in a Bronze Age setting than Silver), but any feat is available with the gamemaster's permission.

BENEFIT: DRAFT EXEMPTION

GENERAL, RANKED

You are an 18-26 year old American male but not subject to compulsory military service due to some rarified condition. Whatever the exact reason, you're not classified I-A (fit for military service), I-Y (fit for limited service), I-C (already in the active-duty military), or IV-C (an alien national who can still be drafted). You are free to pursue your costumed hero career (or anything else, for that matter) as you see fit.

RANK 0 EXEMPTION

Your exemption is really evasion, as you have chosen not to report for duty as required by law. The consequences are steep, as you are a wanted criminal sought after by the US government and are looking at several years in a federal pound-you-in-the-ass prison if caught. This exemption means you've evaded the Fuzz so far, either by hiding out stateside or fleeing to Canada.

This puts a serious crimp in your crime-fighting, as you spend a lot of time disguising your true identity, even when unmasked or around any heroic colleagues sworn to round up lawbreakers like yourself. If you're riding out the war in Thunder Bay, you can live your life in the open there but need to evade the feds (coming and going) whenever an arch-enemy rears his ugly head back in the US. You're stuck in the Great White North until Carter takes office in 1977 and gives you amnesty, learning to love curling and Tim Hortons in the meantime. Regardless of the year and how much some anti-war "doves" will admire you, there will be just as many pro-war "hawks" who despise you as a draft-dodging criminal (see below).

RANK 1 EXEMPTIONS

Your IV-F exemption comes with a cost, the precise nature of which depends on the reason for ineligibility. Some examples:

- Physical handicap: This option is only open to characters with the Disability drawback. The same ailment that makes you unfit to fight the enemy also makes you a less effective crime buster. If the Disability doesn't have specified game effects, the gamemaster is free to penalize the character's Fortitude and/or Reflex saves by the Disability's point value whenever applicable (like running with a heart condition, or dodging an explosion with a trick knee).
- Homosexuality or criminality: You are openly gay (or successfully pretending to be) in a deeply bigoted era, or you have a significant criminal record. Either way, all but the most sympathetic civilian souls are considered to have an Unfriendly attitude towards you on the Interaction table. Extremely homophobic people are going to be downright Hostile, as will pretty much everyone if your ex-con character did time for something especially heinous.
- Conscientious objector or mental incompetence: You are classified IV-W. That's religiously or philosophically opposed to employing any sort of violence in the former case. In the latter, your sanity or intelligence is lacking to a degree that prevents you from fighting effectively. Either way, we flat-out don't know how you make it as a superhero. Still, with a significant drawback like Disability or Involuntary Transformation involved, a gamemaster may allow a character to exercise one of these options.
- Space alien or mutant: Back in the Golden Age, some costumed heroes dutifully tried to join up, but were rejected as medically unfit due to the alterations to their physiology that occurred when they gained super-powers. Characters whose extraordinary abilities derive from the fact that they're an alien, a mutant, or the like can take a rank 1 exemption to represent their unusual IV-F status.

This option is advisable for gamemasters who don't want to ignore Vietnam but also don't want it to be a major factor in their campaign. In this case, a character can purchase it consequence-free. If a more plausible outcome is desired, this exemption can result in the hero being outed as a "freakish monster" and treated like a criminal (see above) ever after.

RANK 2 EXEMPTIONS

Your exemption is one that carries no die-roll penalties with it, but has some specific conditions that must be met in order to retain it. It's a Complication to be sure, but one you get no extra hero points for.

- College, divinity, or rabbinical student: You are classified II-S (if attending a secular university) or IV-D (if sectarian), with the catch being your character has to stay in school and keep his grades up—something that might not be easy if he's got his hands full battling bank robbers and super-villains all hours of the night.
- Critical occupation: You are classified II-A because your job is considered critical to the country (like nuclear scientist, cop, engineer, or fireman), IV-B because you work for the government (as a judge or similar high elected official) or IV-D because you're a clergyman. This exemption makes it critical for you to hang on to your current employment. As a result, your character may have to suffer the indignities of his jerk boss, or campaign for re-election like his life depended on it in order to keep his cushy draft status.

The I-D classification falls under this heading as well, meaning you managed to get one of the scarce slots available in the Reserves or National Guard, virtually guaranteeing you'll spend the war stateside protecting South Carolina from the Viet Cong parttime. In all likelihood you probably owe a favor to the influential someone who pulled some strings to get you in and the gamemaster is bound to call in that marker at the worst possible time for the worst job imaginable.

Depending on your campaign, costumed heroes may qualify for this Benefit level simply because of the nature of their jobs. Patriotic superheroes who work directly for the government may qualify for IV-B status, or Uncle Sam may generously extend II-A status to certain costumed figures for the duration of the war. Here the catch is remaining a good soldier and doing everything the government asks of you (even if it's President Nixon), or keeping up your home-front crime fighting activities at all costs.

 Dependents' hardship: You are classified III-A because of your many dependents (five or more was typically enough to keep you stateside for the duration). While Uncle Sam likely won't come a-calling on you in this case, a steady stream of concerned principals, teachers, doctors, truant officers, neighborhood cops, and all the other assorted problems of family life certainly will, only five-fold. You're bound to have your hands full protecting your large brood from neighborhood bullies and the like—not to mention your supervillain archenemies even without taking into consideration your crime-fighting activities. And what happens when one of the little tykes finds daddy's super-suit?

RANK 3 EXEMPTIONS

Your character is considered to be IV-A, which indicates past military service or status as the family's sole surviving son. Depending on the character's background, your time in uniform may have been a while back (the Korean War, or maybe even World War II), during peace-time or earlier in the Vietnam Conflict.

In addition to having your autonomy, you are also considered to have "done your part" by the public at large and thus don't suffer any sort of Interaction penalties. If your character has obviously and visibly seen action (you're wearing your medals or have battle scars you just can't hide), many people will have Friendly or Helpful attitudes towards you because of your war record. Even the staunchest doves still respect you for fighting against Hitler in WWII, or helping out the United Nations' effort in Korea (some will regard you as a "baby killer" for having gone to 'Nam, though).

If the idea of playing a recent vet or old geezer doesn't suit your character conception, there are other ways to justify purchasing the rank 3 exemption. Perhaps your character performed some vital service for his country during the prewar era, one that may have been done unofficially and out of an actual uniform but that your government is nonetheless grateful for. This can be a great way to simulate a character that spent the 1950s hunting down items like the Crystal Skull of Akator as a favor to President Eisenhower, and got a IV-A status (or the like) as a reward.

After the Vietnam War, this feat is unnecessary, for in the words of *Stripes*' Sgt. Hulka, "Son, there ain't no draft no more." In 1972, conscription is halted and the US switches to an all-voluntary military. The gamemaster may however change this history if he opts to



have world events take a more contentious turn, perhaps in a setting where the Bronze Age never ended.

BENEFIT: MILITARY RANK

GENERAL, RANKED

You're in the Army now. Or the Navy. Or the Marines. Or the Air Force. Moreover, you've gotten some extra stripes or brass to show for your time spent in uniform. It's not all smiles and sunshine, though. This is definitely a benefit with some downside to it, and we're not just talking about the free trip to Southeast Asia the government has lined up for you.

As for the good, there are the three meals a day, free room and board, world travel, and access to some pretty cool stuff. Where else are you going to get your hands on a tank, after all? Plus, you're guaranteed to see Bob Hope at some point.

In game terms, this is represented first by the Wealth Bonus that accompanies each rank, for use in campaigns which employ the optional Wealth rules (see *M&M*, page 132). Second, you get access to equipment most people don't, so long as it makes sense for your job (so forget about your Army journalist getting an ICBM) and you can pay the equipment point cost.

The best part of this feat is all the new friends you make. Paying 6 power points to be a full-bird Army colonel puts a whole regiment under your command and pretty much guarantees the neighborhood bullies are gonna leave you alone.

The buzz-killing part of this feat is the responsibility involved-you didn't think all that power came for free, now did you? No matter how many points you put into this benefit, you still have somebody outranking you. Even a five-star General of the Army has to answer to the President of the United States—just ask General Douglas MacArthur about that.

Anyone who has this benefit spends a lot of time doing what someone else tells them to. Granted, it's less so at higher levels, and the duties aren't as tedious (no potato peeling or toilet scrubbing for an admiral), but you can't come and go as you please without serious consequences involved. Forfeiting this benefit is just a start,

BENEFIT: MILTARY RANK

РР Созт	Army/Air Force/ Marine Corps	Navy	WEALTH BONUS
0	Private	Seaman	+1
1	Corporal	Seaman First Class	+2
2	Sergeant (any grade)	Petty Officer (any class)	+6
3	Second or First Lieutenant	Ensign/Lt. Junior Grade	+8
4	Captain	Lieutenant	+10
5	Major/Lt. Colonel	Lt. Commander/ Commander	+12
6	Colonel/Brigadier General	Captain	+14
7	Major General	Rear Admiral	+16
8	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	+16
9	General	Admiral	+16
10	General of the Army	Fleet Admiral	+16

with prison time and a firing squad (for wartime desertion) as other possibilities.

Because this benefit greatly limits the freedom of action most role-players crave, it's best suited for campaigns set outside the traditional superhero genre. Costumed player characters are better off using this feat to simulate a part-time rank in the Reserves or looking at Benefit: Draft Exemption (see page 48) unless they're prepared to risk going AWOL anytime there's crime to be fought.

A NOTE TO GAMEMASTERS

Any players who spend 6 power points with the intention of using regimental firepower to crush their enemies every single game session can and should have that notion quickly dispelled. The chain of command is your friend in limiting too-frequent or downright abusive use of this feat.

In such cases, either their unit is engaged in a mission (which realistically should be a lot of the time), or has orders from higherup that forbid it from running to the character's rescue whenever they need it. Any character who forces the issue and orders a unit to break off a mission had better have a darn good reason, or else be prepared to learn what military discipline is all about.

That said, this is a feat, and the player did pay points for it, so it should be useful to them at some point. Maybe the character can't get the whole regiment to act like the cavalry in a Western movie, but in a pinch he might be able to spare a squad or two. Even if that's not feasible, he still might be able to pull some strings and get the group some badly needed gear, from a truck to a Claymore mine, as the gamemaster sees fit.

CONNECTED

SKILL, RANKED

Normally, this feat uses the Diplomacy skill to resolve requests for help. This assumes (naturally, for most comic books) that your character's connection likes and trusts him.

While this sort of relationship is the Silver Age heroic norm, some connections help out villains (and some Bronze Age heroes) because they're afraid (such as a weasel-like street informant), or are playing the sap for them (a gullible would-be girlfriend). Obviously, their relationship is going to be role-played a lot differently in these kinds of set-ups, and the feat can be changed accordingly.

If a character routinely beats up, slaps around, or otherwise scares the bejesus out of the connection, use the Intimidate skill instead of Diplomacy. The Bluff skill can also be substituted for Diplomacy if the character is stringing the connection along with phony promises of money, love, or the like. Regardless of the skill used, the Difficulty Classes listed in *M&M* remain the same.

It's worth noting that one character can have different relationships with different connections. They may have a small handful of people they genuinely care about, and a plethora of others they're just using and abusing. Such a character can benefit from friends and suckers alike by buying this feat multiple times.

CULT HERO

SKILL, RANKED

This feat recreates the uneasy place in society some costumed characters fictionally occupied during the fractious times of the 1970s Bronze Age. Such characters are well-known, beloved figures within a subculture and receive a +4 bonus per rank on all Charisma-based skill checks involving anyone belonging to that particular group. This bonus cannot increase your total effective skill rank higher than the campaign's power level limit.

The downside is they're considered infamous and distrusted by at least one other group equal or larger in size to the one that adores them. When dealing with detractors, all Charisma-based skill checks are penalized by -2 per rank.

Which particular subculture a character appeals to must be specified. With the gamemaster's permission, this feat can be selected multiple times to represent the character's popularity across multiple subcultures, kinda like how Sir Ian McKellen is adored by comic-book fans, *Lord of the Rings* fans, and the gay community all at once.

This feat can be used for a variety of Bronze Age hero types. Minority characters who champion the causes of their racial or ethnic group can become inspiring symbols within their community, but still be seen as dangerous radicals (or worse) by more reactionary elements of society. Outspoken Women's Libber heroines (or villainesses) receive a similarly mixed reaction, as will openly homosexual or bisexual characters.

While racial, gender, and preference divisions are the most obvious derivations for this feat, they're hardly the only ones possible. Characters with outspoken views on the Vietnam War are good Cult Hero candidates, as are proponents of any number of trendy and loopy '70s fads like EST, primal scream therapy, encounter groups, or religious cults. They've got their fellow Kool-Aid drinkers behind them, but everyone else just thinks they're nuts.

A character's background may qualify him as well. If he's a wellknown son of old money, his high society chums cheer him as surely as others loathe him as a spoiled rich-kid "Fortunate Son." Similarly, a drawling good ol' boy from the country who fights crime in a suped-up talking Trans-Am will be big in the sticks but derided as a stupid redneck by city-folk. Likewise, a character who grew up on the mean streets of the ghetto or barrio may be an icon back in the old neighborhood, but gets nothing but doors slammed in his face out in the suburbs.

As a note to gamemasters, this feat can be used to create supervillains who have fan followings. This could be a mutant baddie who commits criminal acts to protect and empower his genetically altered kin against anti-mutant prejudice, or a leftwing radical who blows up "fascist" police stations to the delight of some in the '70s counterculture.

NEW VEHICLE FEATS

During the Silver Age, the Space Race was all the rage, and a number of comic-book characters were hotshot pilots. Later during the Bronze Age the grizzled and gutsy chopper pilot and ace wheel-man who "learned a few tricks back in 'Nam" became stock characters, flying or driving heroes out of tight spots right before the issue's last panel.

The following feats simulate these hard-learned "tricks," allowing players (and gamemasters) to create stalwart jet jockeys, howling mad helicopter pilots, and intergalactic taxi drivers capable of getting a fare safely through a fleet of space pirates without so much as a scratch. These feats are also useful for costumed characters that race around in super-vehicles and want to get the most out of their expensive tricked-out rides.

COMBAT DRIVER

COMBAT, RANKED

You know some tricky maneuvers that can keep you alive while driving a ground or water vehicle under combat conditions. Choose the type of vehicle when you acquire the feat. You gain a +1 bonus on either attack rolls or a +1 dodge bonus for the vehicle (allocated each round) per rank in this feat when driving any vehicle of your chosen type that is Size Huge or smaller. Bigger rides just can't be maneuvered to any effective degree and don't benefit from this feat.

Multiple ranks in this feat can be divided between attack rolls and the vehicle's dodge bonus as the player sees fit. Your total attack and defense bonuses are limited by the campaign's power level. Dodge bonuses from multiple operators with Combat Driver do not stack.

COMBAT PILOT

COMBAT, RANKED

You know some tricky maneuvers that can keep you alive while piloting an air or space vehicle under combat conditions. Choose the type of vehicle when you acquire the feat. You gain a +1 bonus on either attack rolls or a +1 dodge bonus for the vehicle (allocated each round) per rank in this feat when flying any vehicle of your chosen type that is Gargantuan or smaller. Bigger craft just can't be maneuvered to any effective degree and don't benefit from this feat.

Multiple ranks in this feat can be divided between attack rolls and the vehicle's dodge bonus as the player sees fit. Your total attack and defense bonuses are limited by the campaign's power level. Dodge bonuses from multiple operators with Combat Pilot do not stack.

POWERS

layers are free to purchase whatever powers they wish in *Silver Age*, provided (as always) their gamemaster approves of their choices. Just because we say yes doesn't mean the GM is obligated to follow suit.

The Datalink power, however, is of limited utility simply because of the relatively primitive computer technology of the day. It remains so until fairly late in the Bronze Age. See the discussion of the Computers skill earlier in this chapter for details.

The same may be true for other powers or concepts involving modern (post-1970s) technology, including things we now take for granted like microwaves, satellite communications, or modern speculative science like nanotechnology.

COMPLICATIONS

Superheroes beset with Complications were big sellers during the Silver Age, and by the Bronze Age seemingly every comic-book hero was battling their own personal hang-ups as much as they did the bad guys. It gave the reader characters they could relate to, and the costumed folk plenty of hero points, so it was win-win.

Since Complications were so prevalent during this era, all those listed on *M&M*, pages 122–123 are available to player characters with gamemaster consent. This section details how to give them a genuine *Silver Age* touch.

ADDICTION

In a Bronze Age campaign, this Complication can be used in regards to the more notorious vices of the day. It can represent characters with a fixation on cocaine, heroin, painkillers, uppers, downers, or alcohol. If the hero has someone close to them trying to get the monkey off their back (like a smack-craving teenage ward), he can receive hero points for the sacrifices he makes to help his loved one get and stay clean.

ENEMY

FAMF

Note that in a Silver Age setting, it's not fair to pick "communists" (or another very generalized group) as an Enemy and expect to get a hero point for it unless they pretty much show up every session. It is, however, perfectly acceptable to pick a particular nemesis from the other side of the Iron Curtain, like a crafty communist super-villain who bedevils the player characters time and again.

Seemingly every Silver Age hero had this complication, with some being referred to as "the world famous crime fighter" in their very first appearance. It was an era where even heroes who battled streetlevel crooks and rarely left their hometowns could somehow acquire fans around the globe.



This Complication is rarer (but still common) during the Bronze Age. Making at least some heroes toil in obscurity as a cynical world refuses to acknowledge their quixotic crusade for good is part and parcel of that era.

HATRED

This Complication is just as much out of place in a Silver Age campaign as it is at home in a Bronze Age one. Note that in Silver Age campaigns, this was true even during wartime, as few comic-book characters were truly rabid in their loathing of enemy nations.

By contrast, Bronze Age characters as a rule are angry about something pretty much all the time—the War, pollution, corporate greed, poverty, discrimination—so this Complication works well for them.

HONOR

This Complication was as common for Silver Age heroes as colorful costumes were, as it made it crystal clear to impressionable young readers that the good guys are really good at all times, not to mention showing how despicable the honorless bad guys were. In fact, Silver Age characters were so honorable and faced actual moral dilemmas so rarely, it's not that much of a Complication in an "authentic" story set in that era. No reason a gamemaster can't throw a few ethical quandaries into the mix if that's what he wants, of course.

It's just the opposite in Bronze Age campaigns, where heroes are often portrayed as the Last Good Guys, still fighting for truth and justice even when everything else (the government included) has become corrupt. The gamemaster makes the final call, of course, but it's tough to imagine a campaign capturing the flavor of the Bronze Age without this Complication.

PREJUDICE

As discussed in the section **We Can Be Heroes**, minority heroes can take this Complication and, in anything other than a strictly Silver Age style campaign, get a steady stream of hero points and grief for it. That is unless the people involved in the game agree to forego this historical reality by mutual assent, a reasonable allowance in all but Bronze Age campaigns. It can still be done even then if the gamemaster and players want, of course, it's just that the resulting campaign won't be all that Bronze Age-y.

REPUTATION

Silver Age characters who don't have the Fame Complication usually have this instead. The unlucky hero may have influential enemies in the media falsely accusing him of being a menace, or he may be wanted by the authorities for a crime he didn't commit. Some characters (like those with the Involuntary Transformation drawback) may have little say over their actions when in superhero mode, and their well-known lack of impulse control can lead to a Reputation for terrorizing normal folks.

Bear in mind this Complication is different from the Cult Hero feat listed earlier, where at least some small group of people love the character. With this Complication, a superhero is as popular as Billy Beer or *Heaven's Gate*.

DEVICES & EQUIPMENT

INDESTRUCTIBLE SHIELD

SPINNERET GAUNTLETS

ith Silver Age gadgets logic and proportion often disappeared, but never the sense of wonder. Death rays, time machines, magical talismans, and giant robots were part and parcel of the era's storylines to the delight of readers.

This section gives gamemasters a handy guide to some realworld hardware that existed during this era. There are also some examples of typical Silver Age devices to give the players an idea of what comic-book science is capable of.

SILVER AGE DEVICES

In the hands of heroes, most Silver Age devices defy every law but that of the land. Even putatively scientific devices still worked inexplicable wonders, like hand-held ray projectors capable of melting through a tank. Even with forty years of technological advances writers are often hard pressed to explain exactly how "scientific" gadgets of the Silver Age actually worked. They look back at how casually 1960s superheroes broke the laws of science and can only shake their heads.

With that in mind, knock yourselves out, players. Justify whatever crazy powers you want with "cosmic energy" or "atomic power" and project "rays" that do whatever you need them to do. If things get too far out for your gamemaster, just put all the kooky powers into an alliteratively named piece of magical jewelry and it's all good.

SAMPLE DEVICES

As versatile as Silly Putty, as ubiquitous as a Slinky, and as vital as G.I. Joe with Kung-Fu Grip, the wonderful toys Silver Age heroes used for crime-fighting would make any kid's Christmas the best ever. The following free samples (complete with power point costs) show off some of the everyday wonders of the Silver Age.

GIMMICK ARROWS

DEVICE 9 • 27 POINTS

Normal bladed arrows: **Blast 8** (Autofire); Easy to lose; *Alternate Powers:* • Bow: **Strike 2** (Mighty)

- Acetylene arrow: **Disintegration 4** (heat/flame; Sustained Duration)
- Acid arrow: Disintegration 6
- Bola arrow: **Snare 6** (Linked with Trip, Transparent), **Trip 5** (Linked with Snare; Improved Throw)
- Boxing glove arrow: Blast 6 (Linked with Stun), Stun 4 (Linked with Blast; Ranged)
- Cryonic arrow: Snare 8 (ice; Burst Area)
- Drill arrow: Blast 8 (Penetrating)
- Explosive arow: Blast 8 (Explosion Area)
- Extinguisher arrow: **Nullify Fire 8** (all powers with fire descriptor; Burst Area, Reflex Save)
- Flash arrow: Dazzle 8 (visual, bright light; Burst Area)
- Glue arrow: Snare 6 (Burst Area, Contagious)
- Grappling hook arrow: Super-Movement 1 (swinging)
- Handcuff arrow: Snare 8 (Transparent)
- Jet arrow: Flight 5 (Instant Duration)
- Magnetic arrow: Magnetic Control 8 (Burst Area)
- Net arrow: Snare 8 (Burst Area)
- Parachute arrow: Flight 1 (Affects Others, Ranged; Gliding)
- Smoke arrow: **Obscure 8** (visual and olfactory)
- Sonic arrow: **Nauseate 8** (vertigo; Ranged)
- Tear gas arrow: Dazzle 4 (visual; Cloud Area, Linked with Nauseate), Nauseate 3 (Cloud Area, Linked with Dazzle, Ranged)

Robin Hood had the skills, but this Device gives you an arrow with a boxing glove on it. Advantage: you. Granted, it's almost more of a motif than a Device, but for crime-fighting versatility it's tough to beat.

DEVICE 5 • 20 POINTS

Hard to lose; **Deflect 4** (all ranged attacks; Action; Interpose), **Shield 3**, **Strike 3** (Mighty, Ricochet, Thrown)

It was a one-time freak accident. It was like God stopped bullets, changed Coke into Pepsi, and found your lost car keys; an according-to-Hoyle miracle. Some nearly indestructible metals somehow combined into a pretty much indestructible alloy. Even more amazingly, the wonder compound was serendipitously cast in the shape of a Frisbee.

Thanks to its improbable composition, a willing gamemaster may allow it a quasi-Plot Device extra. If the shield's wielder takes a full action to brace herself and concentrate on an incoming ranged attack, then spends a hero point, she may then automatically deflect all incoming attacks for the entire round. It's up to the gamemaster to decide when and if this includes attacks with the Area extra, which in most cases will still be able to get around the shield (like poison gas). The gamemaster is the final arbiter here, but is encouraged to let the player use this bonus ability whenever the bacon's in the fire and it's *really* needed to save the day.

MOBILE VEHICL			• 59 EQUIPM	ENT POINTS		
Strength 30	Speed 6	Defense 8	Toughness 9	Size Huge		
Features: Alarm 3 (DC 30), Caltrops, Computer, Navigation System 2, Oil Slick, Remote Control, Smokescreen						
Powers: Blast 7 (laser headlights), Communication 8 (radio; Area; Subtle), Immunity 5 (fire damage), Impervious Toughness 5						

Atomic batteries to power...turbines to speed...roger, you're ready to move out! Your character will be lookin' fly and rollin' phat in the baddest superhero ride of them all. All your character needs to do is fill her hero handle in the blank and the keys are all hers. Trust us, this is your best "cash for clunkers" value!

DEVICE 15 • 60 POINTS

Hard to lose; Alternate Powers: **Dazzle 10** (visual, opaque mesh), **Flight 1** (mesh parachute; Gliding), **Snare 10** (mesh net), **Super- Movement 1** (swinging, mesh line), **Telekinesis 10** (adhesive mesh line; Damaging)

Have you ever wanted to pin someone against a wall with a gluelike substance but, darn it, you just lack natural spinnerets? Sure, we all have! With these handy Spinneret Gauntlets, you'll be catching crooks just like flies in no time. Simple pressure shoots a stream of fast-hardening chemical mesh that quickly envelops your enemies in high-tech Silly String with the tensile strength of steel. This Device has a 1,001 other uses as well, from swinging around town like Tarzan to sticking Led Zeppelin posters on your dorm room walls. It's the perfect gift for the angst-ridden teenage superhero in your life!



This Device propels and retracts a handy swingline which allows you to travel quickly and silently above the city congestion–a handy thing for today's superhero-on-the-go. Even better, once you get to the bad guys, the Swingline Club is sturdy enough to deliver a richly deserved beat-down.

WINGED HARNESS	DEVICE 5 • 20 POINTS
Hard to lose; Flight 6 (anti-gravity wings), Gravity Control 8 4
(Limited to decrease only, Touch Range	e), Healing 6 (Personal),
Immunity 3 (cold environments, suffe	ocation)

It's a mystic metal! Or alien technology! Maybe both! OK, we're not sure what this Device is made of (they keep changing their minds), but whatever it is, the Winged Harness allows you to strap in and fly like a bird of prey. This Device is also sturdy and comfortable enough to wear shirtless, a major plus for any male hero in the Swinging '60s.

PLOT DEVICES

With the heroes getting all those wonderful toys, Silver Age super-villains had to have some truly amazing tricks up their lab-coat sleeves. Fortunately for them, the only thing more potent than the weird science wielded by the costumed good guys was the mad science harnessed by the bad guys.

The villains' insanely powerful inventions frequently crossed over into Plot Device territory. They had giant death-ray cannons that could level a city with every shot and devices that could pluck the moon from its orbit. Sure, these gadgets usually took a while to work (the writers had to give the heroes time to save the day, after all), but it suited the big thinking typical of big-name Silver Age bad guys.

When equipping your villains, gamemaster, don't be afraid of giving them stuff from the furthest reaches of your imagination. When the players encounter the time-travel machine that plucks atomicpowered robots from the future to do the mad scientist's present-day bidding, they'll know for sure they're gaming in the Silver Age.

BAN THE BOMB

The King Kamehameha of all *Silver Age* plot devices is of course the atom bomb. We gave a little coaching on how to handle it story-wise back in **This Is Not a Test**, but some smart arse is bound to ask what the Toughness save is going to be if he sets one off. For game purposes, a nuclear weapon has three possible effects depending on the range. In order of closeness to the detonation, they are: 1) Instant Death, 2) Slow Agonizing Death/New Mutant Power, and 3) Far Enough Away Not to Die.

Gamemasters are free to rule precisely which radius the player characters are inside, and may even listen to pleas and accept offerings of hero points to move heroes one range effect further away. The determining factor should always be how much the heroes did to prevent the explosion, and how much the blast is their own stupid fault. Those who tried to help get to live, and might even pick up a handy third eye in the process. Otherwise, Darwin's Law ("if you're dumb, you die") should assert itself.

As a final atomic note to gamemasters, nuclear weapons are a great way to show just how tough your latest mega-bad guy is. Nothing conveys to the players they're in for a long night better than a villain who takes a nuke to the breadbasket and just keeps on coming. It's also a handy hint that their wits will probably serve them better than their fists in this particular adventure.

SILVER AGE EQUIPMENT

ithin the boundaries of the era's technology (see the section on **Silver Age Tech** in **Chapter 2** for more details on this), rules for Equipment in *Silver Age* are just the same as in the *M&M* rulebook. Assuming the item can be had (and it exists in this era), all the normal rules are in play.

THE SILVER AGE ARSENAL

The following is a list of military-grade weapons found in the hands of cops, crooks, and civilians during the Silver and Bronze Ages. Military-grade weapons are of course normally found in the hands of soldiers, but they can also turn up in civilian use, such as with ex-GIs who kept a few souvenirs from their days in uniform or bad guys who found them after they "fell off the back of an Army truck." Big guns like these also seem to have an annoying habit of winding up in the hands of the super-villains' goons as well.

HEAVY WEAPONS

Sometimes even a machine gun isn't enough to get the job done. Maybe the enemy's too far away, too well dug-in, or there's just too many of them. Maybe the enemy's skin is bulletproof, and a bigger bang is the only hope of stopping him. Whatever the cause, we present the relevant numbers for some of the most common heavy weapons found with Cold War armies. For obvious reasons (just glance at their game statistics), the gamemaster should incorporate these truly big guns into their games with care, lest their perfectly crafted adventures be ruined by a hail of shells fired from a mile away.

HEAVY WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT POINTS

Many of the weapons listed here are pricey equipment point-wise. This is for reasons of game balance, but in some cases it can bend history a little bit, denying real-world soldiers weapons they got to use on a daily basis during the various wars of the Silver Age era.

As it happens, most of the higher-cost weapons are also crewserved weapons that don't work (or at least, don't work well) unless they're fired as a group effort. Therefore, as an optional rule gamemasters can allow characters acting as a dedicated crew for a certain weapon to acquire it using equipment points contributed by each of them.

For example, the two GIs responsible for the unit's Light Mortar can split up the 15 equipment point cost to account for the fact that without one of them loading and the other aiming, the weapon is pretty much useless. Likewise, a Heavy Field Artillery Gun isn't as

PROJECTILE WEAPONS (FIREARMS)

NAME	Dамаде	CRITICAL	RANGE INCREMENT	Size	Соѕт
Light machine gun	+5 Ballistic, Autofire	20	50 ft.	Large	15
Medium machine gun	+6 Ballistic, Autofire	20	60 ft.	Large	18
Heavy machine gun	+7 Ballistic, Autofire	20	70 ft.	Large	21

HEAVY WEAPONS (EXOTIC)

NAME	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE INCREMENT	Size	Соѕт
Light Mortar*	+5 Explosion	_	50 ft.	Small	15
Medium Mortar*	+7 Explosion	_	70 ft.	Medium	21
Heavy Mortar*	+9 Explosion	_	90 ft.	Large	27
Light Recoilless Rifle*	+7 Penetrating or Explosion	_	70 ft.	Large	21
Medium Recoilless Rifle*	+8 Penetrating or Explosion	_	80 ft.	Large	24
Heavy Recoilless Rifle*	+9 Penetrating or Explosion	_	90 ft.	Large	27
Light Field Artillery*	+8 Explosion	_	800 ft.	Large	27
Medium Field Artillery*	+9 Explosion	_	800 ft.	Huge	30
Heavy Field Artillery*	+10 Explosion	_	2500 ft.	Huge	34

*=See individual descriptions for more information.

much of a point burden if all ten guys in its crew chip in 3-4 equipment points each.

As an option, the gamemaster can simply choose not charge military characters for equipment issued to them by their government as part of their assigned duties. In a campaign centered around the crew of a tank haunted by the ghost of General George S. Patton, for instance, the player characters receive the tank itself for zero equipment points (though they may have to pay for the salty-tongued ghost, depending on how much help he is to the crew).

FRIENDLY FIRE

In any given war, the trouble with artillery is that it's always landing somewhere it's not wanted. The enemy being targeted certainly doesn't appreciate it, but when the shells come up short, the soldiers getting hit with "friendly fire" are even more upset.

This is because artillery is foremost used for indirect fire, which is a fancy way of saying the men operating the gun can't actually see what they're shooting at. Instead, they're relying on the word of someone who can see the target, and they may or may not be describing its position well enough to result in a hit. Even when they are, words get misheard in the heat of battle, men under pressure forget to carry the two, and mistakes get made—like shelling their own troops, for instance.

Any attack made with a hand grenade, mortar, or field artillery gun that result in a natural one hits a friendly target instead. Grenades might even blow up in the hands of those throwing them.

MORTARS

Mortars are basically metal tubes capable of launching shells at targets in a high, slow arc. They are relatively easy to transport, set up, conceal, and operate. Most mortar rounds are high explosive, and thus have the Explosion Area extra. Mortars need a crew of two or three men to operate normally. Typically, a light (60mm) mortar is issued to an infantry company, six medium (81mm) mortars to a heavy weapons company, and six heavy (107mm) mortars assigned to an infantry regiment. Medium mortars were also mounted on halftracks to provide mobile fire support.

RECOILESS RIFLES

Recoilless Rifles are direct-fire artillery weapons designed to take out armored vehicles. Light models are fairly portable and can be fired from the shoulder like a bazooka. Heavier and less mobile models were better able to defeat newer, heavier-armored tanks. The rifle's antitank rounds have the Penetrating extra on their damage, while anti-personnel rounds have the Explosion Area extra. Recoilless rifles need a crew of three to five to operate normally. Heavier models were also mounted on jeeps. The light (57mm), medium (75mm), and heavy (90mm or 106mm) rifles were all phased out during the Vietnam War in favor of light anti-tank weapons (LAWs, equivalent to the rocket launcher in *M&M*, page 139).

FIELD ARTILLERY

Field Artillery is the king of the battlefield, raining destruction down on enemy positions and softening them up for attack by tanks and infantry. Most artillery rounds are high explosive, and thus have the Explosion Area modifier. Artillery pieces also have the Improved Range power feat, since they fire in such long ballistic arcs. Artillery is large and heavy, and requires some sort of transport, be it horses, trucks, or being self-propelled on lightly armored chasses. Each gun requires a crew of 5 to 10 men to operate normally. Typically, an infantry regiment had 6-8 light (75mm) and/or medium (105mm) guns assigned to it, while an infantry division had 12 heavy (155mm or 175mm) pieces at its disposal.

"YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A BIGGER BOAT!"

AMPHIBIAN WARRIOR

+8

STR	DEX	соп	ІПТ	шıs	СНЯ
+10	+65	+7	+3	+7	+44
30	22	24	16	24	18
таибн	NESS FO	IRTITUDE	REFLE	ни	

+7

+8

SKILLS

+1 🗖

Handle Animal 8 (+12), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+11), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+7), Language (English), Notice 4 (+11), Profession (soldier) 8 (+15), Ride 4 (+10), Survival 4 (+11), Swim 15 (+25)

FEATS

All-out Attack, Animal Empathy, Blind-Fight, Cult Hero (Atlanteans), Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Environmental Adaptation (underwater), Favored Environment (underwater) 6, Improved Block, Power Attack, Takedown Attack 2

POWERS

Immunity 2 (high pressure, breathe underwater) Protection 3 Super-Senses 1 (ultravision) Super-Strength 2 (heavy load: 3 tons) Swimming 7 (250 MPH)

COMBAT

Attack +7, Grapple +19, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +7, Knockback -5, Initiative +6

DRAWBACKS

Weakness (needs water immersion, drain on Constitution, -5 points)

Abilities 74 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 17 + Powers 17 + Combat 28 + Saves 3 - Drawbacks 5 = 150 Total

Customization: Players may opt for the four-color hero, the "environmental avenger" take on the archetype's backstory or one of their own design. They are free to pick whichever best fits the campaign they're in and their own preferences.

Name Options: Amphitrite, Aquiel, Aquon, Atlantean, Oceanus, Sea-Devil, The Seaman, Tethys

POWER LEVEL 10

AVENGING DISCO GODFATHER



SKILLS

Diplomacy 8 (+12), Drive 6 (+8), Gather Information 8 (+12), Intimidate 10 (+14), Knowledge (streetwise) 12 (+12), Notice 8 (+11), Perform (dance) 8 (+12), Profession (private investigator) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+11)

FEATS

All-out Attack, Attack Focus (melee) 3, Benefit (private investigator license), Contacts, Cult Hero (own racial/ethnic group), Defensive Attack, Distract (Intimidate), Dodge Focus 4, Elusive Target, Equipment 2, Fascinate (Intimidate), Improved Block, Interpose, Power Attack, Startle, Takedown Attack 2, Well-Informed Equipment: Full-size car with hidden compartments feature

POWERS

Enhanced Strength 17 Immunity 5 (radiation damage) Protection 7 (Impervious 5) Super-Strength 2 (heavy load: 6 tons; Groundstrike) COMBAT

Attack +7 (melee), +4 (ranged), Grapple +21, Damage +12 (unarm Defense +8 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback -7, Initiative +2

Abilities 32 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 24 + Powers 39 + Comba + Saves 5 = 135 Total

Customization: As designed, the Avenging Disco Godfather has a private dick's license to snoop around places, a custom Continental to get him there, and the support of the good people in his community. He also rules the dance floor every Saturday night, but since this is an archetype that's all about style, players are free to reassign these power points to better suit their own badass fashion sense.

With just a change of nouns, this archetype can represent a Bronze Age champion for Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, or any other traditionally ghettoized minority in America. Power point adjustments can also be made, or the statistics can be used as written.

Name Options: Black Dynamite, Black Samson, Black Thunder, The Hammer, The Human Tornado, Willie Dynamite

POWER LEVEL 9

"I'M THE CAT WHO WON'T COP OUT WHEN THERE'S DANGER ALL ABOUT."

BIONIC HERO

STR	DE	-6	соп	шт	ш	115	СНЯ
+8	+5	i	+44	+2	+	5	+1
26 (14)	20		18	194	2		12
тоибни	1655	FO	RTITUDE	REFL	EH	L	IILL
+11			+5	+6			-66
SKILLS							

Concentration 7 (+12), Intimidate 7 (+8), Notice 6 (+11), Pilot 7 (+12), Survival 7 (+12), Swim 6 (+14)

FEATS

Attack Focus (melee) 5, Combat Pilot 4, Defensive Attack, Dodge Focus 3, Improved Block, Improved Critical (punch), Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Power Attack, Startle

POWERS

Blast 9 (laser) **Enhanced Strength 12** Leaping 5 (x50 distance) Protection 7 (Impervious) Super-Senses 4 (extended hearing x1000, extended sight x100,

infravision) Speed 3 (50 MPH)

COMBAT

Attack +11 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +19, Damage +8 (unarmed), Defense +9 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -8, Initiative +5

Abilities 38 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 20 + Powers 55 + Combat 24 + Saves 3 = 150 Total

Customization: Players may opt for the espionage or fugitive take on the archetype's backstory, or one of their own design. They are free to pick whichever best fits the campaign they're in and their own preferences. It certainly possible for the Bionic Hero to be a Bionic Heroine (or Boy, or Dog, or...). If players are looking for a darker, more high-tech/less human take on the same origin they should check out the Cyborg archetype in the Iron Age sourcebook.

Name Options: Agent Steel, Cyberspy, Doctor Bionic, The Indestructible Man, Mr. Metal

MACHINE."

"WELCOME TO THE

FEMINIST HEROINE

STR +10	DEX +3	: con +8	нт +Э	ші5 +7	СНЯ +Э
30(10)	16	26(12)	16	24(18)	16
TOUGH +1		FORTITUDE	REFLE	≣H L	+13

SKILLS

Diplomacy 10 (+13), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (art) 6 (+9), Knowledge (business) 8 (+11), Knowledge (civics) 6 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+9), Knowledge (history) 6 (+9), Knowledge (popular culture) 6 (+9), Notice 8 (+15), Profession (traditionally male-dominated career; player's choice) 10 (+17), Sense Motive 8 (+15), Swim 4 (+14)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (melee) 5, Cult Hero (Women's Libbers), Defensive Attack, Dodge Focus 5, Fascinate (Diplomacy), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Pin, Improved Trip, Inspire 2, Quick Change 2, Seize Initiative, Stunning Attack

POWERS

Enhanced Constitution 14 Enhanced Strength 20 Enhanced Wisdom 6 Protection 2 Super-Strength 6 (heavy load: 50 tons)

COMBAT

Attack +10 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +26, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback -5, Initiative +3

Abilities 28 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 24 + Powers 54 + Combat 20 + Saves 3 = 150 Total

Customization: While the Feminist Heroine is very much a product of her Bronze Age times, the struggle for gender equity is nothing new. This makes the archetype playable in other settings, but in later times she'll be less of a Cult Hero and a replacement feat can be chosen. In earlier times (like the Silver Age), the Feminist Heroine becomes even more of a Cult Hero if not considered an out-and-out villain.

With just a change of nouns (and possibly gender), this archetype can represent a Bronze Age champion for Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, homosexuals, or hippies. Power point adjustments can be made accordingly, or the statistics can be used as written.

Name Options: Dynama, Feminine Mystique, Golden Goddess, Ms. America, Ms. Might, Power Woman

GUITAR HERO

STR +	DE#			іпт +1	+1		СНА +Б
100	16	- P	4	12	12	2	22
тоибн	NE55	FORTITU	DE	REFLE	=H		11LL (
+10/+	+10/+2* +4			+44		+	3
* FLATEOOTED							

SKILLS

Bluff 7 (+13), Diplomacy 7 (+13), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+9), Knowledge (popular culture) 8 (+9), Perform (singing) 15 (+21), Perform (stringed instruments) 15 (+21)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 6, Attractive 2, Benefit (draft exemption), Connected, Defensive Roll 8, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 6, Fascinate (Perform), Inspire 4, Taunt, Ultimate Perform

POWERS

Light Control 10 (Dynamic, Alternate Powers [All Dynamic]: Dazzle 10 [visual, bright light], Dazzle 5 [visual, bright light; Aura], Illusion 8 [visual, holograms, 100' radius; Progression 4], Obscure 10 [visual, white light])

Sonic Control 10 (Dynamic, Alternate Powers [All Dynamic]: Blast
10, Drain Toughness 10 [acoustic resonance; Ranged; Limited to crystalline objects], Nauseate 10 [vertigo], Stun 10)

COMBAT

Attack +4 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +4, Damage +10 (Blast), +0 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -5 (-2 flatfooted), Initiative +3

Abilities 26 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 32 + Powers 56 + Combat 16 + Saves 5 = 150 Total



Customization: This archetype works equally well for either a Monkees-style Silver Age campaign or an MC5-flavored Bronze Age one. If the player would rather follow in Joan Jett and Chrissy Hynde's footsteps and be a Guitar Heroine, just swap the Benefit feat for something appropriate like Cult Hero.

Name Options: Captain Fantastic, The Experience, Lightshow, Six-String

HARD-TRAVELING HERO

STR	DE	H	соп	ІПТ	ш	5	СНЯ
+1	+	2	+2	+	+6		+2
12	114	a - 1	14	10	23	2	14
TOUGHNESS		FU	RTITUDE	REFL	≡H	ш	ILL
+6/+2*			+3	+3		+	7
	*without Force Field						

SKILLS

Bluff 5 (+7), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Drive 8 (+10), Gather Information 5 (+7), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+10), Profession (trucker) 8 (+14), Sense Motive 5 (+11)

FEATS

Dodge Focus 5, Fearless, Sidekick 4 (dog)

Equipment: Semi with CB radio; select 1 EP worth of additional gear **POWERS**

Device 18 (alien medallion, hard to lose)

 Alien medallion: Comprehend 4 (speak, read and understand all languages, all who hear understand), Create Object 12 (solidified energy; Continuous Duration, Movable), Enhanced Feat 3 (Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Quick Change), Flight 7, Force Field 4, Healing 4, Immunity 7 (no need to breathe, all environmental conditions), Space Travel 8

COMBAT

- Attack +5, Grapple +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -3, Initiative +2
- Abilities 26 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 80 + Combat 20 + Saves 3 = 150 Total





Customization: The Hard-Traveling Hero is positively Bronze Age, but a decade earlier he can be a rooted costumed hero using his powers to fight crime full time. Feel free to adjust his Equipment and Sidekick accordingly (if you're really mean enough to get rid of the dog). This archetype is also easily changeable for reasons of style. The big rig can give way to a motorcycle for instance, or the lovable dog Sidekick can yield to an even cooler chimpanzee in overalls (who could probably drive the truck if needed-just a suggestion).

Name Options: The Highwayman, Journeyman, Pilgrim, Truck Turner, Vagabond, The Wanderer

MOTORCYCLE DAREDEVIL

STR +4	DE +L 1E	4	CON +7 14	INT +0 12	wis +1 12	CHA +5 22	
тоибноезз		FO	RTITUDE	REFLE	EH	WILL	
+8/+	+8/+7* +E		+8	+5		+8	
* Flatfooted							

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+8), Bluff 6 (+11), Climb 4 (+8), Diplomacy 6 (+11), Drive 13 (+17), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+3), Perform (oratory) 6 (+11), Profession (daredevil) 10 (+11), Stealth 4 (+8), Swim 4 (+8)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (melee), Attack Specialization (walking stick), Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 3, Endurance, Equipment 2, Evasion, Fearless, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Inspire 4, Interpose, Luck 4, Power Attack, Taunt, Ultimate Drive, Ultimate Toughness

Equipment: Motorcycle with smokescreen feature

POWERS

Device 1 (walking stick, easy to lose) Walking stick: Strike 4 (Mighty)

COMBAT

62

Attack +8 (walking stick), +6 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +10, Damage +8 (Strike), +4 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -4, Initiative +8

Abilities 42 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 31 + Powers 3 + Combat 20 + Saves 9 = 120 Total

Customization: Stylistically, the Motorcycle Daredevil is a much better fit for the Bronze Age. People were paying to watch guys do crazy insane stuff on bikes back in the 1950s and '60s, so use in a Silver Age campaign isn't out of the question. The archetype is ready to use as-is in either time period.

Name Options: Billy "Crash" Crasinski, Captain Blaze, Hotdog, Red Rider, The Stuntman

"I'M THE LAST GLADIATOR IN THE NEW ROME."

PSYCHIC



*FLATFOOTED

SKILLS

Bluff 8 (+11), Concentration 15 (+22), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+6), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+3), Notice 8 (+15), Perform (acting) 8 (+11), Search 8 (+8), Sense Motive 8 (+15)

FEATS

Defensive Roll 10, Dodge Focus 8, Seize Initiative, Trance, Uncanny Dodge (mental)

POWERS

ESP 8 (visual and auditory; Subtle)

Mental Blast 8 (psychic assault)

Mind Reading 8 (Sensory Link; Limited to surface thoughts only), Super-Senses 15 (postcognition, precognition [extended 6, radius]) COMBAT

Attack +2, Grapple +1, Damage +8 (Mental Blast), -1 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+1 flatfooted), Knockback -5 (-1 flatfooted), Initiative +0

Abilities 20 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 21 + Powers 80 + Combat 8 + Saves 5 = 150 Total

Customization: The Psychic archetype appears in all comic-book Ages. This one is customized for the paranormal-obsessed 1970s, but the archetype's power points can be readjusted to account for more reactionary times (the Cult Hero feat) or made less "show business" (swap Skills for increased Powers).

Name Options: Astral, The Dreamer, Ether, Ms. Mind, Ms. Wonder, Pentacle, Princess Pyramid, The Spiritualist

"AND REMEMBER MY FRIEND, FUTURE EVENTS SUCH AS THESE WILL AFFECT YOU IN THE FUTURE."

HERO ARCHETYPES

he preceding archetypes encompass the more commonly seen superheroes in the pages of Bronze Age comic books. Typical Silver Age archetypes are already well-represented by those in *Mutants & Masterminds* and are not repeated here. Out of the *M&M* archetypes, only the Martial Artist is more representative of the Bronze Age than the Silver, but of course any character is allowable in any era if that's what the player and gamemaster want.

AMPHIBIAN WARRIOR

Strongest and bravest of all the Emperor's elite Royal Guard Cavalry, the Amphibian Warrior was the first Atlantean soldier the surfacedwellers had seen in millennia. The land-walkers have strange ways, but wherever there are beings there are good and evil. By the Emperor's command, the Amphibian Warrior is tasked with helping the righteous and punishing the wicked in order to serve as an example for the surface-dwellers. When the land-walkers observe the superiority of Atlantean ways and emulate them, they will be ready to meet the ocean-dwellers in peace and friendship. That is Atlantis' hope for the future of all on planet Earth.

During the "Seventies" (as the surface-dwellers measure time), it became clear the land-walkers had learned nothing. Tired of polluting the land, the surface-dwellers began to foul the ocean and threaten great Atlantis. While the Amphibious Warrior still hopes to teach them a better way peacefully, whenever sovereign and country are threatened the land-walkers will be instructed with force. The surface-dwellers repay the Amphibious Warrior's past service to them with scorn and slander like "marauder," but far more than words are needed to stop an Atlantean soldier from protecting the utopia beneath the waves.

AVENGING DISCO GODFATHER

That white bigot framed the wrong soul brother, one who wasn't afraid to become a test subject in exchange for a full pardon. The doctor blew it-the most fantastic medical experiment of the age. Instead of rejuvenating human cells, it made a wrongly convicted man super-strong, bulletproof, and free. The ex-con got his private eye license in time for the Bicentennial, and set out to be the guardian "godfather" of the troubled ghetto he grew up in. Now with the fights, the Fuzz, the chicks and the choppers....Man, any suckas that cross the Avenging Disco Godfather are really in *deeeep* trouble!

The Avenging Disco Godfather is the quintessential funky Bronze Age hero, still trying to do right when everything around him has turned wrong. He's trying to clean up the ghetto, but the Mob, the crooked cops, the dope dealers, and "the Man" are in his way. They're even hiring super-villains to try to take him down, but as they're all about to learn, the Avenging Disco Godfather doesn't play by the rules either.

BIONIC HERO

The Bionic Hero was once an astronaut, until a training mission left him a man barely alive. But the Office of Secret Intelligence could rebuild him. They have the technology. They have the capability to build the world's first bionic man. The Bionic Hero is that man. Better than he was before. Better, stronger, faster. But unfortunately, not covered by Blue Cross-or at least not well enough to pay the bionic bill (rumored to be around six *million*). That leaves you indebted to the government, or at least some acronym part of it most people aren't allowed to know about (like the Office of Secret Intelligence, above). The Bionic Hero's payback is to defend truth, justice, and the American way from their greatest threats, and do whatever's *nuhnuhnuhnuh*-necessary to make sure the bad guys wind up looking like they're running in slow motion.

At least, that's how it was during the Silver Age. In the 1970s, the Office of Secret Intelligence ceased to be the Bionic Hero's friends and colleagues, and became his puppet masters instead. The job was no longer about taking down communist agents and super-villains; instead, it was assassinations and dirty tricks. Or it would have been, had the Bionic Hero not had the strength of character to walk away. Now he needs his superhuman speed, as he tries to still do some good while on the run from the only people who know how to fix him if he breaks down.

FEMINIST HEROINE

All throughout herstory, women have been considered "the weaker sex." Even though it's a lie, for far too long sisters have let themselves be kept down by "the Man." The Feminist Heroine set out to change this even before she got her super-powers, working as hard as any man to make it in a society that wants her to stay barefoot and pregnant. She was already a heroine in spirit, always standing up for her rights against the patriarchy. Her courage was such that Goddess in heaven (or some other benevolent force) empowered her with the strength to win the battle over chauvinism, and the wisdom to make men understand women's struggle for equality.

The Feminist Heroine by her nature uses her abilities to fight against evildoers and injustice, as well as to inspire women everywhere to fight for their own personal freedom. A politically outspoken woman is still something new in the Feminist Heroine's era, and a super-powered one is a supreme threat to the patriarchy. "The Man" has done his best to mock her and ruin her good name, but the Feminist Heroine was used to controversy long before she put on a costume.

GUITAR HERO

From the moment the Guitar Hero first heard "Heartbreak Hotel" on the radio, nothing mattered as much as becoming the next Elvis Presley. Even when his amazing mutant powers manifested as a teenager, he'd have gladly swapped them for being the fifth Beatle or sixth Rolling Stone. Eventually, his dedication and hard work paid off, and soon the kid with the incredible voice and playing ability was hanging out and jamming with the likes of Hendrix and Clapton.

The only thing between the Guitar Hero and stardom is his annoying tendency to cross paths with costumed super-villains. While he'd much rather be picking songs for the second encore, there's no one else around to stop the pack of werewolves from ruining Woodstock, or prevent the super-terrorists from robbing the UNICEF benefit show. He may be a reluctant savior, but the Guitar Hero has learned to be happy doing some good deeds while waiting for his next gig to break him into the big time.

In the Bronze Age, the Guitar Hero has to pay a high price for success. His public opposition to the Vietnam War seemed like another good deed, but now the government suddenly wants to take another look at the unexplained medical condition (read: mutant) that made him IV-F. The hopelessly square super-villains of the '60s have gone away, and now pollution and prejudice are the real enemies. Trouble is, the Guitar Hero isn't sure what good his music or mutant abilities can do against them. Worst of all, the pressure is starting to make the temptations of the road-the booze, the drugs, the groupies-all the more tempting.

HARD TRAVELLING HERO

The Hard-Traveling Hero saw a lot of weird things back in 'Nam, but nothing topped the time his platoon rushed to save a downed chopper only to find it was nothing from this Earth. Big Army brass tried to hush the whole thing up, but the Hard-Traveling Hero was tired of their lies and snatched a piece of alien wreckage as a souvenir of the truth. He still had it with him (and little else to his name) when he got back to the States and saw a country he didn't recognize. There was no one around who could tell him what had happened to the American Dream, so the Hard-Traveling Hero climbed into his rig to find the answer himself.

With his bulldog by his side, the Hard-Traveling Hero journeys across a country asking the same questions about where it's been and where it's going. The Hard-Traveling Hero believes the answer lies in helping his fellow dreamers and outsiders stand up against oppression and prejudice. Sometimes, the forces of old and evil hide behind a mask, and that's when the Hard-Traveling Hero calls upon the power of the strange alien medallion to put the wrong things right. Until all America's injustices are no more, there's another load, another cup of coffee, and another stop up ahead on the Hard-Traveling Hero's endless road.

MOTOCYCLE DAREDEVIL

After Vietnam and Watergate, America is looking for heroes, and the Motorcycle Daredevil has the guts and determination it

takes to fill the role. Sure, some people may be paying to watch him die, but he's tough enough to disappoint them every time. The Motorcycle Daredevil wouldn't miss the chance to teach the modern-day coliseum crowds a thing or two about courage and standing up to impossible odds. Learning those lessons will get America back on its feet again, and the Motorcycle Daredevil is ready to be the teacher no matter how many bones he has to break in the process.

Nothing shows how much the country's lost its way more than the cowards who hide behind masks and prey on the less fortunate. The Motorcycle Daredevil is more than ready to put his double-tough body on the line to bring down the corrupt men in high places or give a super-villain a taste of his walking stick. It's all in a day's work for the last American hero. That may sound arrogant, but the Motorcycle Daredevil has survived enough to earn a little cockiness.

PSYCHIC

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in most people's philosophy and all her life the Psychic has been haunted by them. With one foot in the often grim realities of the Bronze Age and another in the even more dire realm of the grave, the Psychic tries to use her mysterious connection to the etheric for good.

The Psychic works for this otherworldly link, not vice versa, so she's faced with the challenge of piecing together her fragmentary visions of what has yet to come into something coherent. If she succeeds, superheroes under her guidance can change the future for the better. The price of her failure could be catastrophic for the entire world.

In many ways, the 1970s are an ideal time for the Psychic. In earlier days, sensitives like herself would've been burned as witches, but now the world looks for new answers and seems ready to listen to her advice. It's also a time of media focus on the spiritually gifted, and while others pretend to bend spoons with their mind, the Psychic shows the true power of the unknown as she entertains millions live and on TV talk shows. More importantly, by using her abilities in an active role as a superhero, she is assured her warnings are always acted upon, by herself if no one else. People also seem more accepting of strange powers when they're cloaked in a colorful costume.





CHAPTER 4: GAMEMASTERING THE SILVER AGE

his chapter provides resources for busy gamemasters, and describes how the Silver Age and Bronze Age incorporate real-world events differently, as well as the common storytelling conventions of each. In an ongoing *Mutants & Masterminds* campaign, classic Silver Age style adventures, more modern Bronze Age fare, or some combination of the two are all possible. After reading this chapter, the gamemaster and players can best decide which approach most closely matches the type of situations they wish to role-play.

SILVER AGE CAMPAIGNS

he comic books published between 1956 and 1986 differ from the modern variety for a couple of important reasons. First is the simple fact that Silver Age books are the product of another time, catering to tastes and standards often markedly different than those of contemporary publications.

If the gamemaster and players want to role-play adventures straight out of the pages of 1960s comic books, this section outlines the trappings that go into creating authentic Silver Age stories. It uses modern comic books as a comparative baseline, so readers wholly unfamiliar with present-day superhero tales are advised to check out Chapter 10 of *Mutants & Masterminds* to learn about the state of the art before proceeding any further.

Recreating the wondrous comic books published between 1956 and 1969 (or so) in a regular *M&M* game is easy and fun. Really,

how can you beat *that* combination? Read on, true believer, and we'll explain how to make it happen.

FUN, FUN, FUN

The first and foremost rules for recapturing the glory of the Silver Age is keep things light, and let fun rule. Anything that smacks of real-world problems is probably best avoided, and the difficulties that are presented are solvable through judicious use of super-powers (or occasionally, a long-winded speech). Bad deeds do not last beyond one night's gaming, while the good endures forever. Thus, a city flattened by Atlantean invaders in one session is back good as ever in the next, and the citizens remain forever grateful to the superheroes who saved them. There's a temptation inherent in this style to make things campy, kinda like the '60s *Batman* show, and it's certainly a valid approach-superhero parodies were published throughout the Silver Age. Most period comic books avoided crossing the line into outright comedy, however, and the gamemaster may want to take steps to see his campaign is similarly circumscribed. The key there is staying focused on how much fun having super-powers would be rather than "Huhuhuhuhuhuhuhuh, look at the old comics. They're *dumb.*"

RUSSIANS

An absolutist view of the Cold War and criminal behavior is essential in recreating true Silver Age stories. America, democracy, law enforcement, the military, and the government (both federal and local) can do no wrong, and neither can the heroes. By deliberate contrast, foreign dictatorships, lawbreakers, and communists represent every negative trait and characteristic imaginable. While it's important in real life to keep in mind the actual history of the era, its many complexities should not be allowed to get in the way of true Good, pure Evil, and the fistfights between their respective costumed representatives.

The closest thing to nuance is the occasional villain who's portrayed as so very bad even other bad guys hate and fear him. An infamous criminal might cause other hoods to flee town ahead of him, or a communist agent may be such a monster even Nikita Khrushchev himself wants nothing to do with him. These story touches serve the same purpose in games and comics: they clue players and readers into the fact that this session/issue has a new menace in it, and man is he ever *bad*.

RADIATION THEATRE

Perhaps the ultimate testament to the shiny, happy attitude prevalent in the Silver Age is its treatment of the A-bomb. Though referred to in awed tones, the actual effects of an atomic blast didn't seem to be that big a deal. Comic-book readers from that era can easily be forgiven if they thought a nuclear war would mean a bright flash of light, then cool mutant powers for everybody ("I wanna have metal claws that pop out of my hand!"/ "No way! I called it first!").

This attitude was prevalent in comics until the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Once every school kid in America got a lesson on actual doomsday, radiation was never the same again. From then on, the bomb was a boogeyman used to give a story a little added jeopardy, but far too terrible to be shown in action or even for very long. Anything other than a small dose of comic-book rads moved things from a thrilling scare to actual terror.

Gamemasters can incorporate this shift into their campaigns for a real shot of period flavor. All of a sudden radiation-spawned supers stop appearing in the game, and the player characters' government contacts no longer suggest dropping an H-bomb as the first solution to any emerging crisis.

SCIENCE!

Some Silver Age costumed characters were masters of a particular skill, and got to the superhero equivalent of Carnegie Hall through "practice, practice, practice." Such characters were of ultra-keen mind, super-sharp wit, the master of an archaic weapon, or the like. There were also some magic-based heroes-mostly Golden Age holdovers or retreads-but they were comparatively rare, particularly when the Comics Code still banned most traditional supernatural concepts like werewolves.

The prevalent science-fiction genre figured prominently in most character's origins, which was hardly surprising given how many comic-book creators were also literary sci-fi authors and editors. Thanks to their influence, Silver Age comic books featured their share of strange visitors from other planets, time travelers from utopian futures (or pasts), and even hyper-evolved mutants.

Beyond that, there was any number of vaguely scientific justifications for people being super-powered, and nothing seemed out of bounds. The cutting-edge technology of the day often figured in (however tenuously): experimental wonder drugs, atomic power, satellite communications, robots, and the like.

Silver Age gamemasters are encouraged to "science up" their campaigns as much as possible for a proper period feel. Remember, you can never have enough aliens showing up, and everything's better in space (well, except breathing and stuff). For instance, a trucker is just another working guy (outside the '70s CB radio craze), but a Space Trucker is pure Silver Age cool.

THE GENERATION GAP

The Silver Age set the standard for subsequent epochs by recognizing what had gone before. Places and characters from the Golden Age were brought back with great fanfare, and any reappearance of a Silver Age hero's forebears was guaranteed to be a real comic-book event. The presence of a few pros from the senior circuit can similarly enliven a *Silver Age* campaign, whether it's to give the heroes some support or advice, or to have them pull the old super-suits out of mothballs in order to deal with one more Earth-shattering crisis.

At the same time, the second generation of costumed champions had some mentoring of their own to do. Many notable Silver Age heroes had a constant companion of some sort, often a kid version of themselves, sharing identical powers and costumes. They were not just part of the background supporting casts, but a full-fledged sidekick sharing danger and excitement right alongside the feature's title character. Consequently, heroes are going to spend a lot of time in-game getting their youthful wards out of trouble, both in costume and in civilian garb. The same goes for any non-costumed sidekicks.

Depending on the sidekick in question, they may or may not have been aware of the main character's secret identity, although this is not common for non-costumed sidekicks. Along similar lines, they may have been a willing, active participant in the hero's exploits, or just a constant bystander who time and again gets inadvertently involved in each issue's particular dangers.

OLD CHUM

Comic-book creators of the day used sidekicks as sounding boards for the main character. The internal monologue didn't come into vogue until later in the Silver Age, and that meant the costumed hero needed someone to explain his actions to for the sake of the reader. Sidekicks were also around in large part because of the anticipated audience identification factor (which accounts for why so many of them were kids, just like the readers were assumed to be). When the expected sales increase failed to materialize as it did during the Golden Age, kid sidekicks suddenly grew into their troubled teens during the Bronze Age. Sidekicks were also a handy plot shortcut. When all else failed, a writer could just have the bad guys capture the hero's pal, and *voila*—instant dramatic twist! As plot points went, coming up with new ways of menacing the more mundane companion required a lot less brain-sweat than figuring out how to put the super-powered lead character in jeopardy.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Of the many types of constant companions seen during the Silver Age, a young boy as a crime-fighting sidekick was the most popular option. The aforementioned young-reader interest factor had been too good for sales during the Golden Age for comic-book publishers to ignore it in the Silver. However, when success didn't repeat itself, that plus Dr. Wertham's unsavory conclusions about bachelor men hanging out with adolescent boys in tights caused publisher enthusiasm for kid sidekicks to wane considerably.

This transition is another period detail that can bring an authentic *Silver Age* campaign to life. A player character's sidekick can shown in game first as a young laughing daredevil, then as the campaign progresses the lad gives up the superhero life (at least temporarily) while he's off attending college and getting into his own topical Bronze Age adventures. Please feel free not to include any of Wertham's *other* ideas about prepubescent boys wearing tights in your campaign.

SHE'S A LADY

Female sidekicks of the Silver Age had much in common with each other. They were all usually gorgeous, independent, and capable, but not so capable they didn't need to be rescued at least once every issue. Likewise, they were also smart, but not bright enough to connect the lead character to his secret identity. In any case, nothing ever prevented lady sidekicks from getting involved in the hero's exploits—their overriding curiosity and amazing coincidence were all it took to get them into the thick of things.

In keeping with Silver Age convention, comic-book women were idealized as what was considered preferable at the time. While acknowledging many ladies' considerable capabilities, 1960s comics wholly bought into the idea that no woman is completely happy without marriage and motherhood. Thus, even super-competent career women still pined away for the title's lead male character, and were willing to totally degrade themselves or pull a Lucy-and-Ethel type stunt to win his affections.

Including such portrayals in a *Silver Age* campaign is totally authentic, but the gamemaster is encouraged to use caution and discretion while doing so. Not everyone appreciates such attention to period detail, or at least not when it makes women look like silly, man-hungry lunatics. As always it's best to raise potential issues with the players ahead of time and get a feel for how well retrograde elements like chauvinism should be handled to keep the game fun for everyone.

STEAL FROM THE BEST

Comic-book fans always speak of the Silver Age's overriding "sense of wonder" in the most reverential of terms. Funny thing is, this is no small part attributable to Silver Age's willingness to ste...errr, borrow from just about any source, including other comics.

Silver Age gamemasters should feel similarly free to appropriate diverse story elements from a variety of media and mix and match

them as they see fit. Remember, the more weird nouns you can attach to a plot point, the better it is. A lost colony of Chaldeans isolated when Atlantis sank that's warring with talking gorillas from another planet in a parallel universe and is now threatened by a young mutant villain from the Soviet Union is just about perfect.

DOUBLE VISION

A Silver Age peculiarity not to be omitted is the breed of super-villains which are evil versions of the player characters. We're not just referring to Evil Twins from Another Dimension Wearing Goatees (though that's certainly an option) either. During the Silver Age, it seemed like every hero had an arch-enemy with the same powers, a similar costume, and some common elements in their origin stories. Whatever the shared background details are, they make the counterpart characters mortal enemies.

As a practical matter, these are the easiest villains a gamemaster ever creates. All it takes is borrowing the player's character sheet and making a photocopy. Whether or not they are memorable menaces depends entirely on the style imparted to them by the gamemaster. Most commonly, the evil counterpart does not share the hero's main weakness, and moreover may be empowered to exploit it. For example, Mr. White's magical pure-light super-powers may not function against mystical darkness, as his evil-twin nemesis Mr. Black with his mastery of arcane blackness knows all too well.

Personality wise, the villainous twin should highlight and underscore the hero's most notable traits. Nothing plays better off a straight-laced hero than a lunatic, just as a player character honor-bound never to kill is certain to be bedeviled by a gleefully homicidal foe. Giving the two mirror-image characters the same goals but very different means can also be a continuing source of story ideas. Perhaps they both want to control the source of their super-powers, but employ different degrees of ruthless in pursuit of it. Past grudges that drive the bad guy to humiliate their nice counterpart before they kill them is a common touch, as the insane lengths the villain goes to make the hero look bad can be most entertaining.

A final note on running *Silver Age* villains of any type: never forget about the guidelines for bad-guy Gloating, tucked away in the back of the *M&M* rulebook (page 191). Not only is it an authentic Silver Age dramatic staple, it can save time spent on generating new characters every single week.

ENCOURAGING AUTHENTIC SILVER AGE CONVENTIONS

So how does the gamemaster make sure that his *Silver Age* games have some actual Silver Age feel to them? The same way he usually gets his players to jump through hoops just like trained seals: offer them precious hero points in exchange for acting like mid-century funny-book characters.

Before making the players sit up and beg for their treats, it's important to clearly define what Silver Age tropes are being encouraged. As noted earlier in this chapter, they each have their quirks, and not all are suitable for all types of role-players. Use with caution.

Depending on what the group has mutually agreed to encourage, the gamemaster can award hero points for in-character lectures to troubled youth, or offering barely credible scientific explanations for everything. As always, the gamemaster is the final arbiter as to what deserves a reward and what is merely greedy hero-point grubbing.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Hero points can be used to encourage a somewhat looser style of running *M&M* which is more in keeping with the genre. Silver Age superheroes tended to have a fairly well-defined set of abilities with very poorly delineated limits. The same hero who outraced the speed of light in one issue got clobbered by some goof villain with a loaded rubber chicken in the next. There were no boundaries as to how powerful-or weak-a hero could become to move the story along in an entertaining fashion.

Sooner or later a true Silver Age fan tries to save the Earth when it's on a collision course with a comet by having her super-strong character push the Earth out of the way. A true *Silver Age* gamemaster should at least *consider* letting her spend a hero point and give it a shot. The two guidelines for doing this are how dramatically satisfying is such an attempt, and how many points it will cost. If the adventure has progressed to its climax and it's now life or death for the player characters, it's entirely appropriate to let a hero try an incredible stunt for the cost of a single hero point. The gamemaster will need to set an appropriate DC based on just how excessively demanding the action is, but sooner or later an attempt should be permitted. Really big stretches of a hero's normal capabilities may require additional hero points being spent.

When an unbelievable feat is attempted at an undramatic time, the gamemaster is right to declare an automatic failure. For instance, if a character is trying to fly around the Earth fast enough to reverse the flow of time in an effort to get tickets to a Yankees game, the gamemaster is free to shoot the player a look and declare "fail." The bottom line is to make whatever call keeps things fun for all the players and the story entertaining.

BRONZE AGE CAMPAIGNS

n many ways, a Bronze Age campaign resembles one set in the present day. Real-world problems are presented alongside the usual worries over (say) atomic-powered mutants, and characterization is frequently emphasized over traditional super-heroics. The differences are partly a matter of degrees and partly how the Bronze Age betrays its origins in a sincerely weird decade.

HURTING EACH OTHER

Superheroes with true-to-life problems were a real Silver Age innovation, one the Bronze Age carried to a whole new level. While Silver Age heroes typically had an emotional range stretching from Mopey to Not Mopey, Bronze Age characters were angrier, ready to lash out (sometimes verbally, sometimes physically) at those closest to them. When impotent rage failed, they sometimes turned to alcohol and drugs with frequently disastrous consequences.

The Bronze Age is a setting where players should be getting their full allotment of hero points for Complications. When best-friend heroes are trading punches over whether McGovern or Nixon is the better man, their teammates are quitting the super-group to search for the lost American dream in a customized Chevy van, and the remaining characters are fighting to stay on the wagon, the gamemaster knows that hero points are having the desired effects.

THE REAL ME

The increased presence of previously underrepresented groups is a major distinguishing feature for the Bronze Age. Such characters are hard to miss, as they tend to be media stereotypes turned up to 11. African-American heroes always have "Black" in their code names and look and sound as if they just walked off the set of *Superfly*. Female heroes all sound like Gloria Steinem while wearing incongruously skimpy costumes and finding male chauvinist pigs at every turn. Young heroes are all deeply concerned student activists who never once spend a night draining pony kegs and trying to get laid. Every Asian character is a refugee from a mystic martial arts dojo who breaks skulls with his bare hands while reciting the last fortune cookie the book's writer got.

Like with women during the Silver Age, these portrayals are either important touchstones for the era or deeply offensive stereotypes. Once again, the solution is talking it over with the players in advance to see if they want the genuine Bronze Age or more nuance in character renderings.

THE NEEDLE AND THE SPOON

What fascists were to the Golden Age and communists were to the Silver, illegal drugs became to the Bronze Age. Pushers were

THE BEST OF TWO WORLDS

If the players are neither sticklers for authentic Silver Age comic-book details nor diehard fans of Bronze Age "message" stories, gamemaster are free to choose whatever elements are going to create the most fun in their campaigns. In many ways, this is the best approach, because it satisfies the players' likely affinity for modern storytelling conventions while leaving the gamemaster free to create the widest possible range of scenarios.

The eclectic approach can encompass the lighter tone and greater emphasis on super-powered wonders found in Silver Age comics, while at the same time avoiding the oft-preachy moralizing common in the Bronze Age. Stories can be four-color entertainment without the blissful ignorance of the Silver Age, or they can be serious without the long-windedness of the Bronze Age.

It's a bit of a contradiction to go into great detail about how to create a unique mixand-match style of campaign, but many of the guidelines for running Modern Age campaigns in *M&M*, pages 193–194, are applicable here. This is true even of seemingly unlikely elements such as the Modern Age's sense of history, as it's not unheard of for Silver Age superheroes (who, after all, *are* the history in large part) make reference to their costumed forebears in the Golden Age.

Ultimately, the specifics must be left to each individual gamemaster. Thankfully, doing so is a natural process. Simply read over the tropes of each approach, and go with whatever elements are going to be the most fun for all.

monsters beyond redemption, and addicts were usually dead men (or women) walking unless they also happened to be superheroes. No tactic (including outright murder in some cases) was out of bounds when a hero dealt with drug dealers, because comic-book pushers were equally ruthless in moving their product, even selling it to kids.

This makes drug dealers and narcotics kingpins your go-to villains in a full-on Bronze Age campaign. There's no limit to the inhumanity and depravity of such people, which makes them almost as much fun to beat up in an RPG as zombies or Nazis. Whether it's busting up their operations on a street level, destroying the local or regional supply chain, or going after the "untouchable" big bosses overseas and taking on their super-powered bodyguards, every authentic Bronze Age hero should be doing her part for a drug-free America.

THE LOST CAUSE

Many other Bronze Age hallmarks aren't as easy to recreate in an entertaining fashion within the confines of a role-playing game. The threats posed by pollution, rapacious mega-corporations who are above the law, overpopulation, and the like are very real; too real in fact to be resolved by a satisfying super-fight in most cases. There are exceptions (like the Toxic Waste Creature villain archetype), but for the most part these antagonists lead to a lot of talking, no real resolution, and the good guys often losing.

Not all gamers find these prospects enticing. If yours do, then serve it right up, gamemaster. Otherwise, the GM is better off downplaying these story elements, or at least modifying them into forms more acceptable to the players. The key is (again) communication between the gamemaster and his audience.

SUPPORTING CAST ARCHETYPES

his section provides some new Supporting Cast Archetypes typical of those found in Silver and Bronze Age comic books. In addition to these, most of the Supporting Cast Archetypes in *Mutants & Masterminds* (see pages 226–229 in that book) can show up in *Silver Age* campaigns with no adjustment (though ninjas won't be seen much until the Bronze Age).

Of course, the existing modern Archetypes need some adjustments to their Equipment before they are usable back in the years 1956-86, such as the Reporter's digital recorder. Just set them up with some period-appropriate substitutes and they're good to go.

ASTRONAUT

The Astronaut archetype has the right stuff and (in comic books) a marked penchant for getting into the sort of trouble only superheroes can get them out of. Whether it be a super-villain attack on the launch pad (a scheme with possible communist roots) or being stranded in space after a meteor strike, Astronauts in trouble is a classic *Silver Age* story.

Unluckily, Astronauts are usually the first to meet evil alien invaders, and frequently get disintegrated, turned into monsters, or mind-controlled and returned to Earth for spying and sabotage. And let's not forget all the radiation Astronauts encounter and the many changes that puts a man through during the Silver Age. If a Soviet cosmonaut is needed, gamemaster, just change the label on this archetype and say "da" and "nyet" a lot.

ASTRONAUT PL 3							
Str 10	Str 10 Dex 13 Con 12 Int 13 Wis 13						
Skills: Diplomacy 2 (+3), Knowledge (physical sciences) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (technology) 4 (+5), Notice 2 (+3), Profession (astronaut) 8 (+9), Pilot 8 (+9), Swim 4 (+4)							
Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 4, Combat Pilot, Benefit (military rank) 3, Equipment 3, Inspire							
Combat: Attack +1 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +1, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +1, Knockback -1, Initiative +1							
Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +3, Reflex +3, Will +3							
Abilities 13 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 12 + Combat 4 + Saves 6 = 44							

ATTORNEY

Even superheroes need a good lawyer during the Bronze Age. They may find themselves caught in an incriminating situation and wrongly put on trial by a public no longer trusting of masked heroes. Player characters who champion a cause may be framed by "The Man" in an effort to discredit them. Even Silver Age heroes are sometimes hit with wacky lawsuits filed by devious (and annoying) arch-enemies. And who knows what anti-superhero laws a mind-controlling villain can get passed while scheming in DC?

However the heroes get in legal trouble, the Attorney is all that stands between them and ending up in stir. From then on, the Attorney's a target for all the player characters' super-enemies who'd rather have them doing a nickel and making license plates up at the state pen. If the gamemaster wants to make the trial's outcome more dicey, the *Mastermind's Manual* (pages 126-128) has guidelines for dispensing true and impartial justice with just a single d20 roll.

CABBIE

Not all Cabbies are as good at what they do as this archetype, but they ought to be. All the Bronze Age's hard-luck street-crime fighters were on a budget and quickly learned a top-notch hack driver was worth his weight in tips. This archetype has the skills to deliver results when a hurried hero jumps into his hack and shouts "Follow that car!" in the best '70s cop show style. The Cabbie also keeps his eyes and ears open to what's going on in the city, and thus can

ATTORNEY PL 2							
Str 8	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 14	Wis 14	Cha 14		
Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (civics) 7 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+6), Perform (oratory) 7 (+9), Profession (attorney) 7 (+9), Sense Motive 4 (+6)							
Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +2, Knockback -1, Initiative +0							
Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +2, Will +3							
Abilities 10 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Combat 4 + Saves 5 = 31 Total							

GAMEMASTERING THE SILVER AGE

be a great source of info for the player characters (though it may cost 'em a fiver).

CAMPUS RADICAL

Ban the bomb, stop the war, end apartheid, save the whales, burn your bra, free Huey, free Leonard, *viva la Raza*, outlaw dihydrogen monoxide-whatever the cause, the Campus Radical is there, protest sign and megaphone in hand and itching to take over the dean's office. This archetype is typical of the classic Bronze Age story where the heroes are caught between the student demonstrators pondering more violent tactics and the Establishment college administrators who refuse to listen to dirty hippies. Keeping the over-30 dean from calling in the National Guard while simultaneously persuading the Campus Radical not to switch from sit-ins to burn-downs will be quite the role-playing challenge. And there's no shortage of super-villains looking to exploit the generation gap and use the Campus Radical's zeal for their own ends. This might involve provoking a riot to distract law-enforcers from a caper elsewhere or for the sheer villain-y love of mayhem.

GIRL FRIDAY

Plenty of Silver Age heroes ran major corporations in their secret identities, and every one would've been out of business in a week without their hyper-competent Girl Fridays. While the player characters are busy keeping supervillains from disrupting the Beatles' debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the Girl Friday makes sure a hero's source of income doesn't slide into Chapter 11. She's a whiz at administrivia, making coffee, remembering holidays and birthdays for the boss, and answering awkward stockholder questions about the CEO's superhero-related absences. Most player characters already know how invaluable the Girl Friday is, but if not they surely will understand after an arch-enemy kidnaps her. Or him-Guy Fridays are of course entirely possible, especially working for female executive/ superheroine types in Bronze Age campaigns.

GURU

The comic-book life of a Guru is never dull. When you're not meeting with the cream of British rock stars, you're busy giving vague pseudo-religious affirmations and platitudes to your followers. All you ask in return is to relieve them of all that pesky cash and free will that are the real source of their problems. It's only a matter of time before an impressionable and troubled Bronze Age hero, sidekick, or loved one thereof falls under their sway and

GIRL FRIDAY PL 1								
Str 8	Str 8 Dex 10 Con 10 Int 12 Wis 16 Cha 1							
Skills: Computers 1 (+2), Diplomacy 3 (+4), Knowledge (business) 6 (+7), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Profession (secretary) 6 (+9)								
	Feats: Equipment 1 Equipment: Select 5 EP worth of gear							
Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +1, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +2, Knockback -1, Initiative +0								
Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +2, Will +4								
Abilities 8 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 1 + Combat 4 + Saves 5 = 23 Total								



CABBIE					PL 2
Str 10	Dex 13	Con 10	Int 12	Wis 13	Cha 12

Skills: Drive 5 (+6), Gather Information 2 (+3), Knowledge (current events) 2 (+3), Knowledge (streetwise) 5 (+6), Profession (cab driver) 6 (+7)

Feats: Combat Driver, Equipment 3, Well-Informed

Equipment: Hold-out pistol, leather jacket (+1 Toughness), midsize car, choose 3 EP worth of additional gear

Combat: Attack +3, Grapple +3, Damage +2 (hold-out pistol), +0 (unarmed), Defense +3, Knockback -1, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +2, Reflex +3, Will +3

Abilities 10 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 5 + Combat 12 + Saves 6 = 38 Total

CAMPUS RADICAL PL 2									
Str 12	Str 12 Dex 11 Con 13 Int 13 Wis 10 Cha ⁺								
Skills: Bluff 2 (+3), Craft (chemical) 2 (+3), Diplomacy 2 (+3), Disguise 2 (+3), Drive 2 (+2), Gather Information 1 (+2), Intimidate 2 (+3), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+6), Perform (oratory) 4 (+5), Stealth 2 (+2)									
Feats: Cult Hero (the counterculture), Equipment 2									
Equipment: Van; select 2 EP worth of additional gear									
Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +3, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +2, Knockback –1, Initiative +0									
Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +2, Reflex +2, Will +2									

Abilities 12 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 3 + Combat 4 + Saves 5 = 30 Total
Str 10	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 10	Wis 10	Cha 14					
Skills: Bluff 7 (+9), Intimidate 7 (+9), Knowledge (arcane lore) 4 (+4), Knowledge (streetwise) 2 (+2), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+4)										
see M&I	iipment 2, Fa M, page 226) ː Light pistol,	,	f), Minions 5	5 (10 Cultists	, fanatical-					
	Attack +2, Gra rmed), Defen:				1 (knife),					
Saving Th	rows: Tough	ness +0. For	titude +2. Re	eflex +2. Will	+7					
	5									
	+ Skills 6 (24									
Abilities 4 Total	+ Skills 6 (24				es 6 = 33					
Abilities 4 Total HOT R(Str 14 Skills: Cra	+ Skills 6 (24 DDDER Dex 12 ft (mechanica lge (popular of	Con 13 al) 4 (+4), D	ats 13 + Con Int 10 rive 4 (+5), I	Wis 10 ntimidate 2	es 6 = 33 PL 2 Cha 12 (+3),					
Abilities 4 Total HOT R(Str 14 Skills: Cra Knowled Swim 4 Feats: Att Equipment	+ Skills 6 (24 DDDER Dex 12 ft (mechanica lge (popular of	Con 13 al) 4 (+4), D culture) 4 (+4 ment 2	Int 10 rive 4 (+5), I 4), Knowledg	Wis 10 Wis 10 ntimidate 2 ge (streetwise	PL 2 PL 2 Cha 12 (+3), 2 (+2),					
Abilities 4 Total HOT R(Str 14 Skills: Cra Knowlec Swim 4 Feats: Att Equipment of addit Combat: A	+ Skills 6 (24 DDDER Dex 12 ft (mechanica lge (popular of (+6) ractive, Equip c Leather jack	Con 13 al) 4 (+4), D culture) 4 (+4 ment 2 et (+1 Tough apple +5, Da	ats 13 + Con Int 10 rive 4 (+5), I 4), Knowledg	Wis 10 Wis 10 ntimidate 2 ge (streetwise s car; select 1	es 6 = 33 PL 2 Cha 12 (+3), 2 (+2), EP worth					



a Complication results. In the process, the player characters may learn the Guru's path to enlightenment includes ordering his followers to beat the crap out of the non-believers. There may also be some down-on-their-luck super-villains under the Guru's influence, ready to be talked into finding inner peace by knocking over a bank for their "teacher's" benefit.

HOT RODDER

The Hot-Rodder is a good-looking young rebel who makes his own rules. He's never lost a drag race or game of chicken, and if you say otherwise, he'll slug you one, you dirty liar. His leather jacket and ducktail hair make him stand out from the crowd, in a conformist kind of way. If there's a school regulation, he'll break it. He smokes in the rest rooms, cuts class, and calls all the teachers "Daddy-O." The Hot-Rodder is headed for trouble, all right, and it's bound to be up to some superhero to save him from it. On the bright side for the player characters, the Hot-Rodder is ripe for a lecture on good citizenship from a strange masked man, and we know Silver Age heroes are all about the good citizenship lectures.

INVALID RELATIVE

A fair amount of Silver Age plots revolve around a hero's Invalid Relative, be they an aunt with a heart condition, a grandpa with lumbago, or what have you. The infirm kin of a comic's title character were prone to wandering into super-villain battles, getting taken hostage, and all the other usual supporting cast duties. In addition, the Invalid Relative's illness was bound to flare up at critical moments, forcing superheroes into the classic Silver Age dilemma: stop the super-villain, or be at the bedside of an ailing loved one when most needed.

During less hectic times, Invalid Relatives are bound to make wellmeaning surprise visits just as the hero's changing into his costumed identity, or being helpful by doing the player character's laundry, much-needed incriminating super-suit included. Truly, the Invalid Relative paves the hero's road to hell with her good intentions. Still, she's chock-full of spirit, and could surprise a bad guy with her lack of helplessness if her loved ones were threatened.

"THE MAN"

He's unbelievably rich, old, male, white, and evil, and if your player characters aren't, "The Man" is doing everything he can to keep them down. The Man wants to rape the planet and prolong the war for a buck, keep the ghettos full of drugs, and make damn sure women stay quiet and in the kitchen. Kids these days are mad at the Establishment? The Man *is* the Establishment.

Depending on your Bronze Age campaign, The Man can be in business, academia, or politics. He can be a CEO, a dean, or even President of the United States. Either way, he is the field marshal for the forces of old and evil. Whenever *M&M* campaigns need complex social and economic issues reduced to a single punch-able caricature, The Man is the gamemaster's go-to villain.

MECHANIC

Silver Age characters tend to stockpile more vehicles than Jay Leno, and pretty soon they need a grease monkey of the Mechanic archetype's caliber to keep them all running. Sure, he grouses

Str 6	Dex 6	Con 6	Int 10	Wis 15	Cha 12				
Skills: Knowledge (current events) 2 (+2), Knowledge (popular culture) 2 (+2), Profession (select one) 4 (+6)									
Combat: Attack +1, Grapple -1, Damage -2 (unarmed), Defense +1, Knockback -0, Initiative -2									
Saving Th	rows: Tough	ness -2, Forti	tude +1, Ref	lex +1, Will +	-4				
Drawback	s: Disability	(infirm, –3 p	oints)						
Abilities -5 + Skills 2 (8 ranks) + Combat 4 + Saves 8 - Drawbacks 3 = 9 Total									
"THE MAN" PL 10									
Str 10	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 20	Wis 20	Cha 24				
Skills: Bluff 10 (+17), Diplomacy 10 (+17), Intimidate 10 (+17), Knowledge (business) 15 (+20), Knowledge (civics) 15 (+20), Knowledge (current events) 15 (+20), Profession (the Man) 15 (+20), Sense Motive 10 (+17)									
Feats: Connected, Equipment 3, Master Plan, Minions 10 (250 Government Agents-see <i>M&M</i> , page 227) <i>Equipment:</i> Select 15 EP worth of gear									
Governm	Select 15 EF	Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +2, Knockback -1, Initiative +0							
Governm Equipment	Attack +2, Gr		amage +0 (ui	narmed), Dei	fense +2,				

about fixing the amount and types of damage superheroes inflict on their rides ("What? A giant squid attack? ON THE CAR?!?! How does that even *happen*?"). That doesn't change the fact he's always there when the heroes need his skills (or a super-villain needs a hostage).

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

Back off man, the Parapsychologist is a *scientist*. Sort of. Well, close enough for comic books, anyway. "Ghosts" may not equal "science" in the real world, but the four-color universe is just lousy with spooks, specters, poltergeists, and stuff that would make H.P. Lovecraft cry like a little schoolgirl. That's why the Parapsychologist never hurts for work. As long as men tamper in places they were not meant toand clueless superheroes have to deal with the consequences-the Parapsychologist's phone won't stop ringing.

Things get even better in the Bronze Age when pretty much everybody believes in UFOs, astral projection, mental telepathy, ESP, clairvoyance, spirit photography, telekinetic movement, full transmediums, the Loch Ness Monster, and the theory of Atlantis. Then the Parapsychologist is practically respectable, especially since all these things and more actually exists in the four-color world and cause problems for the player characters.

Depending on the needs of the campaign, the Parapsychologist can be a genuine source of knowledge (like Leonard Nimoy was on *In Search of...*) or a total fraud (like John Edward on, well, pretty much anything). The former type gets the Diplomacy skill, while the latter receives the Bluff skill.

Str 13 Dex 12 Con 12 Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 10										
				WIS 12	Cna 10					
Skills: Craft (mechanical) 7 (+8), Drive 1 (+2)										
Feats: Improvised Tools										
Combat: Attack +3, Grapple +4, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +3, Knockback -1, Initiative +1										
Saving Th	rows: Tough	ness +1, Fort	itude +3, Re	flex +3, Will	+3					
Abilities 9 + Skills 2 (8 ranks) + Feats 1 + Combat 12 + Saves 6 = 30 Total										
PARAPSYCHOLOGIST PL 2										
Str 8 Dex 10 Con 10 Int 16 Wis 14 Cha 12										
Skills: Bluff or Diplomacy (select one) 4 (+5), Concentration 4 (+6), Knowledge (arcane lore) 7 (+10), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 6 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+7), Knowledge (life sciences) 4 (+7), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (parapsychologist) 7 (+9), Sense Motive 4 (+6)										
	· (+0)	Feats: Fascinate (Bluff or Diplomacy-select one)								
Motive 4	\ /	or Diplomacy	-select one)							
Motive 4 Feats: Fasc Combat: A	cinate (Bluff	apple +1, Da	,	armed), Defe	nse +2,					
Motive 4 Feats: Fasc Combat: A Knockba	cinate (Bluff Attack +2, Gr ck –1, Initiati	apple +1, Da	, mage -1 (una							

PILOT

Need someone to fly you to and from a, shall we say, tough spot? In that case, hero, you need the Pilot archetype. He got a Ph.D. in choppering in and out of dangerous places back in 'Nam, and he's ready to use his skills to help out a good cause. The Pilot can be a freelancer, ready to take on impossible jobs in exchange for top dollars, or he can be a longtime friend and trusted member of a player character's supporting cast. This archetype may even be seen working for the bad guys, jetting "The Man" from evil deed to evil deed. The Pilot's personality can vary as well, from sardonic vets who saw too much during the war, or entertaining loons who earn their howling mad rep every time they step into a cockpit.

The archetype above has a chopper armed to the teeth. That's easily changeable if the gamemaster requires it with a simple rearrangement of equipment points.

ROCK 'N' ROLLER

Rock 'n' roll was arguably the greatest transforming element in American culture during the 1960s. Whenever it showed up in comic books, however, it was rock 'n' roll as squares saw it (and unintentionally, hysterically funny). The Rock 'n' Roller archetype can be used to portray the caterwauling, untalented Elvis caricatures who led teenage superhero sidekicks astray (e.g., breaking curfew, hotrodding) during the Silver Age. It works as well for the overly earnest Socially Relevant (TM) Beatles knock-offs who populated Bronze Age comics, serving as targets for bitter old Establishment types and super-villains. Hey, at least the heroes get backstage passes when they agree to bodyguard them. This archetype can also be used for disco acts by swapping dance for stringed instruments.

PILOT					PL 3				
Str 10	Dex 13	Con 12	Int 13	Wis 13	Cha 12				
			3), Knowledg (+9), Pilot 8						
Equipment:		l, leather jac	nbat Pilot 4, ket (+1 Toug nal gear						
			nged), Grapp ense +1, Kno						
-	-		titude +3, Re						
Abilities 13 Total	+ Skills 7 (2	28 ranks) + F	eats 15 + Co	mbat 4 + Sa	ves 6 = 45				
ROCK 'N' ROLLER PL 2									
Str 10	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 14	Wis 13	Cha 14				
(+6), Kn		oular culture	5), Knowledg) 4 (+6), Perf (+9)						
Feats: Cult	t Hero (teena	agers), Fascin	ate (Perform)					
	Attack +2, Gr ck –1, Initiati		amage -1 (una	armed), Defe	ense +2,				
			titude +2, Re						
Abilities 11 Total	+ Skills 7 (2	8 ranks) + F	eats 2 + Com	ıbat 4 + Sav	es 6 = 30				
STREET	' INFORI	MANT			PL 2				
Str 10	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 12	Wis 14	Cha 14				
			(nowledge (c otice 7 (+9),						
Equipment:	itacts, Equipi Leather jack additional g	et (+1 Tougl	Informed nness), light	pistol, choos	e 3 EP				
			amage +3 (lig ck –1, Initiativ		0				
Saving Th	rows: Tough	iness +1, Fort	titude +2, Re	flex +2, Will	+4				
Abilities 10 Total) + Skills 8 (3	32 ranks) + F	eats 4 + Con	ıbat 4 + Sav	es 6 = 32				
SNOOP	Y GIRL	REPORT	ER		PL 2				
Str 8	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 12	Wis 14	Cha 12				
Knowled	ge (current e (+6), Profes	events) 6 (+7	5), Gather In), Knowledge r) 6 (+8), Sea	e (streetwise)	2 (+3),				
	itacts, Equipi Camera, tap		Connected elect 3 EP w	orth of addit	ional gear				
	Attack +2, Gr ck –1, Initiati		amage -1 (una	armed), Defe	ense +2,				
c ·									
	-		titude +2, Re eats 3 + Com						

TEENAGE POLITICIANPL 2									
Str 10 Dex 10 Con 10 Int 12 Wis 14 Cha 14									
Skills: Diplomacy 3 (+5), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Knowledge (history) 2 (+3), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+5), Perform (oratory) 7 (+9), Profession (politician) 4 (+6)									
Feats: Cult Hero (the counterculture), Fascinate (Perform), Inspire 2									
Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +2, Knockback -1, Initiative +0									
Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +2, Will +4									
Abilities 10 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 4 + Combat 4 + Saves 6 = 31 Total									

STREET INFORMANT

When the Costumed Adventurer or other Bronze Age streetcrime fighters in the campaign need to get the 411, the Street Informant is their man. Sure, the information costs, but have you *seen* the rate of inflation these days? It's rising while we're standing here! The Street Informant's gotta eat, too. Besides, his info is always solid, even if he never reveals anything about himself.

Typically, the Street Informant is in a position to see and hear everything that goes down in the city, blending perfectly into the urban tapestry among the homeless, as a bartender, or as a news vendor. Wherever he's found, the player characters are only a sawbuck away from the lead they need.

SNOOPY GIRL REPORTER

Every male superhero in the Silver Age had a secret identity, and along with it came a Snoopy Girl Reporter (and would-be girlfriend) going to silly and dangerous lengths to uncover it. At times it seemed like '60s costumed heroes spent half their lives outwitting super-villains and the other half foiling an amorous lady journalist's wacky scheme to prove he's really a mild-mannered schmoe she already knows. In *M&M* campaigns, this archetype can be customized to Snoopy Girl Other Occupation simply by reassigning some skill points. Certainly, the Snoopy Guy Reporter is easily doable with this archetype, and is good for a postmodern chuckle as well.

TEENAGE POLITICIAN

Political nerds will tell you how you can't run for national office until age 25 in real life, but 1970s comic books posited a more hippiefriendly world where counterculture teenagers could be elected to Congress, or maybe even the White House. If your *M&M* campaign accepts this groovier Bronze Age conceit, the Teenage Politician can be a valuable ally to the player characters if they're cool with the flower children. If the heroes are all over 30, they're still duty-bound to protect a high elected official, even if he is surrounded by dirty hippies. They can rest assured the Establishment will be gunning for the Teenage Politician (perhaps literally) and only the player characters can prevent a great wrong from being done. Alternately, if the campaign's heroes pretty much *are* the Establishment, a flower-child Commander-in-Chief giving them loopy orders ("Don't throw punches at Professor Peccant, man, throw flowers!") can be a regular cartoon-ish Complication.

VILLAIN ARCHETYPES

he Silver Age was an era where communists and threats to America's youth were feared above all. The villain archetypes on the pages following reflect these subversion-conscious times. In addition to them, several of the villain archetypes in *Mutants* & *Masterminds* work well in this setting with very little modification. Though some reflect the Bronze Age more than the Silver, none are entirely out of place in either era and thus are free for gamemasters to employ as needed.

For instance, the Corrupt Sorcerer is ready to use, though a bit out of fashion in the science-first Silver Age. Thanks to the Comics Code, the Vampire Lord and Savage Man-Beast are off-limits until the Bronze Age and it won't be until then that the Kung Fu Killer is regularly seen. The Mad Scientist and Sinister Simian are the definitive Silver Age menaces. By contrast, the Hulking Brute may show up as a hero if he's a typically Silver Age misunderstood monster.

COMMUNIST BRUTE CAPERS

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

The player characters awaken one day to find the media all abuzz about a challenge issued to them by the Communist Brute. He's calling out the heroes by name, daring them to come to a "neutral" Third World nation and face a team of super-powered Soviet champions (use archetypes from *Silver Age* or *M&M*, or make your own). The two sides will meet in an arena, *mano a mano*, broadcast live via satellite around the world so it can see once and for all which side is superior.

The players may not want to stoop to that level (or fall into an obvious trap), but it soon becomes clear refusing the challenge (and hurting America's prestige) is not an option. Once they arrive in the "neutral" country, it's clear the local despot has done everything in his power to make it a home game for the commises. The battle itself is rigged in the Reds' favor, as various booby traps soon make clear.

Winning will be tough for the capitalists, but will strike an inspiring blow for champions of freedom everywhere. It might even be enough to inspire the oppressed masses of the "neutral" Third World country to overthrow their cheating despot.

RACE FOR THE CURE

A close friend or loved one of the player characters is stricken by a rare illness. The only hope of saving them is a new experimental drug, which is being rushed to the hospital...or at least, it was. Person or persons unknown have stolen the potential miracle cure and only the heroes can recover it in time. The trial takes them through a phalanx of armed goons, a coterie of enemy agents, then finally to the Communist Brute, bent on taking the drug back to the Soviet Union for study. Can the player characters defeat the Brute, and more importantly, can they do it with enough sand to spare to save their stricken friend?

WIND OF CHANGE

Realizing the Gorbachev-era glasnost and perestroika will soon put him out of a job, the Communist Brute decides to win the Cold War single-handedly in its final inning. Leading a charge of other hardline commie bad guys, the Communist Brute puts his iron boot down smack dab in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue. America's conventional forces and other superheroes quickly fall before them, leaving the player characters the last line of defense. In addition to saving the president from being forced to kneel before the Communist Brute, the heroes have to talk the more hawkish members of the Cabinet out of a retaliatory strike on Moscow. Can the player characters save President Reagan, stop World War III, and make the world safe for the 1980s?

CORRUPTER OF YOUTH CAPERS

EEP OPP ORK AH-AH (MEANS I LOVE YOU)

The player characters' introduction to the Corruptor of Youth usually comes at the behest of concerned parents and educators, worried at the unexplained increase in juvenile delinquency across the nation. It's a mission no Silver Age hero can refuse, and the player characters' investigations soon reveals a connection between the teenage crime wave and the live performances of a paunchy, middle-aged "rock star" in a moth-eaten Beatle wig. Despite the fact his idiotic music sucks worse than that thing that *really* sucked bad, the kids seem to really dig him. It is, of course, the Corruptor of Youth in disguise.

It seems quite easy to take out a doughy guy looking like a really haggard Pete Best and the Corruptor of Youth's music is so bad punching him will release a lifetime's worth of player frustration over terrible pop acts. Trouble is, the Corruptor of Youth has transferred over a full tank of youthful energy by the time the heroes show up. He's more than tough enough to take them on alone, but to make matters worse, the Corruptor of Youth has an army of mesmerized fans ready to attack the heroes. Can the player characters stop the music without hurting a bunch of innocent kids?

MISS HIM, MISS HIM

The Del-Aires, hottest ever teen sensation, contacts the famed player characters for help. Despite their massively successful appearances on the *Sullivan* show and a sold-out concert at Shea Stadium, the group's lead singer has suddenly decided to quit the band without explanation. His band-mates ask the heroes for help because their lead singer made the announcement after receiving a series of very odd phone calls consisting only of really bad pop music.

If the players help the four clean-cut, cheeky lads from Paterson, New Jersey, they find the Corruptor of Youth is trying to get the current singer out of the band so he can mind-control the other members into accepting him as the replacement. This will give him access to a global audience, allowing him to spread his malefic influence to young people everywhere. Even if he fails in that, he can still destroy the careers of the world's favorite band.

The player characters have to track down the Corruptor of Youth, which may not be easy now that he's letting his fingers do the walking and literally phoning in his evil work. When the heroes do find him, the Corruptor of Youth is holding the Del-Aires' lead singer hos-

POWER LEVEL 10

"I MUST BREAK YOU."

COMMUNIST BRUTE

5TR +15	D3 +D		con +7	іпт +1		115 •1	сня +2	
40 (20)	10	L	24 (20)	12		2	14	
TOUGHNESS		FO	RTITUDE	REFL	≡#8		IILL	
+15	+15		+8	+2			-=	

SKILLS

Bluff 10 (+12), Intimidate 10 (+14, includes +2 size), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+7), Knowledge (history) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+9), Language (English), Swim 5 (+20)

FEATS

Attack Focus (melee), Attack Specialization (grapple), Chokehold, Fearsome Presence (DC 11, 5 ft.), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Taunt, Weapon Bind

POWERS

Device 22 (battlesuit, hard to lose)
Battlesuit: Blast 10 (heat/flame, Accurate 4), Communication 4 (radio, 1 mile), Enhanced Strength 12, Flight 7 (1000 MPH), Growth 4 (large; Continuous; Permanent), Immunity 9 (life support), Protection 8 (Impervious), Super-Senses 13 (blindsight [radio, extended, radius], darkvision, direction sense, distance sense, radio, time sense),
Super-Strength 3 (heavy load: 50 tons)

COMBAT

Attack +3 (melee, includes -1 size), +5 (grapple, includes -1 size), +10 (Blast, includes -1 size), +2 (ranged, includes -1 size), Grapple +24 (+28 vs. medium-sized), Damage +15 (unarmed), +10 (Blast), Defense +2 (includes -1 size), Knockback -15, Initiative +0

DRAWBACK

Normal Identity (full round, -4 points)

Abilities 28 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 88 + Combat 12 + Saves 5 - Drawbacks 4 = 150 Total

The Communist Brute is the embodiment of all the worst aspects of the Soviet Union: violent, uncompromising, ruthless, hateful, deceitful, paranoid, and determined to destroy the decadent capitalist superheroes. It may be a Cold War, but to the Communist Brute it's just war, plain and simple. Like a metal juggernaut in his cold-steel powered armor-the cutting edge of Soviet technology-his aim is to crush all opposition. The only limit is put upon him by the Kremlin: the world must behold his triumphs, so it can see not even America's superheroes can stand before Soviet might.

Name Options: Iron Wolf, The Red Menace, The Russian Nightmare, The Russian Bear, The Russian Brute, The Russian Assassin

CORRUPTER OF YOUTH

STR DE		соп	шт	wis	СНЯ
+	+1	+1	+2	+2	+=4
10	12	12	14	194	18
TOUGHNESS		FORTITUDE	REFLE	H U	UILL
+111/+1*		+3	+3		+=4

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Bluff 8 (+12), Disguise 8 (+12), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+6), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+6), Perform (singing) 7 (+11), Perform (stringed instruments) 7 (+11), Stealth 6 (+7)

FEATS

Defensive Roll 9, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 7

POWERS

- Mind Control 10 (hypnotic music; Burst Area, Conscious; Hearing-Dependent)
- **Transfer 7** (all ability scores to all ability scores; Perception Range; Hearing-Dependent; Slow Fade 4)

COMBAT

Attack +3, Grapple +3, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+1 flatfooted), Knockback -5 (-0 flat-footed), Initiative +1

Abilities 20 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 17 Hunk+ Powers 83 + Combat 12 + Saves 6 = 150 Total

Not everyone "got" the Swinging Sixties. Instead of inspiring them to be groovy and shag, some people just got older and more bitter. Unfortunately for the Mods and the Rockers, the Corruptor of Youth was one of them and he's dedicated his life and hypnotic musical abilities to being a colossal drag. His goal is to show the parents of America how rotten this loud, vulgar, rude "rocking and rolling" is making their kids. The Corruptor of Youth himself is ultimately responsible for the kids' bad behavior, but he's convinced himself he's just bringing their true selves to the surface. His powers drain away the young people's vitality and intellect...just like the rock and roll does, the Corruptor of Youth says. He needs it more than those ungrateful brats, anyhow!

Name Options: Dash Riprock, Dropout, Jet Screamer, Madcap, Mr. Mod, Super Groovy

POWER LEVEL 10

"HEY KIDS, I'M SUPER-MOD, HIP AND GROOVY, MAN!"

FALLEN GOLDEN AGE HERO

STR DE			con	шт	шіб	СНЯ
+=4	+5	i .	+5	+3	+2	+65
18	18 20		20	16	14	22
TOUGHNESS		FO	RTITUDE	REFLE	H L	UILL
+10/+9*			+ 65	+65		+44

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Acrobatics 8 (+13), Bluff 8 (+14), Climb 8 (+12), Disable Device 4 (+7), Drive 6 (+11), Escape Artist 4 (+9), Intimidate 10 (+16), Knowledge (history) 5 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 10 (+13), Notice 8 (+10), Pilot 5 (+10), Profession (soldier) 8 (+10), Stealth 8 (+13), Survival 8 (+10), Swim 8 (+12)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Assessment, Attack Specialization (Staff of Liberty) 3, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll, Dodge Focus 4, Equipment 2, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Inspire 2, Leadership, Master Plan, Minions 7 (10 Terrorists, fanatical-see *M&M*, page 229), Power Attack, Quick Draw, Seize Initiative, Uncanny Dodge (Audiotory)

Equipment: Heavy pistol with Accurate 2

POWERS

Device 1 (bulletproof clothing, hard to lose) Device 1 (Staff of Liberty, easy to lose) Bulletproof clothing: Protection 4, Impervious Toughness 1 Staff of Liberty: Strike 3 (Mighty, Thrown)

СОМВАТ

Attack +12 (Staff of Liberty), +6 (melee), +10 (heavy pistol), +6 (ranged), Grapple +10, Damage +8 (Staff of Liberty) +4 (heavy pistol), +4 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -5, Initiative +9

Abilities 50 + Skills 27 (108 ranks) + Feats 38 + Powers 7 + Combat 24 + Saves 4 = 150 Total

Many of America's costumed mystery men of World War II returned to action during the Silver Age, serving just as bravely and honorably as they had during the Golden Age. Others didn't adapt to changing times as well and donned their old costumes in a fit of rage or insanity (or both), determined to teach the new generation of so-called heroes a lesson.

The Fallen Golden Age Hero can be bent on small-scale revenge, perhaps against a Silver Age hero who assumed his legacy and whom he regards as a usurper. His ambitions may be much bigger and crazier, like taking over the country and running it "the right way." Whatever his goals, the player characters are always torn between fighting a capable, determined opponent who once served his country honorably and heroically but now may be a very sick, evil man.

Name Options: General Freedom, Captain Hawk, Major Glory, Major Victory, Night Commando, The Sentinel, Vigil

POWER LEVEL 10

"I'M THE REAL AMERICAN HERO!"

FEMME FATALE

	STR	DEH	соп	шт	шıs	СНЯ
	+3	+7	+=4	+1	+65	+7
	16	24	18	12	22	24
منصفا المتعادي المتحد الفريخية المتحدثين المتحدثين المحدثين المحدثين	тоибн	ANESS FI	ORTITUDE	REFLE	EH I	
+11/+4* +5 +8 +7	+11/-	+=4*	+5	+8		+7

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Acrobatics 9 (+16), Bluff 7 (+14), Climb 9 (+12), Diplomacy 7 (+14), Disable Device 9 (+10), Disguise 9 (+16), Escape Artist 9 (+16), Intimidate 8 (+15), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+9), Knowledge (streetwise) 9 (+10), Notice 9 (+15), Search 9 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+14), Sleight of Hand 9 (+16), Stealth 9 (+16)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Attractive 2, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 7, Equipment, Fascinate (Bluff), Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Disarm, Improve Grab, Improved Pin, Improved Trip, Sneak Attack 4, Stunning Attack

COMBAT

Attack +9, Grapple +12, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +9, Knockback -5 (-2 flat-footed), Initiative +7

Abilities 56 + Skills 32 (128 ranks) + Feats 23 + Combat 36 + Saves 3 = 150 Total

The Femme Fatale is a gorgeous dame and a scheming gold-digger. She turns good men into bad men with just a look (including some superheroes), playing them for saps after luring them in with promises of love they'll never get. In the end, she takes the guy's money, breaks his heart, and leaves him to take the rap for her crimes. Sure, it's not nice, but in the end, a woman's got to do what it takes to get by. Besides, it's not like men can't be hard on a gal, if they get the chance. Somewhere in her past, it's usually a bad man who's to blame for making her a bad woman.

Depending on the Femme Fatale in question, she can be different degrees of heartless. Some have a conscience like a shark. They use men in a cold and calculating fashion for crooked ends, and couldn't care less about the consequences in store for anyone else. This type obviously makes a great *Silver Age* villainess; more so if she's a spy working for an Unnamed Enemy Country.

More challenging is the Femme Fatale who may or may not be a predator camouflaged in a skintight costume. She's surrounded by mystery: is she as bad (or as good) as she seems? And even if she is bad, could she really love the male hero underneath it all? Better still, if she doesn't, is he going to let that deter his pursuit of her in any way?

The third type means well and her intentions are good, but we all know what that paves the

road to, don't we? This kind is a Femme Fatale because of her contagious bad luck (add the Luck Control power with the Uncontrolled flaw). Rotten things just always happen to her and the people she tries to help and as a result she's about as sad and pathetic as they come. Still, any player character with half a heart won't walk away from her, even if her misfortunes are truly supernatural in origin.

Name Options: Delilah, Fatale, Lorelei, Scarlet, The Temptress, The Seductress, The Siren, Vamp

"<50B> I HAVEN'T LIVED A GOOD LIFE. I'VE BEEN BAD...WORSE THAN YOU COULD KNOW."

GRRRRR"

POWER LEVEL 12

GIANT MONSTER

	STR	DEH			ппт		115	СНА
•	+165	+	+16	3		+		+
	42	10	42		2	1		10
тоибниезз			FORTITUD	E	REFLE	=#K		IILL
		_						

SKILLS

Intimidate 4 (+10, includes +6 size), Notice 4 (+4), Survival 12 (+12)

FEATS

Attack Focus (melee) 6, Dodge Focus 6

POWERS

Blast 9 (venom; Burst Area, Fortitude Save, Poison; Fades) Flight 5 (250 MPH) Growth 12 (gargantuan; Continuous; Permanent; Innate)

Impervious Toughness 4 Super-Senses 2 (infravision, scent)

Super-Strength 12 (heavy load: 12.5K tons; Super-Breath, Thunderclap)

COMBAT

Attack +8 (melee, includes -4 size), +2 (ranged, includes -4 size), Grapple +40 (+52 vs. medium-size targets), Damage +16 (unarmed), +9 (Blast), Defense +8 (+1 flatfooted, includes -4 size), Knockback -22, Initiative +0

Abilities 20 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 12 + Powers 115 + Combat 24 + Saves 4 = 180 Total

Just as giant lizards were the forerunner of mankind, the Giant Monster preceded the superhero as the ubiquitous comic book presence. The Giant Monster never entirely went away, even after the capes took over the funny books-much to the chagrin of the superheroes that had to deal with them. Whether sent here as the vanguard of an alien invasion or just a refugee from some lost world, the Giant Monster always means the heroes are going to be putting in a little overtime.

Name Options: Bort, Gigantus, Gorgo, Mammoth, Reptilicus, Serpentine

GIMMICK-WEAPON MASTER



Bluff 6 (+7), Craft (chemical) 6 (+8), Craft (mechanical) 6 (+8), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+8)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 4, Distract (Bluff), Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 4, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (razor weapon) 3, Master Plan, Precise Shot 2, Quick Draw, Ultimate Aim

POWERS

Device 20 (gimmick weapons, easy to lose) Edged Weapon: Blast 6 Exploding Weapon: Blast 8 (Explosion Area) Flash Weapon: Dazzle 7 (visual) Smokescreen Weapon: Obscure 10 (visual) Net Weapon: Snare 10 Oil-Slick Weapon: Trip 9 (Improved Throw)

COMBAT

Attack +7 (melee), +11 (ranged), Grapple +9, Damage +8 (Blast), +2 (unarmed), Defense +11 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -3 (-1 flatfooted), Initiative +5

Abilities 30 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 22 + Powers 60 + Combat 28 + Saves 4 = Total 150

Take one half-crazed genius with a taste for easy money, add an outmoded technology you can stick a bomb to and a loud flashy costume and you've got the Gimmick-Weapon Master. This is the villain archetype that drove the Silver Age, as the steady stream of bank jobs and jewel heists perpetrated by Gimmick-Weapon Masters kept superheroes busy for three decades.

The really good news for gamemasters is how customizable this archetype is. All that's required is a change of archaic weapon and a shuffling of the Attack Effect powers and soon you've created a whole gallery of super-villains.

Name Options: Card Sharp, Crossbow, The Dartmaster, Hardball, Slingshot, The Sportsman

POWER LEVEL 10

"I'VE GOT ANOTHER SURPRISE FOR YOU, HERO!"

TOXIC WASTE CREATURE



POWERS

Disintegration 9 (acid; Cone Area) Disintegration 5 (acid; Aura) Growth 8 (huge; Continuous; Permanent) Immunity 14 (chemical damage, life support) Impervious Toughness 6

COMBAT

Attack +3 (melee, includes -2 size), Grapple +20 (+28 vs. medium-size targets), Damage +15 (unarmed), Defense +3 (+1 flat-footed, includes -2 size), Knockback -17, Initiative +1

Abilities 20 + Feats 1 + Powers 134 + Combat 20 + Saves 5 = 180 Total

Nothing gets people serious about stopping pollution quite like the waste coming to life and trying to kill them-not even the commercial where the Indian sees all the litter and cries. Making a suitably Bronze Age statement is only half of what makes the Toxic Waste Creature such a great villain; the rest is how tough it is for the heroes to stop. Even if they do manage to stop the chemical abomination (and survive its stench), the heroes soon learn that as long as people poison the Earth, the Toxic Waste Creature will return to repay mankind in his own coin.

Name Options: Abnormus, The Despoiler, Hazmat, Putrefax the Ravager, Toxicus, Toxic Terror

"<INCOHERENT BURBLING AND GURGLING>"

POWER LEVEL 10

TRANSFORMER

STR DE			con +2	іпт +7	+ 6	
12	16		14	24	22	24
TOUGHNESS		FOR	RTITUDE	REFLE	=H	WILL
+9/+2*		-	+=4	+44		+7

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Bluff 8 (+15), Concentration 7 (+13), Escape Artist 8 (+11), Knowledge (arcane lore) 8 (+15), Notice 3 (+9), Perform (acting) 8 (+15), Profession (stage magician) 8 (+14), Search 3 (+10), Sleight of Hand 8 (+11), Stealth 3 (+6)

FEATS

Attack Specialization (Transform) 3, Defensive Roll 7, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 5, Fascinate (Perform), Hide in Plain Sight, Ritualist, Trance

POWERS

Device 14 (transformation wand, easy to lose) Transformation wand: Transform 10 (anything into anything else; Continuous)

COMBAT

Attack +4, +10 (Transform), Grapple +5, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +9 (+1 flat-footed), Knockback -4 (-2 flat-footed), Initiative +3

Abilities 52 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 20 + Powers 42 + Combat 16 + Saves 4 = Total 150

The Silver Age had no shortage of crackpot villains, but the Transformer just might take the cake. He finds a genuine mystic artifact that turns anything into anything else, and realizes immediately he's got a ticket out of the über-lame life of being a magician. Instead of changing leftover "I Like Ike" buttons into gold and retiring, he decides to pursue a suddenly developed vendetta against costumed heroes.

From that point on, the Transformer shows up when least expected and changes the player characters into...something else. The Transformer is crazy (maybe that company stealing his handle for those toy robots did it), but he does know to mix it up. And showmanship-the Transformer loves to astound a crowd when he puts the player characters into their latest predicament. Even though he's a fully fledged super-villain now, he's still a stage magician at heart.

Name Options: The Alchemist, The Astrologer, The Diabolist, Paracelsus, The Transmuter, The Warlock

"I HAVE THE STRANGEST FEELING YOU'RE BEING TURNED INTO A PUPPET" tage as a trump card. Will the player characters save him or will the band be forced to replace him with a lookalike and mourn only through a series of cryptic clues buried in subsequent albums?

FALLEN GOLDEN AGE HERO CAPERS

BY DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT

With the help of some highly placed allies in the government who share his beliefs, the Fallen Golden Age Hero seizes control of the White House and declares his intention to "save the country from itself" as Acting President. What happens next depends on the gamemaster's preference.

This caper can be run as a one-shot: sneak in, beat up the bad guys, rescue the duly elected President, roll credits. However, events can play out over several game sessions if enough Americans buy into the Fallen Golden Age Hero's message, either on its own seeming merits, his war record, or because he's replacing an unpopular president (take your pick from LBJ to Carter). Week by week, the player characters have to counteract the "Acting President's" increasingly crazy agenda. It might include nuking North Vietnam, setting up "re-education" camps for dissenters, and other moves that push the country to the brink of a second civil war.

Any successes the player characters have push the Fallen Golden Age Hero further over the edge, which would be a problem even if he didn't have access to the Doomsday Button. Ultimately, the heroes' battles to save America become a war to save the entire human race.

COMING HOME

The disappearance of a friend of the heroes' tips them off to a nationwide rash of men gone missing, all out of work war veterans. Following the trail leads the player characters to an armed compound in the desert where the Fallen Golden Age Hero is building an army to use in his next master plan. The challenge for the heroes is two-fold. Defeating a legion of well-armed and well-trained soldiers is a tall order by itself, but the fact is most of its members are heroes unjustly ignored by their country and left with no better options. Can the players fight their way to victory, or will words and understanding be their best weapons?

THE STRANGER

A Silver Age legacy hero is arrested for a series of crimes he didn't commit. He protests his innocence, but there's no shortage of incriminating evidence. This is due to the embittered Fallen Golden Age Hero, who feels the legacy hero isn't worthy to carry the mantle and has orchestrated a nearly perfect frame-up. The player characters then have to prove the legacy hero's not guilty, and nothing short of finding and capturing the Fallen Golden Age Hero will do.

FEMME FATALE CAPERS

MOLOTOV COCKTEASE

The heroes find a Russian Femme Fatale, injured and running for her life from super-powered commies. If the heroes are suitably heroic, they're bound to rush to her aid. Once rescued, she claims to be a defector, tired of being asked to do terrible things in the name of an evil empire. She's grateful beyond words to the player characters, and repays her debt with months of devoted assistance. The Femme Fatale even helps the heroes fight off a super-villain or two, and professes her love for the team's leader or best-connected male member. She seems too good to be true....

...Because she is. The player characters don't find this out until the fateful day they awake and find their trust completely betrayed, with every one of the group's secrets worth having now on their way to Moscow. Can the heroes pick up the Femme Fatale's trail before the Soviet government learns all their weakest points and the world media learn the player characters' most embarrassing personal secrets?

I'M NOT BAD, I'M JUST DRAWN THAT WAY

This is a mini-Caper; rather like Caper Helper. It's important to establishing the "is she good, is she bad" sort of Femme Fatale. Whenever the player characters look doomed, the Femme Fatale appears to give them a little hand-not rescue them, mind you. That'd be too heroic and spoil her rep. Then, when things couldn't get any better for the heroes, the Femme Fatale shows up to give bad guys an assist. Repeat these two steps whenever you see an opening, and pretty soon the heroes won't know where the Femme Fatale stands, which is exactly as it should be. After that, she can serve in the unique role of the world's sexiest plot device, dragging the player characters into danger or saving their bacon as the gamemaster sees fit.

HARD LUCK WOMAN

The just plain unlucky Femme Fatale comes into the player characters' lives much like her commie spy cousin in **Molotov Cocktease** above, only she's genuinely committed to the heroes' welfare. Trouble is, her bad fortune starts to adversely affect the player characters in increasingly dire ways until their very lives seem to be in danger. Will the heroes be forced to part ways with a valued friend before she inadvertently kills them all? And if they do break ties with their former ally...well, you know what they say about a woman scorned. This scorned woman, however, is one privy to all the player characters' secrets and is all the more dangerous for it.

GIANT MONSTER OH NO! THEY SAY HE'S GOT TO GO

The basic recipe for comic-book Giant Monster adventures is simple: one Giant Monster, one large urban area, some innocent bystanders, some ineffectual military forces, and the superheroes as the last hope. Like we said, simple, but classic, too. Never underestimate the fun and challenge of beating the Giant Monster while protecting the hapless folk in its way. If that's not enough of a challenge, there's always the Giant *Monsters* plot, sending in as many of the critters as it takes to get the player characters' attention.

I, MONSTER

If the classics aren't your style, gamemaster, there are plenty of familiar elements just begging to have a twist applied. One possibility is making the Giant Monster not just big, but smart. Add some brainy skills and feats and maybe a Device or two and the surprised player characters won't know what hit them. The heroes will feel especially shocked if the "dumb monster" hits them with the Taunt feat or something similarly unexpected and witty.

MAMA, I'M COMING HOME

The player characters stop a lower PL version of the Giant Monster before it can go on the expected rampage. High-fives are still being exchanged when the full-power version of the archetype shows up, and starts to inflict the anticipated property damage. The Giant Monsters keep coming until the player characters figure out the first was just a lost baby monster, and it's his kin who've come for him. Only when the heroes realize it's a family matter and let the little critter go home does the devastation stop.

GIMMICK-WEAPON MASTER CAPERS

MONEY (THAT'S WHAT I WANT)

The classic Gimmick-Weapon Master plot involves a daring robbery in broad daylight, which the player characters unsuccessfully attempt to foil. Maybe the trick weapons preyed on their weaknesses, or his versatility was too much for them. However it happens, the heroes have to devise a way to thwart the Gimmick-Weapon Master's arsenal. If the player characters are clever and skillful enough, the Gimmick-Weapon Master goes to prison. At least, he does until the next breakout, when he's ready to bedevil the heroes again with an all new array of trick weapons, beginning the cycle all over again.

WE'RE CAUGHT IN A TRAP

Eventually, the Gimmick-Weapon Master gets tired of the Silver Age's revolving-door prisons and decides to finish the heroes off for good. The answer is invariably building a giant Plot Device version of his signature weapon and empowering it to do some real damage. Maybe it's a huge dart capable of escape velocity that kills heroes by shooting them into the vacuum or a really big bowling ball ready to crush the heroes strapped to it en route to some equally enormous pins. Since it's a Plot Device, the only escape is through the players' wits. Of course, it wouldn't be fair to put them in such a predicament without giving the Gimmick-Weapon Master a chance to gloat first (see *M&M*, page 191).

TOXIC WASTE CREATURE CAPERS

I'M MAYOR OF THIS TOWN AND I SAY IT WAS JUST A SAND CRAB

The Toxic Waste Monster is at its best when its menace is abetted by an authority figure like "The Man." While swimmers, boats, ocean liners, and low-flying planes continue to vanish, Mayor "The Man" greedily rationalizes away every incident and bureaucratically thwarts the heroes' every move. This forces the player characters to fight on two fronts: against "The Man" with their wits, and against the Toxic Waste Creature with their mitts. Winning either fight won't be easy and winning both...well, let's just say even Pete Rose is taking a pass on those odds.

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS

Here's one from the spec script we sent to the Toho Company. The Toxic Waste Creature is busy fouling up a major metropolis when who should take umbrage but the Giant Monster. No one's poisoning the planet before his alien masters can invade it, so pretty soon it's *on*. The player characters might be tempted to just let them kill each other off, but the city residents who'd get killed in the meantime nixes that option. The heroes then make it a three-way dance, with the immediate future of the endangered burgh and the long-term fortunes of the human race at stake.

THE TRANSFORMER CAPERS

WHAT'S WITH KIDS TODAY, ANYWAY?

The Transformer lies in wait while the heroes appear at an orphanage in true Silver Age fashion, hosting a costume party for the underprivileged youngsters. Once the good guys start to mingle, the Transformer strikes, turning back the clock on the heroes until they revert to their bratty toddler selves (see the Kid archetype in *M&M*, page 227). Naturally, everyone in charge thinks they're just orphans with overactive imaginations, so the heroes are faced with pulling off a kiddie version of *The Great Escape* before they can even think about getting their adulthood back. Role-playing the terrible twos should be fun for all, and trying to defeat a super-villain while needing a bottle, their blankies, a nap, and a diaper changing is a definite break from the norm.

MORE TO LOVE

While the heroes are making another public appearance, the Transformer zaps them and packs on a few pounds...a few *hundred* pounds (see the Gravity Control power for the game effects). The suddenly lard-tastic do-gooders can now barely fit in their spandex costumes, and gasp for breath while criminals run circles around them and taunt them with delicious fruit pies. Naturally, since it's the Silver Age, the people they routinely risk their lives for show up to ridicule them now that they're not slim anymore. If they can still fit through the doors of their headquarters, the heroes may use their super-science labs to solve their sudden massive weight-gain. Otherwise, they'll have to get some of those special scooters and hope they've got the horsepower to get them to the Transformer. Beating him with the body of later-life Marlon Brando will take all the ingenuity they've got.





CHAPTER 5: THE SILVER AGE OF FREEDOM

The Freedom City setting owes a great deal of its inspiration to the Silver Age of comics, and modern storytelling techniques that look back fondly on that simpler age. While the previous chapters of this book have described the Silver Age era and sub-genre in general, this chapter looks specifically at the Silver Age of Freedom City, a period of roughly twenty years in the 1960s and '70s, when the costumed hero became a well-established idea in the public mind, and there seemed to be no limit to the strange new wonders in the world. This chapter offers a ready-made Silver Age setting for your *M&M* adventures, as well as an example you can use in creating your own Silver Age style setting, characters, and adventures.

The chapter starts out with an overview of the history of Freedom City during the period, covering the major events and personalities involved with them. Like all elements of the setting, this history is as set in stone as you want it to be. If you prefer to change the city's "future" leading up to the present-day (and beyond), by all means, feel free.

Next is a look at the major heroes and hero teams of the city's Silver Age. This period saw the growth of the "superteam" as a concept as well as the founding of Freedom City's most famous and enduring group of heroes: the Freedom League. The section concludes with some notes on other heroes active in the World of Freedom during this time.

If the Silver Age saw an uptake in the number of heroes, then it saw a virtual explosion in the number of costumed super-criminals, from nutcases in strange outfits to cosmic beings from beyond the stars. The next section looks at the major villains and villain organizations of Freedom City's Silver Age, including a section of notes on villains described in the *Freedom City* and *Freedom's Most Wanted* sourcebooks that you can add to the setting during this time.

While a great deal of the material in this chapter–particularly the individual characters and adventure hooks—is usable on its own, the background, history, and other information assume you have access to the *Freedom City* sourcebook for details about the city, its layout, history, and other elements of the World of Freedom. The focus of this chapter is on the Silver Age and how things then differed from present day Freedom City.

Characters already described in Freedom City are generally not repeated in this chapter. Instead, brief notes describe the differences between the modern-day and Silver Age versions of characters like the Centurion and Daedalus. Often, those differences are relatively few, and it is easy to use the characters from Freedom City virtually unchanged in the Silver Age.

This may not make a great deal of sense from a gaming perspective: after all, those characters should have earned considerable power points during their multi-decade careers, shouldn't they? This is just one of those cases where the conventions of the comics namely heroes maintaining a degree of stability in terms of their traits—trumps the conventions of game-play.

FREEDOM CITY SILVER AGE HISTORY

hile **Chapter 1** looks at the history of the Silver Age comic books, this section details the history of the Silver Age period in Freedom City. Assume unspecified real world events happened in Freedom much as they did in our own world, in true comic book fashion. You can also use the comic book history in **Chapter 1** and your own knowledge of the Silver Age as a source of inspiration for further events in Freedom City's history during this time.

BEGININGS AND ENDINGS

The commonly accepted date for the start of the "Silver Age of Heroes" in Freedom City is early 1960, when the Freedom League was founded, signaling an end to the fallow period in the wake of the breakup of the post-war Liberty League, when Freedom City had no team of heroes to call its own. The years leading up to the formation of the League saw the appearance of several new heroes who became members, while the years immediately following featured an explosion of new costumed super-types.

The exact ending of the Silver Age era is somewhat less clear (just as it is in the real world), although most place it around the late 1970s, as public views of heroes begin to change, and many newer superhumans—like the Atom Family—operate less in the public eye. It is also when many superhuman criminals begin to adopt the tactics of working behind-the-scenes or even from within the system to subvert it, forcing heroes even more to the fringes, with vigilantism on the rise. The timeline here ends in 1976. The years leading up to the Moore Act and the banning of superheroes in Freedom City are described in the *Freedom City* setting sourcebook and the *Iron Age* sourcebook.

1960

March: The death god Hades, enraged at Daedalus' recent activities as a crimefighter, uses the unwitting aid of a foolish mortal wizard and launches an invasion of Freedom City from Tartarus. A number of heroes, including Centurion, Lady Liberty, Bowman, Daedalus, and the Raven band together to drive off Hades and his forces. Zeus forbids Hades from directly interfering with the mortal world again. The heroes, realizing they can deal with threats more effectively as a team, but legally prohibited from using the name Liberty League, band together to form the Freedom League.

June: The new American Elite Government Intervention Service (AEGIS) begins recruiting law enforcement personnel, assuring AEGIS will have accurate intelligence before taking the field. AEGIS Director Jack Simmons proposes partnerships with the superhero community and promises AEGIS will fight for superhero rights and prevent another witch-hunt like the HUAC. With the enthusiastic support of Centurion, many heroes agree to cooperate with the new agency.

Noted psychiatrist Dr. Arthur Levitt begins developing mechanical devices to better study the nature of fear. Adopting the identity of Fear Master, he becomes a foe of the Raven.

Roger Usher, head of the terrifyingly corrupt Usher family, dies, leaving his son Alister in control of the family's criminal enterprises. The new Usher scion, with the approval of his sister and lover, Felicia, leads his family business into new depths of depravity.



February 13: Dr. Atom purchases the newly constructed Goodman Building and moves there with his family.

Alexander Rhodes develops incredible mental powers from the awakening of his *ka*. Discovering he is the reincarnated soul of the ancient Egyptian hero Heru-Ra, he takes on the identity of the Scarab, using his abilities to fight crime.

"Mad Dog" Rae forms the "Dog Pound Squad," a special Freedom City Police squad meant to combat superhuman violence.

Overshadow, recognizing the Scarab as his ancient enemy and fearing discovery before he is ready, launches Operation Inundation, a plot to seize simultaneous control of every institution in the Western world, giving his Penumbra a week to organize. The Scarab discovers the plot before it is initiated, but no one in the government listens to him other than Jack Simmons. Last-minute action by AEGIS and Freedom City's superheroes is all that stands between SHADOW and world-conquest.

Dr. Jonathan Darke, the former second-in-command of the Invisible Empire, takes advantage of Overshadow's momentarily weakened position and shoots him, seizing control of SHADOW. The Nazi mastermind is only able to survive by transferring his mind into an immature clone.

Michael Reeves, a brilliant, sickly albino living in the sewers, driven mad by the misery of his condition, forms a religious cult around himself. Calling himself the Conqueror Worm, the messianic lunatic sends his "Night Crawlers" to rob and murder anyone who offends his ever-changing moral dictates, frequently clashing with the Raven.



AEGIS tracks SHADOW to the estate of Dr. Darke, who is killed in the ensuing shootout. The general consensus that Darke was the founder of SHADOW allows Overshadow to recover his strength in secret.

Quick action in stopping SHADOW gains AEGIS considerable respect in government circles. However, to further silence his critics, Director Simmons insists AEGIS take on the toughest cases available.

Overshadow manages to track down the sorcerer Crimson Mask. As one of his previous incarnations was a member of the Báthory family, the criminal mastermind is able to banish Stefan Báthory's ghost. Overmind then charges the Crimson Mask with reforming the Thule Society.



Fifteen year-old John "Jack" Carlton, attacked by a bully, discovers he has near-invulnerable skin and superhuman strength. Keeping his new abilities secret, he begins working to master them.

In Haiti, psychology doctoral student Cassandra Vale, while studying whether simple belief in supernatural abilities has an effect on the reality of such things, becomes the host of the Voodoo loa La Siren and active as the heroine Siren.

The Egyptian god Horus the Avenger comes to Earth to fight crime in the mortal world.

In Freedom City, Jordan International Airport undergoes a major expansion.

A superhuman calling himself the Leopard King raises an army of brainwashed "Leopard Men" and launches an invasion of the newly liberated nation states of Africa. At the request of King M'Zale of Dakana, the United Nations sends Uniforce to intervene in the conflict. This is the first recorded use of UN troops to fight supervillains.

Avril Griffin, daughter of Lady Celtic and the Human Tank, is empowered by the Spirit of Britain as the new Britannia.

October 24: Bryant Haiday, a young man obsessed with supervillains and the fun they seem to be having and inspired by United Nations Day, adopts the identity of Doc Holiday, waging a series of holiday-themed crimes.



Nicholas Gorman, son of the WWII hero Sergeant Shrapnel, having inherited his father's powers, joins AEGIS under the codename Shrapnick, using his powers to sabotage Communist forces in Eastern Europe.

The stunted telepath Jacques Crenaire, known as L'Enfant Terrible, is convicted on 17 counts of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

Astronaut Chuck Shepard is lost to a rogue "black hole," which transports him to another world. Becoming that world's champion and granted their life-extension technology, Shepard becomes known as Space Ranger.

The Lor Republic and the Grue Unity agree to a tentative peace, inducing a state of détente between the two interstellar governments.

In Freedom City, the military supply depot on Blackstone Island is decommissioned.

The Mobile European Network Acquiring Control of Earth (MENACE), a group of European fanatics, steals the plans for the Inexistence Gun, a weapon that alters causality. In response to the threat, the UN activates Team Alphabet, an elite group of 26 super-spies.



April 11: AEGIS opens Blackstone Penitentiary, a prison specially designed to hold superhuman inmates, on Blackstone Island. The United States Department of Justice makes Blackstone the de-facto prison for superhumans in the United States, moving criminals there from prisons across the country. Jerry Kramer is appointed Warden.

June 2: The Maestro uses a visit by the Beatles to mind-control thousands of screaming fans. The Freedom League manages to thwart the evil mastermind's plans.

Ingrid Hildebrandt is able to temporarily regain access to the power of *die Walkürie*, becoming a foe of both Lady Liberty and Centurion.

A newly resurgent SHADOW infiltrates the United States and Western European military with I-Bots (Infiltration Bots) to foment conflict. The androids are able to bring the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war before the plot is foiled by an alliance of Centurion and Bogatyr.

Overshadow begins enacting grandiose, seemingly insane schemes against the nations of the world, all the while using the belief that he is insane to cover his true agenda: the theft of information and new technology, allowing him to construct a powerful suit of battle armor.

The scientist Dr. Norman, while performing experiments on force field technology, is killed in an explosion that destroys his South Sea island base. His estate is left to his former lab assistant, Dmitri Korcek, secretly a KGB spy assigned to steal Dr. Norman's inventions. Among the Doctor's inventions, Korcek discovers a device that makes the user invisible. He changes the name of his company, Korcek, Incorporated, to Invisible, Inc.

1965

August: Omega manages to pierce the dimensional barriers and invades Freedom City with an army of Omegadrones. The dark lord of the Terminus is driven off by the Freedom League and Dr. Atom.

Theseus, the son of Siren and King Thallor of Atlantis, joins the Freedom League as Sea King.

Brigade Six, a secret branch of British Intelligence, forms to deal with threats too dangerous for regular agents. Troy Griffin (Agent Silver), who has developed an invulnerable skeleton and eyes as well as physically aging at a far slower rate than his twin sister, Avril; Elizabeth "Betty" Munroe, a Ministry of Powers trainee with the power to levitate and training in espionage (Agent Black), Charles Parker (Agent White) and Anne Gordon (Agent Gold) are recruited as its agents.

Samantha Cline, an attractive young researcher at ASTRO Labs, steals some experimental pheromones, as well as a flight harness and web projector, and begins her career as the seductive Luna Moth, clashing often with the Raven despite his ability to resist her charms.

Gathering a group of elite thieves and mercenaries, Korcek organizes Invisible, Inc. into an organization of industrial saboteurs.

September: Filmatic produces the *Freedom Friends*, a cartoon loosely based on the exploits of the Freedom League. Although campy and childish, the show is extremely popular.

Warden Kramer accepts the assistance of Daedalus in redesigning the cellblocks of Blackstone Penitentiary to reduce the chance of escapes.

Avril Griffin, having become pregnant, passes on the mantle of Britannia.



Freedom City, the Maestro is captured and sent to Providence Asylum for treatment.

Overshadow frees Nacht-Krieger from his light prison. Driven mad by his years of imprisonment and the dark shadows infecting his mind, Nacht-Krieger goes on a rampage, attempting to steal an arcane artifact from the Hunter Museum. White Thorn returns and attacks the shadowy creature. Scarab and Beacon are drawn to the battle and White Thorn attacks them as well before the three heroes join forces against Nacht-Krieger. Recognizing Beacon's power as that of his sister, White Rose, White Thorn sacrifices his life to imprison the shadow creature beneath Pyramid Plaza and transfers his remaining power to the new light bearer, his soul finally rejoining his beloved twin and dear friends in "the light beyond life." Scarab takes the responsibility of keeping Nacht Krieger imprisoned.

Tomb-robbing archaeologist Dr. Reese Browder unearths the tomb in which Hades hid the Adamant armor. Touching it, he activates the ancient artifact and his soul is torn from his body and absorbed into the armor. Adamant goes on a rampage, causing much destruction until he attracts the attention of Horus the Avenger. Drawn to the god by its purpose to destroy the divine, Horus and Adamant engage in a terrible battle. Horus, realizing he cannot destroy the Adamant, uses his Ankh to banish it to a distant netherworld. Over the next several years, the armor is freed and then entrapped again as no one seems able to destroy it.

In San Francisco, a renegade Clockworker, one of the constructs of the Time Keepers meant to maintain the time-measuring Dolorous Clock, having experienced emotion and fled his duties in a stolen time machine, arrives in the city. Becoming a guru known to the locals as the Tick-Tock-Doc, he declares war against "the tyranny of time," leading his followers, who call themselves the Counter-Clock Culture, to destroy clocks across the city, giving them advanced technology to further their goals. Their actions earn them major threat status with the FBI.



After a frightening encounter with a drunken Arrow, the Bee-Keeper retires from costumed villainy.

Team Alphabet is able to cut off MENACE's access to the Arsenal Outside Time, where they had stolen their temporal weaponry, and put an end to the organization once and for all.

Jack Carlton adopts the guise of Kid Gargoyle and begins fighting crime in Freedom City.

During a battle in the sewers, the Raven knocks the Conqueror Worm over a ledge, leaving him clinging to a sewer pipe. Reaching to save his enemy, the Raven loses his grip when the villain surprises him with knowledge of his feelings for Dr. Sin's daughter Jasmine, causing the Conqueror Worm to fall to his death. The messianic villain's everfaithful assistant, Ligeia, is sent to Providence Asylum.

In Sedona, Arizona, former hippie and crystal enthusiast, Lorinda Bryant, while searching for new stones in the desert, discovers a cave with several prehistoric drawings and a small altar with a perfect lapis-lazuli upon it. Taking the stone, Bryant is compelled to place it against her forehead, allowing it to bond with her and granting her incredible mental abilities. Calling herself Countess Azure, she gathers a group of followers who donate their worldly goods to her with which she purchases a large commune.



July 20: The Apollo 11 spacecraft delivers the first humans to the Moon. The inhabitants of Farside City watch the mission carefully, now aware of the speed of humanity's technological development.

Selene, an ambitious member of the Farsider royal family who was born without mental powers, uses the fear of humanity's technological development to attract a large group of followers. The group seizes the power of the Moonstone, which Selene uses to gain mental powers superior to her kin and seize control of the city. Taking the name Lady Lunar, Selene orders the royal family executed although one member, her young nephew Mentac, manages to escape to

WHAT IF...THE SILVER AGE NEVER ENDED?

Freedom City's "mainline" history features an "Iron Age" in between the end of the Silver Age of heroes and the start of the modern era following the Terminus Invasion, detailed in the *Iron Age* sourcebook. But what if the circumstances leading to the city's Iron Age failed to arise? If, for example, Scarab managed to survive the attack of the Scions of Sobek, and inspired other members of the Freedom League to stick with the team, and Franklin Moore's political career was cut short by a scandal early-on (preventing him from being elected mayor), then things might have gone quite differently for Freedom City.

Given the existence of time travel and individuals like Dr. Tomorrow, his arch-foe Zeitgeist, and the mysterious Time Keepers, there is even a good chance of somebody changing "established" history from the *Freedom City* source material. A well-intentioned time traveler might help save Scarab by breaking the Scions' mental hold over the Freedom League, or find a way to expose the truth about Franklin Moore. The heroes could be directly involved in this change, or it could be a bit of historical trivia. If their history has been changed along with everything else, there's no way for them to know things were ever any different, after all.

This allows you to carry the setting's Silver Age through unbroken generations across the former "Iron Age" era, right up to the present day. Heroes may have even been able to prevent the Terminus Invasion altogether or at least soften its impact. This can lead to changes like the non-existence of Dr. Metropolis and others created in the wake of the invasion. Similarly, the Freedom League might "graduate" to the status of world-wide protectors (complete with satellite headquarters) years earlier. You can even go so far as to ignore the comic book convention on keeping the world fairly similar to our own, and allow inventors like Daedalus to revolutionize technology from the 1960s onward. The 21st century of this world would more resemble the distant future of some comic book worlds, with maturing interstellar travel, artificial intelligence, and other technologies transforming life on Earth!

Earth. The insane usurper, backed by the crater apes whose aggression she has amplified, proceeds with her plans to build a space fleet to one day conquer humanity.

September 9: Chester Brown, the hero known as the Bluesman, passes away. All of Freedom City mourns the gangbusting hero and Mayor Herbert Huntington honors him with a statue in Liberty Park. The grove in which the statue stands comes to be known as Heroes' Knoll.

The renegade Star Knight Rojan Lhar, pursued by his former compatriot A'Lan Koor for first trying to conquer a primitive world and then trying to seize control of the Star Stone, source of the Star Knights' power, flees to Earth. Taking the name Blackstar, he hides among Earth's supervillains and seeks to amass enough power to storm Citadel and take the Star Stone by force. However, A'Lan Koor tracks the renegade to Earth and joins the Freedom League as Star Knight, constantly foiling Blackstar's schemes.

October 14: A scouting party from the Grue Unity infiltrates humanity. Seeking to infiltrate the Freedom League, the alien plot is foiled when one of their number, R'ik Faax, finds sympathy for the human race due to his telepathic contact with them and exposes his fellow Grue. For his betrayal, R'ik Faax is banished from the Unity and marooned on Earth, where he creates the identity of freelance journalist Rick Fox and joins the Freedom League as the shapeshifting Pseudo.

November 12: The Raven, after breaking up one of the Usher family's brothels and discovering dozens of teenage runaways held captive there, decides to put an end to the criminal family once and for all. The savage battle ends when a desperate Alister Usher throws a flask of acid at the Raven who ducks, resulting in Felicia Usher being horribly burned. The maimed woman stumbles into the fireplace, knocking several burning logs askew and setting the family manor ablaze. The Raven tries to save the Usher siblings so that they may face trial, but Alister Usher fights him off, carrying his sister deeper into the fire. After the blaze consumes the mansion utterly, only several badly charred corpses are found.

Taurus starts watching brilliant Hanover Institute of Technology cyberneticist Dr. Victor Reeds, intending to bring the young genius into the Labyrinth in a few years.

The Malfidians, the personal guard of Lady Lunar, are sent to Earth, where they set up a base of operations in a gravel quarry in central England. Their mission is to procure rare materials and prepare for an invasion of Earth by Farside City. Uniforce learns of the plot with the assistance of the Associates, a pair of time travelers from the future who claim to be agents dedicated to preserving the timestream from interference and who interact with this timeframe by sending their minds to possess bodies in the past. The Associates also make Uniforce aware of the Futurekin, the Associates' opposite number with which they are involved in a "temporal war." Uniforce is able to defeat the Malfidians and expose the involvement of Zeitgeist, who had possessed the body of Lady Lunar's chief advisor. With her guard defeated, Lady Lunar pledges peace with the Earth.

With the waning of the hippie movement, the disillusioned TicTock-Doc abandons his followers behind a time-curtain, preventing them from aging, to travel with an alternative rock band, eventually abandoning them as well to travel through time in the hopes of finding something as fulfilling as his beloved hippie culture.

1970

By this year, the UN has established no less than six different agencies to deal with superhuman threats including Uniforce, Team Alphabet, the United Nations Science Advisory Council (UNSAC), and the United Nations Paranormal Enclave Committee (UNPEC), established to deal with locations that fall outside the traditional definition of nations, such as Atlantis.

Legal issues and "creative differences" with the League result in *Freedom Friends* going off the air.

Dr. Reeds is injured in a laboratory explosion. Taurus arranges to have the lab destroyed and leaves behind evidence that Reeds

was killed. The cyberneticist grafts cybernetic implants to his own injured body and begins developing implant technology for the Labyrinth.

By this time, AEGIS has expanded to over a thousand personnel, establishing times with Canada and the United Kingdom through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Scotland Yard to coordinate their efforts with the British Commonwealth.

Sonic-powered Freedom League member and protégé of Daedalus, Mary Minstrel, dies.

June 14: Escaping from Providence Asylum once again, Doc Holiday prepares a Flag Day-inspired crime spree, dressing head-to-toe in red, white and blue. Unfortunately, his heist coincides with a massive protest against the invasion of Cambodia and the Kent State shootings. Met with jeers and taunts, the fun-loving villain decides his time has passed and quietly returns to Providence Asylum, never to escape again.

Over the next two years Daedalus uses Mary Minstrel's brain patterns to create the Chorale – Aria, Paean and Panegyric – three symbiotically connected androids with vocal powers that mimic those of the deceased heroine. While initially identical, over time they develop distinct personalities, becoming valued allies of the Freedom League.

March 8: Fletcher Beaumont, Jr., having problems with alcoholism brought on by the stress of his double life, retires as Arrow. Although the story is never made public, Tim Quinn retires soon after as Bowman.

The first annual Chester Brown, or "C.B.", Blues Festival is held in Liberty Park.

Talos, retrieved from the bottom of the ocean by an archaeological team, constructs Keres, a robot intended to be his right-hand man and personal assassin. Together, they create the Foundry, an organization intended to distribute weapons to humanity which they hope will end in their destruction, leaving the world free for artificial life to control.

Dmitri Korcek, showing delusional tendencies and convinced of the ultimate collapse of western society, allies himself with the ambitious Asian warlord, Si Fong, offering Fong exclusive use of his services in return for being made head of the warlord's American operations. The alliance is a short one however, as AEGIS manages to track down Invisible, Inc. and Si Fong. The warlord is killed in an explosion and the group's other members are either killed or captured. Dmitri Korcek flees to Buenos Ares. One member of the group, Dr. Noah Manley, a former lab assistant of Dr. Norman, manages to escape with some of his former employer's research on invisibility technology.

Taurus reveals himself to Constantine Urallos, head of Delphic Industries, informing the industrialist that he is the source of the Urallos family fortune. Inducting him into the Labyrinth as the organization's public business face, Taurus converts Urallos from Catholicism to the worship of Hades.



Fear-Master is declared sane and cured after undergoing "primal scream" therapy and finds himself in great demand as a consultant. In reality, the villain is simply performing his cruel experiments without his masked alter ego.



August 24: The Raven confronts his arch-enemy, Dr. Sin in his airship fleet and destroys it with the aid of the villain's daughter, Jasmine (who has loved the hero for years), seemingly killing the villain but suffering crippling back injuries in the process. Duncan Summers retires as the Raven and marries Jasmine.

July 4: Lady Liberty's powers inexplicably fade and eventually disappear altogether. Although she continues to operate without them for a time, Donna Mason eventually retires as a crimefighter. Strangely enough, as the years pass, the public's memories of the specifics of Donna Mason's time as Lady Liberty slowly and inexorably fade.

Despite her husband's dedicated efforts to save her, Anne Atom dies from complications due to cancer.

Dr. Conrad Dippel creates a method by which humans can be granted superhuman abilities.

King Cole, discovering his long-time assistant Rapunzel is carrying his child, manages to achieve a reasonable level of sanity and retires from crime to take care of his family, becoming a much-beloved figure to the children in his suburban community.

1973

August 24: Duncan and Jasmine Summers' daughter, Callie, is born.

Jacques Crenaire discovers a talent for painting in prison, his work becoming highly in demand.

Dracula stalks the nighttime streets of Freedom City and terrorizes the populace. Seeking to enslave Lenore as one of his brides, the hedonistic vampire seeks help from Duncan Summers, alternately trying to seduce him and draw him away from his wife and child. With the Raven unable to protect her, Lenore is captured by Dracula's human agents and locked in a church until the morning sun destroys her.

Troy Griffin, now the head of Brigade Six, discovers a conspiracy within the Ministry of Powers and the House of Lords. Realizing they have been used as double agents against the Crown, the group begins a slow and careful planning stage to expose the conspiracy.

Alexander Rhodes begins construction of a trio of incredible skyscrapers at Pyramid Plaza in downtown Freedom City.

19/4

March: Fletcher Beaumont, Jr., in recovery from alcoholism, assumes the mantle of Bowman, training former gang member Ethan Keller as the new Arrow.

Overshadow seizes control of the TickTock Doc and the Counter-Clock Culture's "grooviest time machine in the universe." Attempting to rewrite his past defeats, multiple incarnations of the Scarab stop him with the aid of Dr. Tomorrow. However, Overshadow is able to use what he has learned about time manipulation to cut the growth time of his clone armies in half. Scarab and Dr. Tomorrow agree to leave the TickTock Doc his technology as long as the time traveler promises to leave Earth for thirty years.

September: Aurora Press, suffering from a series of bad licensing deals and a waning interest in superhero comics, closes its doors.

Dr. Dippel first uses his augmentation process on human subjects. The procedure proves to be extremely crude and more often than not results in terrible deformities and mutations.

The White Lion leaves the Freedom League, returning to Dakana to rule there full-time.

April 1: Daedalus, tiring of endless battles and beginning to question the purpose of his immortal life, constructs a starship of his own design, the *Icarus*, and leaves Earth to explore the galaxy. Pseudo, who is starting to feel isolated from humanity. joins the inventor in his travels.

May 30: The Black Avenger quits the Freedom League, feeling he can accomplish more as a solo hero.

Brigade Six discovers enough evidence to expose several powerful politicians as spies in league with Communist Russia and SHADOW. Anne Gordon is killed in the operation when she absorbs a virulent plaque meant to be released on London. Betty Munroe and Charles Parker, now a couple, are captured by SHADOW agents while vacationing in Greece as a parting shot by the exposed conspirators. Both are subjected to extensive brainwashing and drug therapy to develop new powers. Munroe manages to escape, but is forced to leave Parker behind. Immediately contacting Troy Griffin, who arranges her return to the U.K., Munroe masters her new powers and she and Griffin launch a rescue effort to get Parker. Although they find the lab and destroy the technology, Parker is too far gone mentally to be saved, nearly killing both Munroe and Griffin before fleeing. After recovering from the operation, Munroe, wanting a fresh start, leaves Brigade Six with Griffin's blessing and moves to Freedom City.

Grace Gorman, the daughter of ShrapNick, suffering from lifelong psychological disorders, is illegally subjected to electroshock therapy. Her father's powers spontaneously manifest during the procedure allowing her to destroy the machine. It is the only time in her life that she shows any control over her abilities.

Betty Munroe, under the name Evening, makes her heroic debut when she stops a bank robbery in the Theatre District, quickly becoming the unofficial heroine of the West Side.



Mob enforcer Bobby "Bulletproof" Masoni, AKA "the Repentant," breaks out of prison and causes a great deal of damage to St. George's Cathedral, apparently looking for something, before being recaptured. The Repentant escapes several more times over the years, always returning to the church, but never revealing why.

Jack Carlton, having discovered evidence of criminal activity within Grant Conglomerates, investigates the corporation, thinking he will solve the crime as Kid Gargoyle and make the arrest as Officer Jack Carlton, cementing his reputation with both his identities. Instead, he is captured and turned over to the Labyrinth. Carlton is subjected to painful cybernetic augmentation and brainwashing. Renamed the Eye of Vengeance, he is sent to eliminate the heroine Evening. After several unsuccessful attempts to kill the heroine, Evening uses her mental powers to override the brainwashing, freeing Jack's human consciousness.

While attending the Hanover Institute of Technology, Andrea Atom meets Mentac, who is hiding on Earth as a mentalist debunker of the paranormal. Discovering the young man has actual mental powers, she confronts him and he tells her that he uses his façade as a stage mentalist to find con-artists and true paranormals who abuse their abilities. Andrea introduces Mentac to her father, beginning a long association between the mentalist and the Atom Family. Mentac's presence however, causes friction with Dr. Atom's ward, Jack Wolf, the son of famous astronaut who went missing on an early orbital mission, who has been carrying a torch for Andrea for some time.

June 11: Alexander Rhodes cuts the ribbon officially opening the Pyramid Plaza skyscrapers.

SILVER AGE HEROES

reedom City's Silver Age is the first wherein some of its heroes are seasoned veterans of a world at war while others are idealistic newcomers, full of drive and ambition to change the world and make it a better place or just fit in. Almost as if to combat the tendency to see costumed superhumans as commonplace, the Freedom City of his era becomes an increasingly fantastic place. Forget about just guys in long underwear able to pick up getaway cars and leap tall buildings, or ladies who can bounce bullets off of a glowing shield; this is a world of alien invasions (and tourists), armies of sinister clones, time travel, other dimensions, and literal gods walking the Earth.

The Silver Age is also the heyday of the superhero team, with the founding of the legendary Freedom League as well as offbeat groups like the Atom Family and their fantastic explorations (which last well through what many consider the end of the era), Britain's Brigade Six, and the alien Newcomers and their hope for universal peace and love.

THE FREEDOM LEAGUE

he world's greatest heroes, banded together to fight forces and foes too great for any one hero to handle, the Freedom League becomes legendary during the Silver Age of Freedom City, creating a legacy that is reborn in the modern world after the Terminus Invasion. The League is the largest and most powerful hero team in the world, and also one of the most dynamic, its membership changing over the years as some heroes come and go. Still, the core team remains stalwart defenders of Freedom, and the world.

THE MANSION: FREEDOM LEAGUE HQ

Shortly after the Freedom League formed in the wake of Hades' invasion, the team moved into the vacant Beaumont Mansion down-town with the blessings of Fletcher Beaumont, the first Bowman. The Mansion (as most called it) served as the headquarters of the Liberty League until that team's dissolution in 1955 (see page 77 of *Golden Age* for information about the Mansion during this era).

Mothballed for several years, the turn of the century manor needed some work the Freedom Leaguers were more than willing to provide. Daedalus heavily renovated and upgraded Beaumont Mansion, both structurally and technologically. Lower-level workshops and training areas were expanded and improved, while new electronics and security systems were installed upstairs. Improving the Mansion was one of Daedalus' ongoing projects during the years the League used it as a base, along with repairing the damage done by their various foes.

Beaumont Mansion was virtually demolished during the Terminus Invasion in 1993, leading to the decision to scrap what remained of the building. The Beaumont family donated the property to a trust established for the Freedom League, which built Freedom Hall on the site (see *Freedom City*, page 112, for details).

BEAUMONT MANSION

JN

HEADQUARTERS

Size: Large, Toughness: 10, Features: Combat Simulator, Communications, Computer, Defense System, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Hangar, Holding Cells, Infirmary, Laboratory, Living Space, Power System, Security System

Cost: 16 equipment points

THE PEGASUS

The Pegasus is a highly-advanced supersonic aircraft designed by Daedalus and used by the Freedom League as their primary mode

of transportation outside of Freedom City. While some League members, notably Centurion and Star Knight, are capable of flying faster than the Peqasus, it is capable of outpacing most aircraft of its time.

Initially, the Pegasus was only capable of atmospheric flight, but Daedalus later upgraded it with space-flight capabilities, including a faster-than-light stardrive, which expanded the Freedom League's reach to the whole of the solar system and nearby stars as well.

THE PEGASUS

Strength 65, Flight Speed 8 (2,500 MPH), Space Travel 5, Defense 6, Toughness 13, Size G; *Features:* Navigation System, Super-Senses 7 (blindsight [radar], extended 3)

Cost: 38 equipment points

Note that the 54 equipment points (or 11 ranks) worth of equipment making up the League's HQ and vehicle are not accounted for in the member's game stats; assume League members have each donated at least one power point to an Equipment feat rank for this purpose.

GALATEA

Intrigued by Daedalus' engram transfer technology, Talos stole it from his old foe and used it to develop a female form robot to function as his "bride," patterning her mind on that of the sorceress Medea, the first female to thwart Talos. This proved a mistake, as Galatea (named for the legendary living statue of Greek myth) also thwarted Talos' desires. Her artificial intelligence incorporated an unprecedented degree of free spirit, and she rebelled



VEHICLE

against her creator, helping the Freedom League rescue Daedalus and defeat Talos.

Lost and alone in the world, Galatea accepted the League's offer to come stay with them, quickly becoming a valuable member of the team. She struggled with human-like emotions, dealing with bouts of loneliness, especially after an unrequited attraction to Daedalus (who saw her as more of a "daughter" figure and was reminded of his failures with the Chorale). Galatea took innocent joy in many simple experiences, but was also denied some human pleasures by virtue of her artificial nature.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SILVER AGE OF FREEDOM



GALATEA POWER LEVEL 10							VEL 10
STR	DEX		C0N	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+11	+2		—	+4	+2		+1
32	115	5	—	18	15		13
TOUGHNESS FORTIT		RTITUDE	REFLEX			WILL	
+11			_	+7			+9

SKILLS

Computers 8 (+12), Disable Device 8 (+12), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+10), Notice 6 (+8), Search 4 (+8)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Ambidexterity, Eidetic Memory, Improved Aim, Improved Initiative

POWERS:

Blast 10 (force beams) Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects) Protection 11 (Impervious 6) Super-Senses 6 (extended vision 1, infravision, low-light vision, radio, time sense, ultra-hearing) Super-Strength 4 (heavy load: 16.6 tons)						
СОМВАТ						
	Attack +9, Grapple +24, Damage +11 (unarmed), +10 (blast), Defense +9, Knockback -9, Initiative +2					
Abilities 43 + Skills 8 (32 ran Saves 12 = Total 177	ks) + Feats 5 + Powers 73 + Combat 36 +					
Real Name: Galatea	Occupation: Hero					
Identity: Public	Affiliation: Freedom League					
Height: 5 ft. 10 in.	Eyes: White (no pupils)					
Weight: 300 lbs.	Hair: Silver					

HALOGEN

Maggie Burroughs was a research technician for ASTRO Labs when an experimental plasma generator overloaded. Maggie saved the other members of her research team, at the cost of being locked in the test chamber with the generator. ASTRO Labs initially believed she was vaporized by the blast, and she was, in a way. Maggie was transformed into a being of pure plasma energy.



Eventually, she mastered the ability to return

to her human form at will. She discovered a plot by the Foundry to sabotage ASTRO Labs and acquire supposedly "flawed" technology after it was abandoned. During the investigation she met Daedalus, who introduced her to the Freedom League and later recommended her to take his place in the active roster when he left the team.

Halogen is an attractive African-American woman dressed in a brief and close-fitting silvery costume with shoulder-length metallic blue gloves and thigh-high metallic blue boots. In plasma form, she appears to be made up of brightly glowing golden energy.

HALOG	EN			PO	WE	R LE	VEL 10
5TR	D	H	CON	INT		15	CHA
+🖬	+4		+2	+3	+1		+1
10	11		14	16			12
тоибни	E55	FORTITUDE		REFLE	ł		WILL
+2			+5	+6			+8

SKILLS

Craft (electronics) 4 (+7), Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 (+9), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+9), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (technician) 8 (+9), Sense Motive 4 (+5)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 4, Attractive, Improved Initiative, Precise Shot

POWERS

Plasma Form 19: Blast 12 (plasma) Flight 12 Insubstantial 3 Strike 8 (heat; Aura, Sustained)

COMBAT

Attack +4 (melee), +8 (ranged), Grapple +4, Damage +0 (unarmed), +8 (heat aura), +12 (plasma blast), Defense +10 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback -1, Initiative +8

Abilities 23 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 95 + Combat 28 + Saves 12 = Total 173

Real Name: Margaret "Maggie" Burroughs	Occupation: Technician
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Freedom League
Height: 5 ft. 9 in.	Eyes: Brown
Weight: 130 lbs.	Hair: Brown

LADY LIBERTY

Donna Mason, daughter of Virginia Senator William M. Mason, could have had a life of luxury by simply marrying well. Donna was her father's daughter, however, with a keen mind and a desire to do some good in the world. She became a secretary working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, assigned to the dashing agent Dan Bradley.



Although she was careful not to upstage

her boss, Donna's keen investigative skills helped Agent Bradley crack many a case. One such involved a cell of fifth columnists in the nation's capitol, where Donna deduced that their target was in fact the Bureau itself. She tried to warn Agent Bradley that he was walking into a trap, but she only succeeded in being shot and left for dead as the spies abducted her boss.

While lying there, close to death, Donna experienced a vision in which the Spirit of Liberty came to her and offered her a choice:

save herself or Agent Bradley. She chose another's life over her own without hesitation and the Spirit of Liberty proclaimed her worthy. Donna awakened healed and filled with newfound power, dressed in the red, white, and blue of Lady Liberty!

Lady Liberty saved Agent Bradley and busted up the spy-ring. She continued to show up from time to time when Dan Bradley was in danger or needed her help—and he never noticed that his whipsmart secretary, Donna, was never around when Lady Liberty was on the scene. The Damsel of Democracy was quick to sign-on with the Liberty League, offering to serve as its first recording secretary, despite being one of its most powerful members. This humility was a hallmark of Lady Liberty's career.

This dissolution of the Liberty League was particularly difficult for Lady Liberty. She planned to finally reveal her true identity to Dan, romance having finally blossomed between the FBI agent

LADY L	IBEF	RTY		PO	WE	R LE	VEL 10
STR	D	H	CON	INT		15	CHA
+110	+3		+2	+1	+3		+4
30/12	16		14	12	11	6	18
TOUGHN	ESS FORTIT		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		WILL
+110			+8	+15			+11

SKILLS

Concentration 8 (+11), Diplomacy 8 (+12), Gather Information 4 (+8), Knowledge (civics) 6 (+8), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+7), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+5), Notice 7 (+10), Profession (federal agent) 8 (+11), Profession (secretary) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 9 (+12)

FEATS

Contacts, Defensive Attack, Endurance, Quick Change, Teamwork
POWERS

Enhanced Strength 18 Flight 5 (250 MPH) Light Control 10 (The Light of Liberty) Alternate Power: Deflect 10 (all ranged attacks) Alternate Power: Healing 10 Alternate Power: Nullify 10 (all binding and imprisoning effects at once) Protection 8						
Super-Strength 6 (heavy load: 50 tons)						
СОМВАТ						
Attack +10, Grapple +26, Damage +10 (unarme flat-footed), Knockback -5, Initiative +3	Attack +10, Grapple +26, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback -5, Initiative +3					
DRAWBACKS						
Power Loss (all powers, when bound or imprison	ied, –5 points)					
Abilities 28 + Skills 17 (68 ranks) + Feats 5 + Po Saves 17 - Drawbacks 5 = Total 173	owers 71 + Combat 40 +					
Real Name: Donna Mason Occupation: Se	cretary, later FBI agent					
Identity: Secret Affiliation: Free	edom League					
Height: 5 ft. 9 in. Eyes: Blue						
Weight: 140 lbs. Hair: Black						

and the formerly shy Donna Mason. When the Liberty League refused to cooperate with the government witch-hunt for communist sympathizers, Donna decided to break off her relationship with Dan Bradley. She couldn't risk hurting his career if the truth of her identity came out.

Lady Liberty continued her crime-fighting career and became both an advocate for equal rights for women and a founding member of the Freedom League. She served with the League into the 1970s, when her powers began to fade. She continued with the team until her powers were practically gone, then finally decided to retire. The game information here represents Lady Liberty's abilities at low ebb, when she worked primarily as a Federal agent. For her powers at their peak, see the *Golden Age*, page 83.

MARY MINSTREL

Singer Mary Vaughn was a local Freedom City celebrity looking to make the break into super-stardom, but never quite able to get

MARY I	iL	Р	OW	ER L	EVEL 9		
STR	DEX		CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+🗖	+3		+2	+1	+	1	+4
- 11	17		14	12	13		18
TOUGHN	HNESS FORTITUDE		REFLE	H		WILL	
+5/2*		+5	+9	l		+8	

* Flat-footed

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+7), Climb 8 (+8), Diplomacy 4 (+8), Knowledge (popular culture) 8 (+9), Knowledge (streetwise) 6 (+7), Notice 6 (+7), Perform (dance) 4 (+8), Perform (singing) 10 (+14), Sense Motive 6 (+7)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Attack Specialization (blast), Attractive, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 2, Improved Initiative

POWERS

Sonic Control 9

Alternate Power: Blast 9 Alternate Power: Blast 9 (Burst Area, Touch Range) Alternate Power: Nauseate 6 (Burst Area) Alternate Power: Stun 6 (Burst Area)

COMBAT

Attack +5 (melee), +7 (ranged), +9 (sonic blast), Grapple +5, Damage +0 (unarmed), +9 (blast), Defense +12 (+5 flatfooted), Knockback -3 (-1 flatfooted), Initiative +7

Abilities 25 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 22 + Combat 34 + Saves 16 = Total 121

Real Name: Mary Vaughn	Occupation: Former singer, hero
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Freedom League
Height: 5 ft. 5 in.	Eyes: Blue
Weight: 130 lbs.	Hair: Black

beyond the nightclub scene. Late one night after a gig, she talked with a mysterious stranger about her dreams, and he offered her the opportunity to "sing like she never had before." Mary jokingly accepted and the man disappeared. She wrote the whole thing off until suddenly she drew the attention of record producers and big labels.



Just as she was cutting her first album, it

happened. Mary's singing took on a whole new quality; her voice could shatter steel or create a compelling hypnotic trance. She nearly destroyed the studio, and realized she could no longer sing normally. Indeed she could now "sing like she never had before." Her career in ruins, Mary began to sink into a deep depression, until the liquor store she was in was robbed. She used her new sonic abilities to

THE RA	VEN			PC)WE	R LE	VEL 12
STR	D	H	CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+2	+5	5	+3	+7	+!	5	+6
15	2		16	24	2		22
ТОИБНЛ	E55	FORTITUDE		REFLE	H		WILL
+8/+5	*	+6		+10			+9
* Flat-footed							

SKILLS

Acrobatics 9 (+14), Bluff 8 (+14), Computers 4 (+11), Disable Device 8 (+15), Disguise 8 (+14), Drive 6 (+11), Escape Artist 8 (+13), Gather Information 8 (+14), Intimidate 10 (+16), Investigate 16 (+23), Language 5, Notice 10 (+15), Pilot 8 (+13), Search 8 (+15), Sense Motive 8 (+13), Sleight of Hand 6 (+12), Stealth 10 (+15)

FEATS

- Acrobatic Bluff, Assessment, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 4, Equipment 10, Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Jack of All Trades, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Seize Initiative, Skill Mastery (Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Stealth), Startle, Surprise Strike, Takedown Attack, Uncanny Dodge (auditory)
- *Equipment:* commlink, costume (+2 Toughness), grapple gun (**Super-Movement 1** [swinging]), utility belt: flash-bangs (**Dazzle 4**, visual & auditory; *Alternate Powers:* boomerangs [+2 damage], smoke bombs [**Obscure 4**, visual, Continuous], stun grenades [**Stun 4**, Ranged], plus up to 10 points in other equipment.

COMBAT

Attack +16, Grapple +18, Damage +2 (unarmed), +4 (boomerang), Defense +16 (+6 flatfooted), Knockback -4, Initiative +9

Abilities 57 + Skills 35 (140 ranks) + Feats 39 + Combat 56 + Saves 11 = Total 198

Real Name: Duncan Summers	Occupation: Independently wealthy
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Freedom League
Height: 6 ft. 1 in.	Eyes: Blue
Weight: 190 lbs.	Hair: Black

catch the criminals and realized she could turn her curse into something good for others. Taking the name "Mary Minstrel" she began operating as a crimefighter in the city and eventually accepted an offer to join the Freedom League.

For much of her career, Mary looked for a way to rid herself of her unwanted powers. Her teammate Daedalus tried to help her, but all of his tests and experiments were unsuccessful, leading him to believe Mary's abilities were the work of magic, although not even Master Mage Eldrich was able to learn their true origins or remove them.

THE RAVEN

The original Raven was a somewhat reluctant member of the Freedom League. He split his time between League activities and his own cases, sometimes feeling the Freedom League was too focused on the big picture, losing sight of problems like street crime. Raven was also a pragmatist, which put him at odds with the more idealistic Centurion and Lady Liberty, and a conservative, putting him at odds with



the more liberal Black Avenger. There were times when it seemed like the Raven would quit the League in order to go it on his own, but he always remained with the team. It wasn't until he was crippled in a confrontation with his archenemy Dr. Sin that Raven finally retired from crimefighting and the ranks of the Freedom League.

The Raven had perhaps the most colorful rogues gallery of foes during this era, and was known for facing off against some of the most dangerous psychos around. Many of the Raven's enemies are detailed in *Freedom's Most Wanted* and described in brief in the **Silver Age Villains** section.

THE SCARAB

The longest-term member of the original Freedom League after the Centurion was the Scarab, mysterious master of mental powers. Scarab was actually wealthy philanthropist Alexander Rhodes, who established the Rhodes Foundation. Scarab's mental powers and diplomatic nature made him the peacemaker of the original League, helping settle disputes between its members and encour-



aging teamwork. He served as deputy-leader on occasion, and used his telepathic abilities to keep his teammates in contact in the field.

Scarab's mental powers protected him from being possessed by the Scions of Sobek, agents of an ancient Egyptian god. The other members of the Freedom League were not so fortunate. Scarab sacrificed himself, exceeding the limits of his powers to free his teammates. He is honored with a memorial statue on Heroes' Knoll, and in the lobby of Pyramid Plaza.

SEA KING

Prince Theseus is the son of King Thallor of Atlantis and Queen Evelynn, the original Siren, the first child born of the union of an Atlantean and a surface dweller in centuries. Theseus inherited a measure of his mother's mystical powers as well as the destiny to ascend the throne of Atlantis. As he wished to see his mother's world for himself and his royal parents believed it would broaden his education and understanding, Theseus became known to the world as the Sea-King, Champion of the Oceans.



Throughout his time on the surface world, Sea-King is known as a somewhat hot-headed

member of the League. He is used to a degree of royal privilege and deference, and is quick to voice strong opinions, particularly on matters of concern to "his domain." He is surprisingly deferential to Siren, his mother's namesake, because of her divine status (one of the few things outranking his own royal status). The two of them make an effective team.

THE SCARAB POWER LEVEL 1							EVEL 10
STR	D	•	C0N	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+1	+;	-	+1	+3	+1		+2
12	14		13	16	2	2	14
TOUGHN	ESS	FO	RTITUDE	REFLE	H		WILL
+9/+3/+	·I*		+16	+7			+11

*WITHOUT FORCE FIELD AND FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Bluff 6 (+8), Concentration 10 (+16), Diplomacy 8 (+10), Escape Artist 6 (+8), Gather Information 8 (+10), Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 6 (+9), Knowledge (behavioral science) 8 (+11), Knowledge (business) 8 (+11), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+9), Knowledge (history) 12 (+15), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 (+11), Notice 6 (+12), Profession (financier) 8 (+14), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+14), Sleight of Hand 4 (+6)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 3, Beginner's Luck, Benefit 4 (wealth), Connected, Jack of All Trades (past-life memories), Trance

POWERS

Comprehend 2 (languages) Flight 3 (50 MPH) Force Field 6 Super-Senses 1 (mental awareness) Telekinesis 11 Telepathy 11

COMBAT

Attack +6 (melee), +9 (ranged), Grapple +7, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +11 (+6 flatfooted), Knockback -5, Initiative +2

Abilities 31 + Skills 31 (124 ranks)	+ Feats 11 + Powers 73 + Combat 34
+ Saves 15 = Total 195	

Real Name: Alexander Rhodes	Occupation: Financier and philanthropist
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Freedom League
Height: 5 ft. 11 in.	Eyes: Brown
Weight: 170 lbs.	Hair: Black

TECTONIC

Ramon Diego discovered his mutant ability to generate and control powerful vibrations when the Terra-King had him kidnapped to power an "earthquake machine" to devastate the surface world. Rescued by the Centurion, Ramon learned to control his vibration powers and accepted an offer to job the Freedom League. The fiery-tempered young Hispanic clashed with the more authoritarian and



old-fashioned Centurion on occasion, but became an effective team-member and hero under his guidance.

SEA-KI		Р	OW	ER L	EVEL 9		
STR	D	EH	C0N	INT		115	CHA
+8	+3		+3	+	+i	2	+3
26	1	6	16	10	1	4	17
TOUGHN	55	FOI	RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		ШІШ
+9			+8	+8			+7

SKILLS

Acrobatics 8 (+11), Diplomacy 4 (+7), Handle Animal 2 (+5), Knowledge (earth sciences) 2 (+2), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 2 (+2), Language 1 (English, Atlantean native), Notice 6 (+8), Ride 6 (+9), Search 6 (+6), Survival 6 (+8), Swim 5 (+13)

FEATS

Attack Focus (melee) 2, Benefit (Atlantean royalty), Environmental Adaptation, Favored Environment (aquatic), Improved Initiative

POWERS

Defense +9 (+5 flatfooted), Knockback -4, Initiative +7

Abilities 39 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 54 + Combat 34 + Saves 15 = Total 160					
Real Name: Theseus	Occupation: Prince of Atlantis				
Identity: Public	Affiliation: Freedom League				
Height: 6 ft.	Eyes: Green				
Weight: 185 lbs.	Hair: Blond				

Tectonic is a Hispanic man in his early 20s with a thin, wiry build. He doesn't bother wearing a mask or costume, preferring instead an outfit of jeans, a tight-fitting T-shirt, work boots and a black leather jacket with sunglasses. His T-shirts often have different "tremor" or "quake" patterns on them. His hair is black and usually cut fairly short.

OTHER LEAGUERS

Many other prominent members of the Freedom League are described in some detail in the *Freedom City* sourcebook. Their Silver Age appearances are summarized in this section with reference to their full write-ups and game information in *Freedom City* with any important changes or details noted.

BLACK AVENGER

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 83

Wilson Jeffers, the Black Avenger, is described on page 83 of *Freedom City*. The Black Avenger was often known as the "least powerful" member of the Freedom League, particularly in comparison to powerhouses like Centurion and Lady Liberty, but his spirit and fighting skills made him an asset to the team and he proved his worth many times over. Jeffers felt, and to a degree still feels, that the League lost touch with the concerns of ordinary people. He chose to resign in order to fight crime on the streets of his old neighborhood. Now he runs the Lincoln Youth Center and serves as a mentor to the young hero Sonic and other students at the Claremont Academy.

BOWMAN & ARROW

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 113

The second Bowman was one of the founding members of the Freedom League and a staunch supporter of the team. Bowman's good relationship with his Freedom League teammates deteriorated, however, due to his drinking problem. Despite their best efforts, the other members of the League were unable to help Fletcher to admit and deal with his problem, so the team was left with no choice but to call for an official inquiry. Bowman quit the League before a decision was reached to avoid the disgrace of being ousted. Although Fletcher Beaumont II has since gotten his life back in order, he hasn't returned to his superhero career, and his relationship with the Freedom League was never quite the same again. With many of his former friends in the League retired or passed on, Fletcher has fairly little contact with the current Freedom League. His relations with the surviving members of the original League remain cool.

CENTURION

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 22

A founding member of the Freedom League, Centurion was the team's heart and soul throughout most of its existence. Although the immortal Daedalus and Siren were both older, Centurion was really the mentor and leader of the team, a duty he accepted reluctantly, since he never quite felt worthy of it. Still, Centurion's dedication to the League was never in doubt. Even when the other members of the team chose to leave it, Centurion remained. He only disbanded the League when he could no longer be responsible for the deaths of any of the other young heroes under his guidance. Centurion's final battle with Omega was the inspiration for the modern Freedom League. Had he survived that battle, the

TECTON				Р	OW	ER L	EVEL 9
5TR	DI	H	CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+2	+;	2	+2	+🖬	+1		+1
14	13	5	14	10	1	1	12
TOUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		WILL	
+5/+4/+	+2*		+55 +5				+=4

*WITHOUT JACKET, FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+6), Bluff 5 (+6), Climb 5 (+7), Gather Information 6 (+7), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+8), Notice 4 (+4), Perform (dance) 6 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+6)

FEATS

- Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Contacts, Defensive Roll 2, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment
- *Equipment:* Leather jacket (+1 Toughness), sunglasses (**Sensory Shield 1** [visual])

POWERS

Vibration Control 12 Alternate Power: Blast 12 (Burst Area, Touch Range) Alternate Power: Deflect 8 (all ranged attacks, Ranged) Alternate Power: Drain Toughness 12 (Ranged, Limited to crystalline

or brittle objects)

Alternate Power: Trip 12 (Burst Area)

COMBAT Attack +4 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +6, Damage +2 (unarmed), +12 (blast), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -3, Initiative +2

Abilities 16 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 8 + Powers 28 + Combat 24 + Saves 10 = Total 98

Real Name: Ramon Diego	Occupation: Hero
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Freedom League
Height: 5 ft. 9 in.	Eyes: Brown
Weight: 160 lbs.	Hair: Black

Centurion would certainly have had a place of honor as the leader of the team once more.

DAEDALUS FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 115

In many ways, Daedalus is the center around which the Freedom League revolves, although he would be reluctant to admit it. It was Hades' enmity for the immortal inventor that drove him to attack Freedom City, where Daedalus had settled, and he was the first to inform the heroes rallying to the city's defense about the true nature of their foe. Since the founding of the League, Daedalus has designed their headquarters, the Pegasus plane, and various other pieces of equipment and been a kind of helpful uncle to his teammates, a voice of considerable experience.

In return, Daedalus has found his first true friends in uncounted years among the Freedom League. Although he remains slow to open up, the brilliant hero is quite dedicated to the team he helped create. **PSEUDO**

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 119

Ri'ik Faax was gestated in the Grue Unity as an elite scout, bred to infiltrate other societies, gather information, and undermine them from within. As sometimes happened, however, his telepathic contact with humanity changed Ri'ik. He felt sympathy for the first time, and developed his own individual identity, apart from the Unity. When his fellow Grue imitated and tried to discredit the Freedom League, Ri'ik turned against this own kind to help Earth.

As the shapeshifting "Pseudo," Ri'ik became a member of the League. They also helped him adopt the human identity of "Rick Fox," freelance journalist, and he enjoyed the process of observing humanity and reporting what he saw, since it was what he'd been created to do.

SIREN

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 121

Not long after she began operating as a super-heroine, Siren encountered the Freedom League and accepted an invitation to join the team as a part-time and reservist member. The sea goddess worked with the League on and off in matters concerning her domain, and could call upon them for aid while operating in and around her home in New Orleans. When Sea-King joined the team, Siren still found occasions to work with the League, but her expert assistance in aquatic matters was not as needed.

STAR KNIGHT

FREEDOM CITY, PAGES 103 AND 122

Star Knight Sri A'Lan Koor was assigned the duty of capturing rogue knight Rojan Lhar, the only one of their order to ever betray their oath. Toward that end, Koor became a superhero on Earth and later a member of the Freedom League.

Star Knight's lack of familiarity with many Earth customs and habits sometimes proved a stumbling block for him, but he managed to overcome it. His knowledge of the universe beyond Earth was often helpful to the League and he found a kindred spirit in Daedalus.

Star Knight's abilities during his time with the League were similar to those given for the modern Star Knights on page 122 of *Freedom City*.

WHITE LION

FREEDOM CITY. PAGE 86

The Silver Age White Lion is M'Zale, King of Dakana. A progressive who understood Dakana could not maintain its legendary isolation any longer in the modern world, M'Zale reached out to other nations and world leaders. He also took up the pursuit of thefts of daka crystals from his homeland, as they made valuable components in various technologies. M'Zale found an ally in Daedalus when it came to hunting down rogue technology, and eventually joined the Freedom League to further his experience with the outside world.

M'Zale's game abilities are much like those of his son M'Balla, the modern-day White Lion, given in the *Freedom City* sourcebook.

THE ATOM FAMILY

The Atom Family is a renowned group of explorers and investigators of the unusual, led by world-famous scientist and hero Dr. Atom and consisting of his daughter Andrea, his ward Jack Wolf, and Dr. Atom's student—the mentalist debunker known as Mentac, who in fact possesses extraordinary mental powers of his own.

THE GOODMAN BUILDING

The top floors of the Goodman Building in Midtown Freedom City serve as the Atom Family's headquarters and home. Dr. Atom did not choose the new high-rise at random. On the contrary, an investigation of a number of unusual "hauntings" during the construction of the building revealed a "weak spot" in the dimensional fabric right where the summit of the building was being built. It turned out this spot was the exact place where the infant Centurion's dimensional capsule entered Earth-Prime's dimension. Dr. Atom arranged to purchase the building and built a containment and monitoring system around the top floors to study the dimensional rift, eventually learning of the Terminus and the greater expanse of the Omniverse (see the *Worlds of Freedom* sourcebook for more information).

THE GOODMAN BUILDING

HEADQUARTERS

Size: Large, *Toughness:* 10, *Features:* Communications, Computer, Defense System, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Hangar, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Power System, Security System, Workshop

Cost: 16 equipment points

SKY-CAR

The Atom Family uses a swift anti-gravity vehicle called "the Sky-Car," for getting around Freedom City and for short trips elsewhere. Jack Wolf usually pilots, although the other members of the Family are capable of doing us.

SKY-CAR

Strength 40, Flight Speed 5 (250 MPH), Defense 8, Toughness 9, Size H. Cost: 14 equipment points.

DR. ATOM

Alexander Atom earned his first PhD (in physics) at the age of 15, and went on to earn the title "Doctor Atom" several times over. At home in a laboratory or research library, Dr. Atom was not content to simply theorize or study the discoveries of others. An explorer at heart, he traveled to the farthest-flung reaches of the world, becoming a renowned scientific adventurer.



VEHICLE

Dr. Atom worked with the Liberty League during the Second World War, although he was not a regular member of the team in the field. He did go on missions behind enemy lines, such as in occupied France. As the war went on, his efforts were increasingly involved in weapons research, including the Manhattan Project, where "Dr. Atom" again earned his name.

DR. AT		P	OW	ER L	EVEL 7		
STR	D	H	CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+	+	1	+1	+11	+1	4	+1
10	13		12	32	11		12
TOUGHN	TOUGHNESS FOR		RTITUDE	REFLE	H		ШILL
+==/+=		+44	+44		-		

SKILLS

Bluff 8 (+9), Computers 8 (+19), Concentration 6 (+10), Craft (electronic) 12 (+23), Craft (mechanical) 10 (+21), Diplomacy 6 (+7), Disable Device 10 (+21), Investigate 6 (+17), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 6 (+17), Knowledge (earth sciences) 8 (+19), Knowledge (history) 6 (+17), Knowledge (life sciences) 6 (+17), Knowledge (physical sciences) 11 (+22), Knowledge (technology) 12 (+23), Languages 3 (French, Latin, Russian), Medicine 4 (+8), Pilot 4 (+5), Profession (scientist) 8 (+12), Search 8 (+19), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Survival 2 (+6)

FEATS

Benefit 3 (wealth), Connected, Defensive Roll 2, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 5, Leadership, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Master Plan, Skill Mastery (Computers, Craft–electronic, Craft–mechanical, Disable Device)

COMBAT

Height: 5 ft. 9 in.

Weight: 155 lbs.

Attack +6, Grapple +6, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +6, Initiative +1

Abilities 37 + Skills 38 (152 ranks) + Feats 17 + Powers 0 + Combat 24 + Saves 12 = Total 128					
Occupation: Scientist, explorer					
Affiliation: Atom Family					

Eves: Blue

Hair: Auburn

After the war, Alexander Atom married his lab assistant Anne and the two of them had a daughter, Andrea, in 1959. In 1961, Dr. Atom purchased the Goodman Building and moved there with his family. Anne Atom later died of inoperable cancer in 1972, one of Dr. Atom's greatest defeats as a scientist. From then on, he raised his daughter alone and never remarried. By the late '70s, Dr. Atom was the "patriarch" of a family of young heroes: his daughter Andrea, his ward Jack Wolf, and the young psychic named Mentac.

Dr. Atom is the very model of a brilliant, but often distractible, scientific genius. He's capable of spending days on end in his lab working on a particular project or trying to solve some scientific puzzle. On the other hand, he's also a man of action, and likes to get into the thick of things, although tempered by more wisdom than in his youth. Still, there are moments when things get tough one can spot the young man from a rough-and-tumble neighborhood glimmering in Dr. Atom's eye. He adores his daughter and is terribly proud of her intellect and capabilities. He loves both Jack and Mentac for different reasons, and manages to ignore their mutual affection for Andrea most of the time.

Dr. Atom has access to a wide range of equipment, along with the ability to whip up most anything he might need in short order. Distribute his 25 equipment points as-needed for his particular cur-

ANDRE	A A 1	MO		Р	OW	ER L	EVEL 6
5TR	D	H	C0N	INT		15	CHA
+🗖	+;	2	+	+9	+3		+2
10	1	4	-11	28	11	6	15
TOUGHN	E55	55 FORTIT		REFLEX		WILL	
+3/+0	1/+0*		+5	+7			+9

*Flat-footed

SKILLS

Bluff 5 (+7), Climb 6 (+6), Computers 6 (+13), Concentration 6 (+9), Diplomacy 8 (+10), Disable Device 8 (+17), Drive 6 (+8), Investigate 4 (+13), Knowledge (earth sciences) 4 (+13), Knowledge (history) 4 (+13), Knowledge (life sciences) 4 (+13), Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 (+15), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+17), Languages 3 (French, Latin, Russian), Medicine 4 (+7), Notice 6 (+9), Pilot 4 (+6), Profession (scientist) 6 (+9), Search 6 (+15), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Survival 4 (+7), Swim 6 (+6)

FEATS

Defensive Roll 2, Distract (Bluff),	Endurance,	Equipment 5,	Improved
Initiative, Jack-of-All-Trades			

COMBAT Attack +6, Grapple +6, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -2, Initiative +6 Abilities 34 + Skills 30 (120 ranks) + Feats 11 + Powers 0 + Combat 28 + Saves 16 = Total 119 Real Name: Andrea Atom Occupation: Scientist, explorer Identity: Public Affiliation: Atom Family Height: 5 ft. 6 in. Eyes: Brown

rent project, allowing him to change them around when he has access to the Goodman Building.

Hair: Brown

ANDREA ATOM

Weight: 125 lbs.

Andrea Atom is a brilliant young woman. She almost has to be, considering her parents. Still, Andrea has always been her father's daughter and admires him more than any man she has ever known. Since she was thirteen and her mother passed away, Andrea has tried to look after her father, and she is the one to remind him of the mundane and routine matters that sometimes escape his attention. Forced to grow up fast, she's remarkably mature and level-



headed, but perhaps a bit too stubborn and headstrong for her own good.

Andrea has always had a friendly rivalry with her father's ward Jack, a playful, teasing relationship that might have blossomed into something romantic, had she not met Mentac. When she first encountered the brooding mentalist during her freshman year at the


Hanover Institute of Technology, Andrea was drawn to him. She discovered Mentac possessed actual psychic powers and convinced him to meet and work with her father while she continues to try and draw the dour young man out of his shell. Andrea is the only one who can get Mentac to crack a smile most of the time.

Although some see Andrea Atom as just her father's glorified lab assistant, she is quite a skilled scientist and technician in her own right. Although she has a lifetime of physical training and has picked up a variety of odd skills here and there, perhaps her greatest abilities are her unfailing faith in the people she trusts and the tendency of her family's enemies to underestimate her—always to their regret.

MENTAC

"Mentac the Magnificent" made a name for himself as a young man debunking so-called psychics and related charlatans who tried to bilk innocent people out of their money or pull the wool over the eyes of legitimate researchers. What people did not realize was Mentac was

MENTA	C			Р	OW	ER L	EVEL 8
STR	D	H	CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+🖬	+;	2	+1	+2	+1	4	+1
10	1	4	12	15	11	B	13
TOUGHN	ESS FOR		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		WILL
+5/+	+1*		+5	+7		-	14

SKILLS

Bluff 6 (+7), Concentration 12 (+16), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Handle Animal 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 2 (+4), Notice 4 (+8), Pilot 2 (+4), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 4 (+6)

* FLAT-FOOTED

FEATS

Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment 2, Improved Initiative, Second Chance (Will saves), Taunt

POWERS

Comprehend 2 (languages Mind Shield 5 Super-Senses 1 (mental aw Telepathy 8 Alternate Power: Illusion 4 Alternate Power: Mental Bla	vareness) (all senses, Phantasms)
COMBAT	
Attack +5, Damage +0 (una Initiative +6	rmed), Defense +12 (+5 flat-footed),
Abilities 22 + Skills 11 (44 r + Saves 13 = Total 129	anks) + Feats 11 + Powers 40 + Comb
Real Name: Mentac	Occupation: Adventurer, debunke
near Name. Mental	occupation. Adventurer, debuilke

Real Name: Mentac	Occupation: Adventurer, debunker
Identity: Secret (Farsider)	Affiliation: Atom Family
Height: 6 ft.	Eyes: Gray-Green
Weight: 170 lbs.	Hair: Black

himself a genuine psychic, using his powers covertly to deal with both fakes and true psychics misusing their gifts while covering it up with an air of skepticism. Mentac himself was a mysterious figure, an orphan with no past, a brilliant mind, and little interest in human contact, but willing to help others for little or no reward.



Andrea Atom was the first to see through Mentac's charade and to break through his

cold façade. Not long thereafter, he found himself with a new family of people who cared about him (even if he and Jack Wolf often fought like cats and dogs). Mentac's telepathic powers are a valuable asset to the Atom Family, and since he has joined them, their adventures take them to even broader and stranger vistas than ever.

Mentac shares Andrea Atom's attraction, but he has difficulty opening up even to her. The truth he keeps hidden is Mentac is not just an unusually talented psychic. He's not even from Earth! In fact, he is the exiled surviving member of the royal family of Farside City on the Moon, hiding on Earth from his aunt, Lady Lunar, who led a coup and seized power for herself.

JACK W		POWER LEVEL 8					
5TR	DEX		EON	INT	Ш15		CHA
+4	+3		+4	+1	+2		+3
18	16		18	12	14		16
TOUGHNESS FO		FO	RTITUDE	REFLEX		ШІШ	
+6/+4*			+8	+8		+8	

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Acrobatics 5 (+8), Bluff 7 (+10), Climb 6 (+10), Craft (chemical) 4 (+5), Disable Device 6 (+7), Drive 10 (+13), Intimidate 8 (+11), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+9), Language 2 (Russian, Spanish), Medicine 4 (+6), Notice 8 (+10), Pilot 12 (+15), Profession (soldier) 6 (+8), Survival 8 (+10), Stealth 6 (+9)

FEATS

- All-out Attack, Assessment, Attack Focus (melee), Beginner's Luck, Defensive Roll 2, Diehard, Dodge Focus 2, Elusive Target, Endurance, Equipment 3, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Taunt, Track
- *Equipment:* blaster (+5 damage), plus up to 5 points in other equipment.

COMBAT

at 30

Attack +11 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +14, Damage +4 (unarmed), +5 (blaster), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -3, Initiative +7

Abilities 34 + Skills 25 (100 ranks) + Feats 24 + Powers 0 + Combat 36 + Saves 15 = Total 134

Real Name: Jackson Connor Wolf	Occupation: Adventurer, pilot
Identity: Public	Affiliation: Atom Family
Height: 6 ft.	Eyes: Blue
Weight: 180 lbs.	Hair: Dark blond

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SILVER AGE OF FREEDOM

JACK WOLF

Jack always admired his father, Lt. Colonel John Wolf, a daring Air Force pilot and astronaut who was a good friend and associate of Dr. Alexander Atom. When his father was lost on an early space mission, Jack did his best to take care of his mother, but she was unable to care for him and Jack was placed with Dr. Atom and his family after Alexander pulled some strings with his government contacts.



Jack wanted to become a pilot, like his father, but disdained the military and government he felt sent Col. Wolf to his death. Instead, he trained with Dr. Atom and his various associates and learned as much or more than he could have at military school or boot camp. By the time he was a teen, Jack was already a capable pilot and good in a fight. Having grown up with her, Jack was also wrestling with feelings for his mentor's daughter, Andrea. She saw Jack more like a brother, and his fears were confirmed the moment she brought that weirdo Mentac into their lives. Ever since, things haven't been the same, but one thing is for certain, they haven't been boring.

Jack is fiercely devoted to his foster family: seeing Dr. Atom like a second father, and carrying a torch for the lovely and talented Andrea. He even sticks up for Mentac when things get rough, although most of the time he enjoys baiting the stuck-up stone face, if only secretly because he thinks Andrea likes him. Still, Mentac is part of the team, part of the family, and that counts for something.

<u>THE NEWCOMERS</u>

The Newcomers are both an underground music sensation and a team of young superheroes. What many do not know is the Newcomers are also aliens stranded on Earth for a variety of reasons, doing their best to fit in and help their adopted world in the process. They travel the highways and byways of the great nation of America in the company of their human friends, helping people, putting on shows, and solving crimes along the way.

THE WONDERBUS

The Newcomers get around in a vehicle Ryder calls "the Wonderbus," an example of Terminus technology and his means of escape. To the outside world, the Wonderbus looks like a fairly ordinary Recreational Vehicle, but on the inside, it is as large as a mansion, with more than enough room for the Newcomers, their human friends, and occasional guests (along with all of the team's instruments and other gear). The Wonderbus is also capable of "driving" on air. It originally had dimension-hopping abilities, but these were burned out in Ryder's escape from the Terminus.

Either Ryder or Jake King generally drives the Wonderbus, although Indigo, Serafina, or even Bigfoot can handle it under routine conditions. Jimmy King would *love* to drive the 'bus, but he's not allowed to yet, except in the most serious emergencies.

THE WONDERBUS

VEHICLE

Strength 50, Ground Speed 5, Defense 8, Toughness 11, Size H (A interior). *Features:* Armor 3, Dual Size, Self-Repairing, Super-Movement 2 (air-driving)

Cost: 17 equipment points.

JACOB "JAKE" KING

The Newcomer's manager, mentor, and overall guide to Earth and humanity is Jake King, a modestly successful entertainment agent before he met up with the young Newcomers on a camping trip with his nephew, Jimmy. It was Jake who came up with the idea of putting the youngsters together as a band and helping them tour, and he handles many of the practical issues confronting a group of true "illegal aliens" operating in human culture.

All Jake ever wanted was to manage a star act and, with the Newcomers, he's got one. He's really not looking to get rich, or even famous, and enjoys looking after his young charges and helping them to help other people, whether it's using their amazing powers or just providing them with some good music and a good time.



Jake is an older guy, commonly seen in a rumpled suit with a half undone tie, shirtsleeves and suspenders, or loud Hawaiian print shirts. He likes to eat, smoke cigars, drink on occasion, and doesn't apologize for enjoying life while he can. He's got an easy laugh and a brusque attitude towards anyone posing a problem for his young charges.

JIMMY KING

Twelve year-old Jimmy King has been with his uncle Jake since losing his parents in an accident when he was only seven. Getting to pal around on the Wonderbus with a bunch of alien rock stars is about the coolest thing Jimmy could imagine, even if he has a tendency not to listen to his uncle's advice about staying out of trouble. He loves the Newcomers and would do anything to help them out, and has shown courage and compassion far beyond his few human years in doing so.



Jimmy is a skinny, sandy-haired kid just hitting a growth spurt that will probably make him taller than his Uncle Jake eventually. He's good friends with Bigfoot and Ryder, admires Indigo's musical talents, and has a crush on Serafina.

BIGFOOT

In spite of his resemblance to the Earth legend that is his namesake, Bigfoot is actually a native of the planet Cholax V. The Lor

BIGFOOT				POWER LEVEL 10				
STR	DEX		CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA	
+13	+0		+13	+	+🖬		+1	
36*	10		36*	10	-11		13	
TOUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLEX		ШІШ			
+13		-	-1131	+3			+6	

*INCLUDES GROWTH

SKILLS

Intimidate 4 (+5), Notice 6 (+6), Perform (percussion) 10 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+8)

FEATS Improved Pin, Interpose POWERS Growth 4 (large; Continuous; Permanent; Innate) Immunity 1 (cold) **Leaping 5** (x50 distance) Super-Strength 7 (heavy load: 235 tons; Groundstrike, Innate) **COMBAT** Attack +7, Grapple +27, Damage +13 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -7, Initiative +0 Abilities 44 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 35 + Combat 26 + Saves 9 = Total 123 Real Name: Unpronounceable Occupation: Hero, musician Identity: Public (secretly alien) Affiliation: The Newcomers Height: 8 ft. Eyes: Brown Weight: 450 lbs. Fur: Brown

Republic exploited the primitive and peaceful inhabitants at one time as laborers and even mercenaries. Bigfoot was a hold-out in the illegal trade in Cholaxan slaves, charged with going on a rampage to protect Serafina, who befriended him. Together they fled the authorities and encountered the other Newcomers on Earth.



Although Cholaxans are incapable of

human speech, Bigfoot communicates via Serafina's psychic abilities. He is a kind-hearted and gentle being, although possessed of great strength and a fierce devotion to his friends. In particular, he would do anything for Serafina, and bristles at any perceived threat to her. Most people seeing the Newcomers' stage-act think "Bigfoot" is a costume or special effect, even some kind of puppet. Most of the time, the big quy has to hide-out in the Wonderbus, although he sometimes dons an overcoat and wide-brimmed hat to conceal his true nature and pass amongst humans.

Jake King has speculated that maybe other Cholaxans have found their way to Earth in the past, leading to the creation of the "bigfoot" and "sasquatch" legends.

INDIGO		POWER LEVEL 9						
STR	DEX		C0N	INT	ШІ5		CHR	
+1	+2		+1	+2	+1		+2	
12	15		13	14	13		15	
TOUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLEX		WILL			
+11/+1*			+16	+7			+6	

*WITHOUT PROTECTION

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+6), Bluff 6 (+8), Concentration 10 (+11), Knowledge (popular culture) 2 (+4), Perform (stringed) 10 (+12), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Stealth 2 (+4)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 2

POWERS						
Device 15 (the Nightstone) The Nightstone: Comprehend 2 (languages), Darkness Control 12 (Alternate Powers: Blast 12, Create Object 12, Dazzle 12 [visual]), Flight 8 (2,500 MPH), Immunity 9 (life support), Protection 10 (Impervious 7), Super-Senses 2 (darkvision)						
СОМВАТ						
Attack +4 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +5, Damage +1 (unarmed), +12 (blast), Defense +9 (+5 flatfooted), Knockback -9, Initiative +2						
Abilities 22 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 60 + Combat 26 + Saves 15 = Total 101						
Real Name: Zefir In'Dego Occupation: Musician, adventurer						
Identity: Secret Affiliation: The Newcomers						

Eyes: Indigo

Hair: White

INDIGO

Height: 6 ft. 2 in.

Weight: 175 lbs.

Zefir In'Dego was never likely to follow in his father's footsteps as a scientist or explorer of the past on Zultas. Young Zefir looked towards the future and wanted to be an artist, a musician. Matters changed when his father Ollano discovered an ancient Preserver site. Word of his discovery spread in spite of Ollano's best efforts, reaching the ears of a Zultasan warlord, who wanted anything of value the scholar might have found.



Ollano managed to get his greatest discovery into his son's hands before the warlord's men caught him and he was able to hold out under interrogation long enough for Zefir to get away. When cornered at the spaceport, the younger In'Dego discovered the true nature of the dark gem his father gave him. Not just a valuable jewel, it was the Nightstone and he was able to use its power to escape. The warlord who sought In'Dego soon fell to other fac-



tions on Zultas, particularly the ambitious Queen Khana, but with his father gone, Zefir has nothing to bring him back home.

Indigo is perhaps the most powerful of the Newcomers, although he prefers to settle conflicts as non-violently as possible. His mastery of the Nightstone has improved over time, allowing him to shape its energy into different forms, and he has developed a strong bond with the alien jewel. Enemies often seek to take the stone from him and Zefir holds on to it at least partly out of fear of what it could do in the wrong hands.

RYDER

Ryder does not remember a time before the Helpful Hospice or the torment suffered there. He might have come from any of an infinity of worlds before ending up in the Terminus. All he knows is that he was saved from becoming another of Omega's minions by the Overriders and that they took him in. Unfortunately, their kindness to him was nothing but a trap; an implant led Omega's forces out into the Warpwold after the Overriders. Only Ryder's



realization and sacrifice was able to lead them away.

It was in the depths of the Warpwold that he found the Wonderbus or it found him. Ryder was able to use its damaged dimension-hopping circuits to blast free of the Terminus and rocket out into the Omniverse, finding himself on a world called "Earth." He accidentally brought some of Omega's agents along for the ride, scattering them across the planet. In seeking out other Newcomers to Earth, Ryder found friends and allies to help him against the forces of the Terminus. When asked his name, all he can tell anyone is "I'm a 'Ryder".

SERAFINA

Even from a race of winged humanoids with the ability to fly, Serafina was born unique. She possessed not only a beautiful and captivating singing voice, but also a mutant psychic ability, making her a valuable commodity. Small wonder she was kidnapped and sold into slavery on the harsh frontiers of the Lor Republic. She eventually escaped with the aid of Bigfoot, a powerful Cholaxan she befriended. Fleeing from bounty hunters,



they eventually found their way to Earth and the company of the Newcomers.

Serafina is a kind and gentle soul, somewhat hardened by her experiences in the cold, harsh galaxy. She loves many of the qualities she sees in humanity, but is confused and repulsed by others, particularly the human capacity for violence and prejudice. She pities species unable to experience the joys of unbounded flight and has tried to teach Indigo some of it (although just getting him comfortable with the idea of flying has been work). She adores Jimmy King like a little brother, and considers Bigfoot her dearest friend.

RYDER		POWER LEVEL 10					
5TR	DI	H	C0N	ΙΠΤ		15	CHR
+161	+2		+2	+1	+44		+3
EI/IE	14		15	13	19		17
TOUGHNESS FO		FD	RTITUDE REFLE		K		ШILL
+12			+8	+8 +1			

SKILLS

Bluff 6 (+9), Computers 6 (+7), Craft (electronics) 8 (+9), Drive 8 (+10), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+9), Notice 6 (+10), Perform (singing) 7 (+10), Perform (stringed) 7 (+10)

FEATS

Attack Focus (melee) 3, Equipment 17, Move-by Action *Equipment*: The Wonderbus (see description)

POWERS

Enhanced Strength 18 Protection 10 (Impervious 4) Super-Speed 5 (250 MPH) Super-Strength 4 (*heavy load:* 14.7 tons) COMBAT

Attack +10 (melee), +7 (ranged), Grapple +24, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -8, Initiative +22

Abilities 31 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 21 + Powers 65 + Combat 30 + Saves 18 = Total 179 Real Name: Unknown Occupation: Wanderer, musician, hero Identity: Secret (even from him) Affiliation: The Newcomers Height: 5 ft. 11 in. Eyes: Dark blue Weight: 175 lbs. Hair: Black

SERAFI		POWER LEVEL 9					
5TR	DEX		CON	ΙΠΤ	Ш15		CHR
+2	+5		+3	+2	+44		+4
14	21		16	14	18		19
TOUGHNESS FO		FO	RTITUDE	REFLEX		ШШ	
+7/+3*			+7	+9		+8	

*Flat-footed

SKILLS

Acrobatics 8 (+13), Medicine 2 (+6), Notice 6 (+10), Perform (singing) 10 (+14), Search 4 (+6), Sense Motive 10 (+14)

FEATS

Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 4, Fascinate (Perform), Favored Environment (aerial), Move-by Action

POWERS

Flight 3 Telepathy 6

Alternate Power: Emotion Control 6 (Perception Area [hearing], Limited to calm)

COMBAT

Attack +5, Grapple +7, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +11 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -3, Initiative +5

DRAWBACKS

Power Loss (Flight, if wings are bound, -1 point)

Abilities 42 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 11 + Powers 19 + Combat 24 + Saves 12 - Drawbacks 1 = Total 117

Occupation: Musician, hero
Affiliation: The Newcomers
Eyes: Blue
Hair: Black

SOLO HEROES

n addition to more teams than ever before, Silver Age Freedom City saw a number of heroes who worked primarily on their own, occasionally teaming up (after a fight or some other misunderstanding) to take on criminals and threats to the city and the world.

THE EYES OF NIGHT

IRON AGE, PAGES 103-105

Evening and the Eye of Justice, together known as "the Eyes of Night," were active in the later years of Freedom City's Silver Age, before their activities took on a harder edge to deal with the rising tide of crime and corruption in the city. They operated primarily in the West End well after Hepcat (see the following) had become just a local legend and they had a similarly adversarial relationship with the authorities at first. Their abilities are similar to those presented in *Iron Age*.

ADRIAN ELDRICH

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 139

Earth's Master Mage comes into his own during this time in Freedom City: Eldrich settles in Freedom's Riverside neighborhood following the Second World War and pursues both his studies and responsibilities as defender of Earth's reality with vigor. He has no lack of challenges: both Malador and Queen Una are his persistent foes during this period.

His heroic career remains largely unknown to the general public. Those who are even aware of him merely consider him an "eccentric expert on the occult" consulted by the authorities on occasion. Heroes like the Freedom League and the Eyes of Night are well acquainted with Eldrich's true role, however. Dr. Atom also knows Eldrich from encounters during the War, although the famous scientist does not attempt to hide his discomfort with the very idea of magic, and dislikes having to consult Eldrich in such matters.
HEPCA	1						
5TR	D	H	C011	INT		15	CHR
+4	+1	-	+3	+2	+3		+3
18	2	2	17	15	11	6	17
TOUGHN	JUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		WILL
+7/+	7/+3*		+8	+10			+8
* Flat-footed							

SKILLS

Acrobatics 9 (+15), Bluff 10 (+13), Concentration 4 (+7), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Escape Artist 8 (+14), Gather Information 8 (+11), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (art) 8 (+10), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+10), Knowledge (streetwise) 9 (+11), Language 2 (French, Spanish, possibly others), Perform (oratory) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+12)

FEATS

Acrobatic Bluff, Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (melee) 4, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 4, Elusive Target, Evasion 2, Grappling Finesse, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Takedown Attack, Taunt, Uncanny Dodge (hearing), Weapon Bind

POWERS

Leaping 3 (x10 distance)

COMBAT

Attack +14 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +20, Damage +4 (unarmed), Defense +11 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -3, Initiative +10

DRAWBACKS

Normal Identity (Jonas Grey, full action, -5 points)

Abilities 45 + Skills 26 (104 ranks) + Feats 31 + Powers 3 + Combat 36 + Saves 14 - Drawbacks 5 = Total 153

"All you cats dig what I'm puttin' down: the Hepcat is the groovin'est hero ever in dis here town." That's what they sing in parts of the West End where the legend of the Hepcat began. Few actually know just how important those lyrics are to the origins of one of Freedom City's most unusual heroes.

As any great mystic will agree, words have power, particularly words spoken or sung aloud, and repeated over and over. In particular poetry, whether spoken word or verse, is the very root of the term "spell." That is apparently why the cool rhymes of a would-be young Beat poet named Jonas R. Grey tapped into something that transformed Jonas' words into a power that in turn transformed him into the "groovin'est hero" of 1950s Freedom City: the Hepcat!

Jonas initially thought his late-night forays as the crimefighting Hepcat were nothing more than fever dreams, but he quickly learned the mysterious figure from his nocturnal visions was not only real, but also an embodiment or aspect of Jonas' psyche, given form and power. Eldrich later identified Hepcat as a kind of spirit of youthful rebellion combined with a very human need for heroes like those driven into early retirement by the post-war American culture.

POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Jonas Reginald Grey	Occupation: Writer and poet
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: None
Height: 5 ft. 8 in.	Eyes: Blue (as Jonas), Black (as Hepcat)
Weight: 155 lbs.	Hair: Brown (as Jonas), Black (as Hepcat)



Hepcat quickly became the beloved hero of the West End and Southside communities of Freedom City, although the police officially considered him an outlaw vigilante. Always one to "do his own thing," Hepcat worked with other heroes from time to time, but showed no interest in ongoing "team-ups," much less joining a group.

AWED LEVEL

HORUS THE AVENGER

When his uncle Set the Destroyer possessed a hapless mortal conjurer and threatened to spread darkness across the human world, Horus, the Avenger of His Father, petitioned great Ra to go to the mortal realm and do battle with Set. In accordance with the Pact, Ra would only grant his permission if Horus found a mortal willing to host his divine essence. Otherwise, the gods of Heliopolis would not interfere.

So it was that archeologist Henry Farrow discovered a hidden chamber in the Valley of Kings, untouched by human hands for millennia. Within, he found the mighty Ankh of the Avenger and the incantation: "Horus, Avenger, Lord of Light / Grant me now your godly might / Let we two do what is right / Banish evil into the *night!"* With those words, meek Henry Farrow was transformed ... into the avatar of the Avenger! The newly reborn Horus initially suffered some memory loss due to a curse laid by Set as a trap for any of his fellow gods who might try and stop him. In spite of this handicap, Horus overcame various foes, regained his true identity, and stopped Set from plunging the world into eternal darkness.

When Henry Farrow returned to Freedom City, Horus went with him, and the immortal Avenger remained an active hero in the city for some years. Although he worked with the Freedom League on occasion, Horus preferred to operate alone, and turned down offers of League membership.

			PUWER LEVEL 15						
STR	D	EX	CUN	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA		
+8	+i	2	+9	+1	+3	=	+3		
26	P	4	28	13		7	17		
TOUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLE	H		ШІШ			
+11/+9* +		12	+55			+ 53			

SKILLS

Concentration 8 (+11), Intimidate 8 (+11), Knowledge (arcane lore) 7 (+8), Knowledge (history) 9 (+10), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 11 (+12), Language 1 (English), Notice 4 (+7), Sense Motive 8 (+11)

*FLAT-FOOTED

FEATS

All-out Attack, Attack Specialization (Ankh of the Avenger), Defensive Roll 2, Fearless, Improved Grapple, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Weapon Break

POWERS

Device 23 (Ankh of the Avenger, easy to lose; Indestructible, Restricted 2)

Immunity 7 (aging, disease, heat damage)

Super-Strength 8 (heavy load: 117 tons)

Ankh of the Avenger: Blast 14 (heat and light; Penetrating; Accurate 2, Alternate Powers: Dazzle 15 [visual], Light Control 15, Strike 8 [Penetrating; Mighty, Thrown]), Enhanced Feat 1 (Quick Change), Flight 8 (2,500 mph), Immunity 9 (life support; Linked to Space Travel), Space Travel 8, Super Movement 2 (dimensional, mystical dimensions; Portal; Progression

5 [x 50 mass]), Super Senses 10 (true sight)

СОМВАТ

Attack +7, +9 (Ankh), Grapple +23, Damage +8 (unarmed), +14 (Ankh blast), +16 (Ankh strike), Defense +10 (+5 flat-footed). Knockback -5. Initiative +2

DRAWBACKS

v

Normal Identity (Henry Farrow, free action, -3 points)

Abilities 55 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 95 + Combat 34 + Saves 12 - Drawbacks 3 = Total 217

Real Name:	Occupation: Archeologist
Henry Farrow, Horus	(Farrow), Deity (Horus)
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: The gods of Egypt
Height: 5 ft. 10 in. (Farrow),	Eyes: Brown (Farrow),
6 ft. 2 in. (Horus)	Amber (Horus)
/eight: 160 lbs. (Farrow),	Hair: Brown (Farrow),
225 lbs. (Horus)	Black (Horus)

SPACE RANGER

STR	DE	H	C0N	ΙΠΤ	ш	IS CHR
+3	+3		+3	+3	+•	H +3
16	16		17	17	15	1 7
TOUGHN	JUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł	ШШ
+6/+3	+6/+3*		+7	+7		+8

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Acrobatics 6 (+9), Bluff 10 (+13), Computers 4 (+7), Concentration 6 (+10), Diplomacy 7 (+10), Disable Device 8 (+11), Drive 8 (+11), Escape Artist 6 (+9), Intimidate 4 (+7), Investigate 4 (+7), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+11), Knowledge (technology) 4 (+7), Language 1 (Koruan), Notice 8 (+12), Pilot 10 (+13), Ride 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 6 (+9), Survival 6 (+10), Swim 6 (+9)

FEATS

Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 3, Elusive Target, Evasion 2, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improvised Tools, Jack-of-All-Trades, Master Plan, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Second Chance (Reflex saves), Takedown Attack, Track, Uncanny Dodge (sight)

POWERS

Device 3 (flight harness, hard to lose) Device 3 (blaster, easy to lose) Blaster: Blast 7 Flight Harness: Flight 3, Immunity 9 (life support)

COMBAT

Attack +9, Grapple +12, Damage +3 (unarmed), +7 (blaster), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -3, Initiative +7

Abilities 42 + Skills 32 (128 ranks) + Feats 25 + Powers 21 + Combat 34 + Saves 12 = Total 166

Astronaut Chuck Shepard was part of an early orbital mission for the United States space program. Things went far off course when Shepard's capsule encountered a "black hole"—later shown to be an unstable wormhole—and was drawn into it. After a rough ride, the space capsule was caught in the gravity of a planet called Korus. Marooned on a world light-years from Earth, Shepard discovered Korus was once home to an advanced civilization all but wiped out by a cataclysmic war centuries earlier.

The primary inhabitants of Korus are human offshoots (likely settled by the Preservers) although the planet has a number of alien and mutant life-forms as well. Shepard was able to use his training and salvaged equipment from his capsule to survive and make contact with a group of Koruan survivors, including a warrior-woman named Illyra. Together with the mutant shape-changer Groob, and assisted by Illyra's father, the scholar Arran Vey, the new allies help the people of Korus to survive, reclaim territory, and rebuild their civilization.

POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Charles "Chuck" Shepard	Occupation: Astronaut
Identity: Public, believed dead on Earth	Affiliation: None
Height: 6 ft.	Eyes: Blue
Weight: 185 lbs.	Hair: Black



By the time the "Space Ranger" regained contact with people from Earth, it was years later and he had made a home for himself on Korus. Choosing to allow Earth to continue to believe he was dead, Shepard remains Korus' renowned champion, using little more than his wits, skills, and a few pieces of advanced technology. He has worked with space-faring heroes like Daedalus and even returned to Earth for the occasional visit, by way of a rarely used spatial gateway unearthed in the Koruan ruins.

SILVER AGE VILLAINS

Supervillainy in the Silver Age reverses some of the trends of the previous era. In the Golden Age, most of the villains were agents of the Axis powers during World War II, literal enemies of the freedoms of the Allied nations and their people. The rest were various costumed crooks and kooks out for a fast buck or some not-so-harmless fun.

In the Silver Age there are ideologues to be sure: communist superagents are often cast in the same villainous roles as Axis super-soldiers (albeit more sympathetic at times). Still, it is the inmates who rule the asylum, with a rise in mentally deranged costumed criminals from the zany to the truly sinister. Some are still out to turn a profit, but many are just following whatever happens to obsess them.

AUGUST ROMAN

A criminal mastermind in the 1940s, August Roman fulfilled his ambition to become "Emperor of Crime" in Freedom City by the 1950s and '60s, running most organize crime in the city and surrounding area. His ambitions expanded toward build-

ing a worldwide criminal "shadow empire" the likes of which had never been seen.

Roman's greatest foe remained the Centurion, whom he considers nothing more than a "muscle-bound meddler." The criminal genius seeks to prove the superiority of his brilliant and inventive tactical mind against the Centurion's powers, and he has come close to finishing the famed hero on a number of occasions. Roman's greatest asset is his skill in distancing himself from his criminal connections. The Centurion has never been able to pin the kind of crimes on his foe that led to Roman's conviction back in the '40s or his eventual government pardon. His vast wealth and genius allows him to develop a variety of weapons and schemes to further his qoals.

Note that although Roman does not have the Inventor feat or any Craft skills (he prefers not to get his own hands dirty), he's a technical genius with considerable wealth and resources. Distribute his 100 equipment points as-needed to suit the adventure, and feel free to set Roman up with whatever plot-devices, henchmen, or other equipment he might need for his latest scheme.

				P	OW	ER L	EVEL 7
STR	D	EH-	E 011	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+1	+	1	+1	+12	+3		+3
12	13		13	22	1	B	17
TOUGHN	ESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		ШІШ
+1	+1		+5	+5		-	12

SKILLS

Bluff 10 (+13), Concentration 8 (+12), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Gather Information 12 (+15), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (art) 6 (+12), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 6 (+12), Knowledge (civics) 8 (+14), Knowledge (current events) 12 (+18), Knowledge (history) 8 (+14), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+14), Knowledge (tactics) 10 (+16), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+14), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 (+12), Language 3 (French, Latin, German), Notice 4 (+8), Perform (oratory) 4 (+7), Sense Motive 9 (+13)

FEATS

Benefit 3 (Wealth), Connected, Contacts, Distract (Bluff), Eidetic Memory, Equipment 20, Master Plan, Seize Initiative, Taunt, Well-Informed

Equipment: Assign Roman up to 100 points of equipment as needed for the adventure.

COMBAT

Attack +5, Grapple +6, Damage +1	(unarmed) or by weapon, Defense
+8, Knockback -0, Initiative +1	

Abilities 35 + Skills 34 (136 ranks) + Feats 26 + Powers 0 + Combat 26 + Saves 12 = Total 133							
Real Name: August Tiberius Roman	Occupation: Financier, crime-boss						
Identity: Public (many activities secret)	Affiliation: Crime League (various incarnations)						
Height: 6 ft. 1 in.	Eyes: Blue						
Weight: 165 lbs.	Hair: Brown (later white)						

THE BEE-KEEPER

5TR	D	H	CON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+🖬	+;	2	+3	+8	+	4	+3
10	11	4	16	26	1	B	16
TOUGHNESS FO		RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		ШІШ	
+4/+3*		+5	+ 6			+7	

POWER	LEVEL	8
--------------	-------	---

Real Name: Brian Nisbet	Occupation: Criminal
Identity: Secret (initially)	Affiliation: Troublemakers, Inc.
Height: 5 ft. 9 in.	Eyes: Blue
Weight: 160 lbs.	Hair: Brown

powers, enough to make him an occasional foe of the Centurion. He attempted to steal various supplies and scientific secrets to fur-) ther his own experiments and to blackmail the city and the country with the threat of deadly "killer bee" swarms or giant bees, even

> established a massive hive in the superstructure of a construction site in Freedom City. Each time, the Bee-Keeper has met defeat at the hands of the Centurion and other heroes.

The threat represented by the Bee-Keeper is not necessarily in his own capabilities (although he can handle himself in a fight, when it comes to that), it is his talent for creating and training different sorts of bees and bee-like creatures to do his bidding from swarms of conventional-sized "killer bees" (working like a massive distracting Environmental Control and/or Nauseate effect) to human-sized (or larger!) mutant

bees. Divide up his ranks in Minions each adventure as desired and keep his various minion-affecting feats in mind. Use the Monstrous Insect archetype from page 234 of *M&M* for starters, adding Flight and a suitable Poison Drain, along with any other capabilities you care to dream up (hive mind Telepathy, perhaps?).

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Bluff 8 (+11), Craft (chemical) 10 (+18), Craft (electronic) 10 (+18), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Handle Animal 12 (+15), Knowledge (life sciences) 12 (+20), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+14), Knowledge (technology) 10 (+18), Notice 6 (+10), Sense Motive 6 (+10)

FEATS

Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll, Dodge Focus 2, Inspire, Inventor, Leadership, Master Plan, Minions 20, Skill Mastery (Craft, Knowledges), Taunt

POWERS

Device 3 (stinger gun, easy to lose) Immunity 1 (poisons) Stinger Gun: Blast 7 (Accurate)

COMBAT

Attack +5 (melee), +7 (ranged), +9 (stinger gun), Grapple +5, Dan +0 (unarmed), +7 (stinger blast), Defense +10 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -2, Initiative +2

Abilities 40 + Skills 22 (88 ranks) + Feats 32 + Powers 10 + Combat 2 + Saves 8 = Total 138

Brian Nisbet started out as a small-time crook working with a group calling themselves Troublemakers, Inc., back in the 1950s. After a number of thefts (the most spectacular being robbing every Studebaker dealership in Freedom City), the gang eventually broke up. Nisbet did his share of time in prison, but dedicated himself to further understanding his precious bees. By the time he got out, he had expanded the science tremendously.

So the infamous Bee-Keeper returned with a new costume and motif and control over strains of mutant bees with tremendous

POWER LEVEL 9

JASMINE SIN

STR	D	H	CON	ΙΠΤ		S CHA
+2	+•	4	+2	+2	+=	+2
14	115	-	15	15	16	i 15
TOUGHNESS		FO	RTITUDE	REFLE	ł	ШІШ
+6/+2*			+ 65	+8		+8

*FLAT-FOOTED

SKILLS

Acrobatics 10 (+14), Concentration 10 (+13), Escape Artist 8 (+12), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (history) 4 (+6), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+6), Language 2 (Cantonese, English, Mandarin native), Notice 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 10 (+14)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, Assessment, Blind-Fight, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 3, Elusive Target, Equipment 2, Grappling Finesse, Improved Defense, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Redirect, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Uncanny Dodge (hearing) Equipment: Various small and concealable weapons

amounting to knives and shuriken

COMBAT

Attack +12, Grapple +14, Damage +2 (unarmed), +3 (blades), Defense +12 (+5 flatfooted), Knockback -3 (-1 flatfooted), Initiative +8

Abilities 34 + Skills 17 (68 ranks) + Feats 29 + Powers 0 + Combat 42 + Saves 13 = Total 135

Real Name: Tzin Li	Occupation: Agent of Dr. Sin
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Dr. Sin
Height: 5 ft. 4 in.	Eyes: Green
Weight: 115 lbs.	Hair: Black

Throughout his long life, Dr. Sin sired several children, none of whom survived their father. Perhaps his favorite was his daughter

Tzin Li, known as "Jasmine" (the English translation of her name). Raised by her father's servants, Tzin Li respected and adored Dr. Sin. She trained in a variety of mental and physical disciplines and, once she entered womanhood, became her father's trusted right-hand and chief assistant.

It was this role that first brought Jasmine Sin into contact with the hero known as the Raven and there was an immediate spark between them. They fought on numerous occasions as the Raven opposed the schemes of Jasmine's father, but she was never able to bring herself to kill the daring hero, even secretly arranging for his escape on several occasions. For years the relationship between dedicated hero and increasingly uncertain villainess was nothing more than flirtation, but eventually Jasmine chose the Raven over her loyalty to her father, saving him and sending Dr. Sin to what seemed like certain death. Raven retired from crimefighting and he and Tzin Li married.

QUEEN KHANA							
5TR	D	EX	CON	ΙΠΤ	III	15	CHA
+9	+3		+3	+2	+3	=	+6
28/16	11	5	16	15	11	5	22
TOUGHNESS FI		FD	RTITUDE	REFLE	H		ШІШ
*=+/=1+			17				

*WITHOUT ARMOR

SKILLS

Bluff 6 (+12), Diplomacy 6 (+12), Intimidate 4 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+10), Notice 8 (+11), Pilot 6 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Survival 6 (+9)

FEATS

Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (melee) 2, Attractive, Defensive Attack, Dodge Focus 3, Equipment 5, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Minions 20, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Startle, Takedown Attack Equipment: Assign Queen Khana up to 25 points

of equipment as suits the adventure. **POWERS**

Device 15 (warsuit, hard to lose)

Device 5 (power sword, easy to lose) Warsuit: Communication 18 (subspace, Subtle), Enhanced Strength 12, Immunity 9 (life support), Protection 10 (Impervious), Super-Senses 2 (darkvision), Super-Strength 6 (heavy load: 50 tons) Power Sword: Blast 12 (Alternate Power:

Strike 12)

COMBAT

Attack +14 (melee), +12 (ranged), Grapple +27, Damage +9 (unarmed), +12 (power sword), Defense +13 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback -11, Initiative +7

Abilities 41 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 40 + Powers 75 + Combat 32 + Saves 17 = Total 218

POWER LEVEL 13

Real Name: Khana Kinas	Occupation: Queen
Identity: Public	Affiliation: None
Height: 6 ft.	Eyes: Black
Weight: 155 lbs.	Hair: White

On the distant world of Zultas, Khana Kinas became queen of the nation-state of Feric. By ancient custom, Queen Khana was permitted to choose her consort and the eventual sire to her heir, but was required to do so or else abdicate her throne. Disappointed with the crop of suitors from her homeworld, Khana's blood was stirred by tales of a distant planet called "Earth" and the great heroes there, particularly one called the Centurion.

> Clad in her battle-armor, Queen Khana visited Earth on several occasions, trying to convince Centurion to become her consort and help her build a new empire with Zultas at its heart. The human hero always refused her, which only made Khana pursue him more ardently. Eventually, his continued rejection turned Khana bitter towards Centurion and she attempted to slay him, but once again failed to overcome him in battle and lost her claim to the throne. In its place, however, she found love with soldier on Zultas.

THE RED DEATH

5TR	DI	H	C0 N	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+2	+3		+2	+3	+i	2	+3
14	11	-	14	16	11	4	17
TOUGHNESS		FD	RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		ШILL
+9/+4*			+8	+12		-	12

* Flat-footed

SKILL

Acrobatics 6 (+9), Bluff 10 (+13), Computers 4 (+7), Craft (chemical) 6 (+9), Craft (electronic) 6 (+9), Disable Device 8 (+11), Disguise 8 (+11), Gather Information 12 (+15), Intimidate 10 (+13), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+11), Notice 8 (+10), Sense Motive 10 (+12), Stealth 10 (+13)

FEATS

Attack Specialization (gas gun) 2, Defensive Roll 4, Distract 2, Dodge Focus 4, Elusive Target, Equipment 1, Evasion, Fearsome Presence 5 (DC 15, 30 ft.), Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Seize Initiative, Power Attack, Well-Informed Equipment: Armored jumpsuit

(Toughness +3), gas mask, rebreather **POWERS**

Device 4 (gas gun, easy to lose) **Device 1** (skull mask, hard to lose) *Gas Gun:* **Nauseate 8** (*Alternate Powers*:

Suffocate 8, Paralyze 8) Skull Mask: Super Senses 2 (darkvision), Sensory Shield 3

COMBAT

Attack +8, +12 (gas gun), Grapple +9, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -4, Initiative +7

Abilities 32+ Skills 29 (116 ranks) + Feats 26 + Powers 16 + Combat 28 + Saves 25 = Total 156

POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Yussef Smerdyakov	Occupation: Spy, assassin
Identity: Secret	Affiliation: Soviet government
Height: 5 ft. 10 in.	Eyes: Brown
Weight: 165 lbs.	Hair: Brown

Under the alias "Joseph Smith," Yussef Smerdyakov operated as a spy in the United States for the Soviet Union, gathering informa-

tion on a variety of subjects. Wearing the crimson guise and skull mask of the Red Death, Smerdyakov also operated as a sometime assassin and posed as a crime-lord in order to infiltrate and gain information from the western underworld.

One of the Red Death's primary foes during his career was the Raven, who first came up against the mysterious assassin working to prove himself for the criminal underground.

Later, Raven discovered the Red Death moving in on some gang-lords' territory and attempting to poach political and military secrets from the U.S. government.

> In addition to his fearsome skull-clad nocturnal identity, the Red Death was skilled in disguise and impersonation, using a variety of cover identities and guises to further his mission.

SET THE DESTROYER

STR	DE	H	EON	ΙΠΤ		15	CHA
+10	+=	2	+12	+3	+1	2	+11
30	15		34	17		4	32
TOUGHN	E55	FD	RTITUDE	REFLE	ł		WILL 🙍
			ATTEDL				

+7

+15

POWER	LEVEL	15
--------------	-------	----

Real Name: Set, Seth, Sutekh	Occupation: Deity
Identity: Public	Affiliation: Gods of Egypt
Height: varies (typically 6 ft.)	Eyes: varies (in color and number)
Weight: varies (typically 180 lbs.)	Hair: varies (typically none)

A force of chaos and corruption, Set the Deceiver and Destroyer was exiled by his fellow gods to the endless wastes beyond their domain after his attempt to murder and usurp his brother Osiris. Set was defeated in his ambitions by Isis' resurrection of

> her husband and by the power of his nephew, Horus, the Avenger of His Father.

> Prevented by the Pact from escaping his exile, Set bided his time until the 20th century, when an unwitting initiate of one of the cults controlled by the Serpent People overreached and attempted to summon the dark god. Set responded to the summons and consumed the soul of his would-be master, taking his body as a vessel, which allowed him to manifest on the earthly plane. This led Horus to seek a way to do the same, investing his power in the Ankh of the Avenger and allowing the human archeologist Henry Farrow to discover it.

For years, Set warred against Horus, using his sorcery, shapeshifting abilities, and the minions of the various serpent cults he commanded. The sinister god also came up against other heroes, although his nephew remained his primary foe. Set sought to create a new dominion on Earth, one he could eventually use to storm the gates of Heliopolis itself and overthrow his fellow gods.

FEATS Attack Focus (melee) 4, Dodge Focus 4, Fearsome Presence 4, Improved Initiative, Ritualist

Bluff 8 (+19), Concentration 8 (+20), Diplomacy 4

(+15), Knowledge (arcane lore) 12 (+15),

(+15), Gather Information 4 (+15), Intimidate 4

Knowledge (history) 12 (+15), Sense Motive 4 (+16)

+1 5

POWERS

+1 5

SKILLS

Comprehend 2 (languages)

 Immunity 15 (aging, death effects, life support)
Magic 15 (Dynamic, spells (all Dynamic): Darkness Control 15, ESP 9 (all senses, Dimensional),
Summon Minions 5 [75-points, Broad Type, Horde, Progression 5 (up to 50)], Super-Movement 1 [dimensional, Affects Others, Progression 4], Teleport 15
Protection 3 (Impervious)
Regeneration 6 (injured 1/5 minutes, disabled 1/hour, resurrection 1/day, Regrowth)
Shapeshift 15 (75 points)
Super-Strength 5 (heavy load: 24 tons)

COMBAT

Attack +15 (melee), +11 ranged, Grapple +30, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +14 (+5 flatfooted), Knockback -9, Initiative +6

Abilities 102 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 201 + Combat 42 + Saves 11 = Total 384

OTHER SILVER AGE VILLAINS

Many of the villains in the *Freedom City* campaign setting, and others in *Freedom's Most Wanted*, were active during the Silver Age era. The following notes explain how to adjust these villains' write-ups and game information to suit a Silver Age *M&M* series. If a villain from either book is not mentioned here, you can assume that character is not active during the Silver Age (or simply does not exist at that time).

ADAMANT FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 42

The Stygian Scourge first becomes active during the 1960s, when it battled Horus the Avenger. Immortal and virtually unstoppable, Adamant returned on various occasions to plague Freedom City and its heroes for two decades, until Centurion set it in an extended orbit around the Sun. The game information given in *Freedom's Most Wanted* reflects the god-slayer's capabilities during this time and in the present day.

BARON SAMEDI

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 186

The start of the Silver Age is also the start of the conflict between Siren and Baron Samedi on the mortal plane. The sinister loa of the dead wished to take advantage of a loophole in the Pact (*Book of Magic*, page 94) offered by the worshippers of Voodoo, who regularly called their patrons into the mortal world, giving them a kind of access other divinities lacked. Seeing mortals as little more than puppets, like his zombie servants, the Baron proposed conquest and the spread of worship through force. Siren argued against this, claiming humanity was truly worthy to determine its own destiny, and that measures like the Pact were ultimately for the good. So a contest was proposed between the two loa, possessing mortal hosts and demonstrating the best and worst of humanity.

Baron Samedi's abilities are the same as given in the *Freedom City* sourcebook, although he is more given to grandiose schemes in the early years of his career as a supervillain: armies of zombies, summoning ghost pirates, passing dangerous occult secrets on to mortal magicians, and so forth. It is not until the darker decade of the 1980s that the Baron becomes a drug-lord, creating and selling zombie powder to junkies who fall under his sway.

Like Siren, Baron Samedi splits his time between the New Orleans gulf coast and Freedom City, where Siren works with the Freedom League. Given his power to teleport through shadows, it is easy for the master of the dead to appear where and when he wishes, usually at the most inopportune time for Siren.

ALIEN-GATOR FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 44

Alien-Gator was active in Earth in the 1950s, before the founding of the Freedom League and what most consider the start of Freedom City's Silver Age. Still, it would certainly be possible to extend his "stay" in the South River Swamp or to have his people send a scouting or research party. Given his treatment at the hands of humans, it is even possible for the Jerreids (Alien-Gator's race) to mount an invasion!

BEAST OF KILIMANJARO FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 50

The powerful alien creature hidden away in Dakana also became active again in the 1950s, and may present a threat during the Silver Age, especially while White Lion, the ruler of Dakana, is away from home and active with the Freedom League. The Beast escaping its Pen is a good hook to send the League rushing to Dakana to contain it before it can do too much damage.

BLACKBIRD FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 54

Freedom's Most Wanted describes the modern-day inheritor of the legacy of Alessandra Reynolds, the original Blackbird. Alessandra was a young woman obsessed with the original Raven, whom she both idolized and desired. She adopted the costume and moniker of Blackbird with the idea of becoming his crime fighting partner and winning his affections, but the Raven would have none of it. Her obsession eventually turned to bitter anger, but Raven's final rejection, and willingness to sacrifice himself to stop her, restored a measure of Alessandra's sanity (although she later infected her son with her obsession).

The game traits given for Blackbird II in *Freedom's Most Wanted* can suffice for the Silver Age Alessandra as well, although she lacks the various Devices later used by her son, relying primarily on skill and a few simple items of equipment like a grapple gun, some boomerangs, and a few smoke pellets.

BLACKTHORN FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 56

The resurrected druid Blackthorn is initially an enemy of Lady Celtic, with past-life ties to his imprisonment, but for much of the Silver Age, the druid of darkness focuses his enmity on the Centurion, who becomes his arch-foe. To Blackthorn, Centurion is a "scion of accursed Rome," even if it is not the same Roman Empire that destroyed his people and way of life. Centurion's formidable physical abilities do not protect him from some of Blackthorn's more subtle sorceries, and he is faced with the challenge of a nigh-immortal foe who does not give up easily.

Ageless and virtually unchanging, Blackthorn's game traits are the same as those given in *Freedom's Most Wanted*. He is also a likely enemy of other mystics, polluters and anyone threatening nature as he sees it or anyone with even tenuous ties to "hated Romans" or to the other druids who judged and imprisoned him ages ago. He seeks out mystics in order to defeat them and claim a measure of their magical power for his own.

BROTHERHOOD OF THE YELLOW SIGN FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 142

The ancient cult of corrupt Serpent People and other worshippers of the Unspeakable One is active in Freedom City during this era, as in many other cities. The Silver Age is the first stirrings of the cult extending tendrils of influence into the city's business and political life. For generations their presence was felt in certain "old world" families, but waned due to the interference of heroes during the first half of the 20th century. Thus, a large part of the Brotherhood's focus during the Silver Age is on increasing its numbers and influence rather than seeking to summon the Unspeakable One or offer up all of Earth's reality to their mad god.

The primary foe of the Brotherhood during this time is Eldrich, although the Master Mage sometimes receives aid from allied superheroes, who also run afoul of the Brotherhood's schemes. A great many of the Brotherhood's new recruits are humans during this time, although the Serpent People remain the true power behind the cult.

FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 58

Cereus is one of Hades' primary agents during the Silver Age, especially empowered with the authority to come to the earthly plane on

CERBERUS

certain occasions, providing opportunities to commit mischief for his master in addition to his duty of recapturing lost souls for Tartarus. The often blunt and brutal Cereus fights nearly every member of the Freedom League at some point, particularly Daedalus and the Centurion. His initial contempt for Lady Liberty and other heroines proves his undoing more than once.

Cerebus' game traits are the same as given in *Freedom's Most Wanted*.

THE CONQUEROR WORM FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 62

The mad master of the Night Crawlers terrorized the Freedom City underworld for much of the Silver Age, until he apparently perished in a final conflict with the Raven in '68. The Worm is an excellent behind-the-scenes mastermind and plotter for a Silver Age series, capable of using his almost inhuman charisma to convince his followers to carry out various crimes for him. A group of heroes might face-off against a similar group of twisted outcasts exiled to the city sewers to become the Conqueror Worm's loyal followers.

COSMIC MIND

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 190

The disembodied intellect of Dr. Mina Kosmova was a regular foe of the Atom Family toward the end of Freedom City's Silver Age and into the Iron Age, when the Atoms operated in realms beyond imagining, primarily in secret. Perhaps a version of Dr. Kosmova's later experiments could create an earlier psionic entity like the Cosmic Mind for heroes to confront. You can also use the villain's *Freedom City* traits for a similar foe like an alien or being of pure thought from another dimension.



CRIMSON KATANA

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 191

Toshiro Ranaga, the second Crimson Katana, was active during the Silver Age as a mercenary and leader of the mystical Katanarchist cult, until a gang war virtually wiped them out in the late 1970s. Ranaga's game traits are described in *Freedom City* for when he possesses Kimiyo's body, and can be used to reflect his Silver Age capabilities when he was still alive. Use the ninja archetype (*M&M*, page 227, or see *Supervillain's Handbook*) for members of the Katanarchists.

The Crimson Katana and his followers are rabidly anti-Western, particularly anti-American, and so likely foes of patriotic American heroes. They can be coldly practical and mercenary, however, and are willing to work for whoever can meet their price, whatever their nationality.

DOC HOLIDAY FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 66

The zany Doc Holiday is active during much of the Silver Age, primarily as a foe of the Raven, although he does not have a particular vendetta against any one hero, so others may encounter him in the midst of committing one of his calendar-themed crimes. Few bad guys embody the offbeat style of the era as well and Doc Holiday showing up with some crazy new scheme can make for a fun adventure that is very Silver Age.

DR. SIN

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 195

The immortal Dr. Sin is the Raven's arch-enemy during Freedom City's Silver Age. The Asian mastermind is ostensibly allied with the Communist powers of China, but merely sees them as another obstacle to his eventual and inevitable takeover and restoration of the Empire, with himself at the head. Raven confronts Dr. Sin in secret laboratories, underground lairs, on board experimental submarines, and more. He also encounters Jasmine, the mastermind's daughter and most effective agent in the outside world. So begins an attraction both of them cannot deny.

Dr. Sin's game traits are the same as given in *Freedom City*. He typically appears with a new weapon, scheme, or set of minions as each new plan comes to fruition; redistribute his Equipment and Minions points as needed to reflect this.

FEAR-MASTER I

FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 71

Dr. Arthur Levitt was active as the costumed villain Fear-Master in the 1960s, using his fear-inducing weapons against the Raven and other heroes. Committed to Providence Asylum (see *Freedom City Atlas #5: Providence Asylum*), he was declared cured of his mental illness and released in 1971. In truth, he began operating in secret, abandoning his costumed identity but continuing his experiments into the nature of fear.

FOUNDRY

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 157

The robotic Talos started the Foundry during the Silver Age, shortly after his modern resurrection. The Foundry is both a power-base for the inhuman inventor and a means to experiment with new forms of artificial life, which he considers superior to organic beings. The Foundry's willingness to supply advanced technology to criminals makes them some of Daedalus' greatest foes during this era and on into the present.

Talos and most of the Foundry machines described in *Freedom City* are close enough to their modern versions to be used unchanged in a Silver Age series. Talos also experimented with a variety of other

robots and androids, allowing the opportunity to introduce new ones into the series as you see fit. Perhaps a new robotic hero is a rogue creation of the Foundry, for example.

HADES

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 201

In many ways, Hades is the one who initiates the Silver Age of Freedom City. His attempt to invade the mortal plane and seize power for himself is the first step in a bid to eventually topple Zeus and rule Olympus. Hades' invasion, starting in Freedom City, unites a disparate group of heroes for the first time in years, leading to the formation of the Freedom League.

After his initial defeat, Hades was forced to be more circumspect in his plotting. Just following the letter of the Pact was not enough; Zeus forbade the death god from acting on the earthly plane on pain of eternal torment in his own domain. So Hades became a subtle plotter, looking for potential pawns he could pit against his enemies. He reserved a special hatred for Daedalus, who had initially spurned the gods' gift of immortality and now taunted Hades with his unending life. He sought a number of ways to claim the inventor's soul for his own, thwarted by Daedalus' cunning and the timely aid of his Freedom League allies.

Hades has the same game traits as given in *Freedom City* and can be an excellent over-arching master villain for a Silver Age series, working from his dark realm to bring about the eventual downfall of the heroes and all they hold dear.

INVISIBLE, INC. FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 21

One of the premier groups of mercenaries and spies-for-hire, the original incarnation of Invisible, Inc., run by Dmitri Korcek, operated for much of the Silver Age (between 1966 to 1971). Their "Invisible Island" provided a near-perfect hideout from the authorities, who sometimes managed to capture members of the gang, but were unable to break it up until a concerted effort by AEGIS in the early '70s.

Korcek had a tendency to hire misfits for his gang, from circus acrobats to Sumo wrestlers, femmes fatale, and con-artists. You can vary the members as you see fit, since turnover was somewhat brisk even in the gang's heyday.

JACK-A-KNIVES

FREEDOM CITY. PAGE 203

The Murder Spirit is one of Hades' primary pawns in the later part of the Silver Age and offers a ready-made villain template. Just add a suitable host for Jack to possess.

KING COLE FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 13

In and out of asylums for decades, the zany King Cole continued a criminal career throughout the Silver Age, working with his henchmen the Blackbirds or the Fable Gang, many of whom the King empowered using his various magical talismans and storybook items. Membership rotated frequently, but was usually based around nursery rhymes and fairy tales. The only constant was the King's faithful assistant Rapunzel, who used a magically animated wig of long blonde hair able to move and grapple at her command.

If you think a team-up between King Cole and the equally nutty Doc Holiday seems inevitable, then you are definitely thinking in the right Silver Age spirit! The two villains could give a group of Silver Age heroes a *very* busy Halloween or Christmas, for example.

LABYRINTH

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 162

The Labyrinth certainly exists during this era of Freedom City (as it does in virtually every era), but virtually no one is aware of it as such, since the organization works through a variety of fronts and proxies to conceal its true nature.

One of these fronts during the Silver Age was the Zodiac Cartel, harkening back to Taurus' Zodiac Cabal, which fought Daedalus for centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. The Cartel operated as an alliance of super-criminals, providing foes for heroes like the new Freedom League and a suitable distraction while Taurus worked on his plans to expand the reach and influence of the Labyrinth.

LADY LUNAR

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 204

Lady Lunar stages her coup to overthrow the rest of the Farsider royal family at the start of Freedom's Silver Age and spends some years consolidating power and influence within her new domain. The only known foray to Earth is sending the Malfideans, her personal guard, as a prelude to an invasion. Their defeat at the hands of the fledgling UN group Uniforce and the time-traveling Associates convinces the mad mistress of the Moon to delay her plans for a time, allowing her nephew Mentac time to group up and, eventually, depose her.

Of course, that does not mean there were not other feints and thrusts by Farside City toward Earth during Lady Lunar's early reign. Perhaps heroes like the Newcomers or the presence of a Star Knight on Earth had something to do with Farside City's restraint or it may have been the actions of a group of Silver Age player character heroes. Farside exile (royal or otherwise) is a good potential origin for a Silver Age Freedom City hero.

Use the game traits from *Freedom City* for Lady Lunar's Silver Age abilities, keeping in mind that her access to the Moonstone is essentially a plot device for whatever additional level of psionic power the story might require. Lady Lunar spends some time in solitary meditation with the Moonstone, delving into its secrets, and potentially uncovering new powers or techniques she can use to further her ambitions.

LENORE FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 82

The Raven's vampiric foe Lenore maintains an identity as the owner of one of Freedom City's trendiest nightclubs, the ideal cover for her own nocturnal activities. Her ability to limit her feeding to a willing band of followers, and her connections and influence in the city, allowed her to remain at large in spite of some defeats and setbacks. Her belief in indulging her every whim and desire, however, always leads her back to crime, usually theft, mainly for thrills rather than profit.

LUNA MOTH

FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 84

The seductive Luna Moth stole both property and hearts during the 1960s and '70s in Freedom City, using her various gadgets and pheromones to carry out her crimes and get away with them. Although the focus of her obsession was the handsome Raven, she never objected to some male attention and would be more than willing to get it from other heroes. Superheroines, on the other hand, are sure targets of her petty jealousy.

MALADOR THE MYSTIC

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 207

The malevolent Malador is one of Eldrich's two primary foes during Freedom City's Silver Age, the other being Una, Queen of the

SILVER AGE

Netherworld (see the following). Of course, Malador's schemes to accumulate enough occult power to regain the mantle of Master Mage can draw other heroes into the fray.

MASTERMIND

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 208

Mastermind's description in *Freedom City* does not mention any activity during the Silver Age, but that does not mean you cannot use the immortal villain in your own Silver Age series. It is entirely plausible that Mastermind may have awakened and been active during the 1960s and '70s, before having to return for one of his periodic hibernation phases, carrying him through the next few decades until the modern era.

MR. INFAMY

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 211

Likewise, *Freedom City* (deliberately) makes no mention of how long Mr. Infamy has been active in the city. His status as something of an "urban legend" may date all the way back to the Silver Age, where his tendency for granting "devil's bargains" can lead to the creation of new threats for the heroes. Who knows? Perhaps the Mr. Infamy of the Silver Age is in some way a predecessor or precursor to the modern version. In your own *Freedom City* series, it can be any way you wish (just ask the nicely dressed fellow when he shows up...).

NACHT-KRIEGER

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 213

As mentioned in the **History** section, the Nazi shadow-warrior is trapped until 1967, when Overshadow manages to free him from the prison created by White Rose and White Thorn. Defeated and trapped



again by the combined powers of Scarab, Beacon, and White Thorn, Nacht-Krieger remains in Scarab's Lair, hidden beneath Pyramid Plaza (see *Freedom City Atlas #2* for details). You can involve the heroes in the events of Nacht-Krieger's escape and recapture or even have the Nazi criminal manage to escape again during this era, with the Scarab calling upon the heroes for aid in dealing with him.

SHADOW

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 181

In the Silver Age, as in the present day, the sinister SHADOW is the pre-eminent threat to the security of the world. It is during this era that SHADOW takes on most of its modern form, although the Overshadow's role in the organization rises and falls. Still, SHADOW provides countless opportunities to confront the heroes with legions of faceless clone soldiers out to conquer the world for their hidden masters.

You can find much more detail about SHADOW, its history, operations, and resources in the *Agents of Freedom* sourcebook.

SUPERIOR

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 220

The former Nazi super-agent and exiled Ultiman Superior is a regular foe of the Centurion and other heroes during the Silver Age. Superior is one of the most powerful super-criminals, and certainly one of the most despised, given his ties to the Nazis. For much of his career he is considered a war-criminal and most believe he is the product of Nazi experimentation. Eventually, Centurion and other superheroes discover the truth about the Ultima and Superior's origins, but it does not become widely known.

Exiled by his own people, but obsessed with his own innately "evolved" nature, Superior wants to both rule the Earth and to get revenge on his people for both making him an outcast and ignoring the call of their destiny to lead humanity. His ideal scheme is one that can both bring the nations of the world to their knees and strike at Ultima Thule, such as when he attempted to seize control of a nuclear arsenal and launch some of the missiles at the site of the hidden city "as a demonstration to the world." Superior attempts to sway other "evolved" superhumans to his side, labeling them bitter enemies when they refuse his leadership and guidance.

TICK-TOCK DOC

FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 113

The time-traveling troublemaker described in *Freedom's Most Wanted* is primarily active on the West Coast of America during the Silver Age, leading the Counter-Clock Culture in their "rebellion against the tyranny of time." Of course, given the Doc's nature, he can turn up almost anywhen, from the past or future, trying to free people's minds from the linear march of minutes, hours, and days. He's a great plot device for setting up time travel stories, particularly if some villain way-lays him and gets their hands on the Grooviest Time Machine in the Universe.

TOM CYPRUS

FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 16

The shambling swamp creature puts in appearances throughout the Silver Age, returning from the South River Swamp on a regular basis. Typically, Tom Cyprus starts out harmless enough, until something sets him off and he goes on a destructive rampage. From time to time other villains manage to find him and talk the fairly simple-minded powerhouse into working with them, promising rewards or even just the simple companionship he wants.

TRAWLER

FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 117

The original Silver Age Trawler is Jared Jeffers, a deep-sea diving expert and regular foe of the Sea-King, largely due to Trawler's habit of looting Atlantean ruins of their historical treasures and his work as a smuggler. His abilities are similar to those of the second Trawler described in *Freedom's Most Wanted*, including the deep-sea armor, which allowed him to go head-to-head with the Scion of the Seas.

UNA

FREEDOM CITY, PAGE 223

Perhaps inspired by Hades' audacity, this era is when the dark queen Una is drawn to Freedom City and Earth's dimension and first begins attempting to add Earth to her interdimensional domain. Earth's Master Mage, Eldrich, regularly opposes her and Una's ploys (and largely her existence) remain unknown to the people of the city and the world.

ALISTER USHER FREEDOM'S MOST WANTED, PAGE 119

The twisted Alister Usher rules a powerful criminal syndicate in the Silver Age, dealing in vices too perverse even for crime-lords like August Roman and his ilk. The Raven fought Usher and his underlings throughout the 1960s, culminating in the eventual fall of the House of Usher. Other heroes might take Ravens place or contribute to the struggle against the crime family. Usher's business trafficking in illegal drugs, particularly *adrenochrome*, might even lead to the origin of a new super or two.

THE SILVER AGE FREEDOM CITY SERIES

The Silver Age of Freedom City can support virtually any type of *Silver Age* series for *Mutants & Masterminds*, which is a broad range of options. Most of the series creation and Gamemasterming advice from the *M&M* rulebook applies, although GMs running a Silver Age game may want to go for a more free-wheeling feel to encourage the kind of out-there ideas and story-lines that happened during the period.

SERIES FRAMEWORKS

The following are four major series archetypes suited to the setting and the period, either using existing Freedom City heroes or substituting new player character heroes for the existing Silver Age characters.

ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN

The Silver Age saw an explosion in strange new vistas, from lost worlds to alien planets, microverses, and other dimensions. Freedom City offers such locales in abundance, as a quick glance through **Chapter 4** of the *Freedom City* sourcebook reveals. In this series framework, the heroes are less crimefighters than they are intrepid explorers of the unknown, expanding the frontiers of human knowledge, and also dealing with strange menaces lurking out there.

Ideally, such a team of explorers includes at least one scientist hero with considerable Intelligence and Knowledge skills. The team could be made up entirely of experts, with each character having a different specialty and the skills to match. Bodyguards, pilots, survival and exploration experts, and other support personnel often round-out the team and look after the needs of the eggheads while they're doing their thing. Alternately, the exploration team might be made up entirely of hardy survivalist types, with the big-brains all back at headquarters, keeping in touch with the field team via an advanced communications system. Their patron could be a single brilliant (and resourceful) scientist or a whole team, perhaps a corporate or government agency.

The heroes can be among the first to visit and explore such places as Sub-Terra, the ruins of Atlantis and Lemuria, Farside City, Ultima Thule, the Aerie, Shambala Vale, Farside City, or even the Terminus. They can encounter the threats posed by the Terra-King and his Subterrans, the Serpent People, Lady Lunar, the shapeshifting Grue, or Lord Omega and his Annihilists. They may even be the ones to inadvertently expose the human races to one or more of these dangers! In addition to the *Freedom City* sourcebook, Gamemasters may find the *Worlds of Freedom* sourcebook a useful resource for this type of series.

MYSTERIES IN SPACE

The Silver Age is the dawn of the era of human space exploration, with astronaut heroes rocketing off to the stars to discover strange new worlds and the life existing on them. You can run a whole Freedom City series where the characters leave Earth behind and travel the universe, encountering alien races, ancient artifacts, and cosmic forces.

Perhaps an accident hurls an experimental starship far from Earth, endowing the heroes with strange powers and leaving them with a long journey to get back home. Alternately, the heroes might have access to some means of interstellar teleportation, like an ancient gateway device or transport beam, able to send them across the galaxy in the blink of an eye to explore other worlds and then return to Earth. They may become known as great heroes throughout the stars, while remaining safely anonymous on Earth.

CONTINUITY VERSUS CHANGE

One issue for any series set in an established world like *Freedom City* is, how much do you stick to the description of the setting as-given and how much do you change to suit your own ideas and preferences (and those of the players)? This is even more important when dealing with a "historical" series like *Silver Age*, since the "future" of Freedom City is already established, including the future fates of many of its heroes and villains. Do you try and ensure this future comes about or ignore it and go with the events of your own series?

Generally, the best advice is to treat the future of any series, even one set in the past, as open-ended and changeable. Certainly, history can be and has been changed in the World of Freedom, and countless parallel worlds exist, so your own Silver Age Freedom City is just another of these, where different heroes rise to prominence, perhaps in place of some or all of the heroes described in this chapter, and the future holds different fates in store for them. This way, you do not have to worry whether or not you are keeping history "on track," since it can be difficult enough to just keep a regular adventure series going, without being responsible for all of future history as well! SILVER AGE

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SILVER AGE OF FREEDOM



A *Mysteries in Space* series has a "space opera" element to it, harkening back to the adventures of space-faring pulp heroes with jet-packs and ray-guns. You can pit the good guys against alien foes like the Grue, the Star-Khan (or a similar interplanetary dictator), the Curator, or even Cap'n Kraken. There are also mysteries to solve, as the explorers encounter alien cultures and worlds, where things are not always what they appear.

Gamemasters with access to the *Worlds of Freedom* sourcebook might consider a "retro-future" style series, set in 26th century universe of the Freedom Legion, for example, where Earth is part of a Confederation of Planets and the whole galaxy opens up as a place for adventure.

STRANGE VISITORS FROM ANOTHER PLANET

Just as the Silver Age features humans taking the first bold steps out into space, so too does it speculation about life on other worlds coming to visit *us*. In this series framework, the heroes are all aliens from other planets. Some may have come to Earth on purpose, others by accident, some stranded among humanity, others just visiting. The Newcomers are a good example of this type of group, right down to their token human member and allies.

Strange Visitors usually have to contend with odd human customs and the relative barbarism of our world (as they typically come from more advanced cultures). They may have an ongoing nemesis in the form of a government or military officer trying to capture them for study. There will certainly be factions who consider them a threat. In Freedom City, early experience with the Grue has made humanity cautious when it comes to aliens, one might even say paranoid.

Such concerns are not unfounded. There are plenty of alien menaces in the World of Freedom and the heroes may end up protecting Earth from them. In addition to the aforementioned Grue, there may be alien criminals on the run from law enforcement like the Star Knights, would-be invaders, or even members of the heroes' own species on Earth and up to no good. All the while, the visitors may have to conceal their true nature or activities, protecting a world that doesn't really trust or understand them.

WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES

The dawn of the Silver Age in Freedom City is also the beginning for the world's greatest team of heroes, the Freedom League. It is an opportunity for an *M&M* series to get in on "the ground floor" of the League's history, right from the start.

You can run an initial adventure with Hades' invasion of Earth and Freedom City, bringing the heroes together to put a stop to the death god's ambitions, and then having them stay together to protect the world from menaces greater than any one hero can handle. The founding members in your Freedom League might be the same as given in this book or they could be entirely different characters, keeping in mind that each *Freedom City* series essentially takes place on a different "parallel" world.

Then you're off through the major events of the League's history and Freedom City's timeline, from the newly founded team moving into the Beaumont Mansion downtown (and perhaps finding some lingering "ghosts" from the Liberty League era) to the appearance of new heroes and villains, from the Scarab and Horus the Avenger to threats like SHADOW and the new Crime League.

You can play this—or any other—type of Silver Age series in a conventional way, with individual game sessions paced fairly close together, or you can take more of an "overview" approach and set things up with the series spans the whole era, twenty years or more, with bigger gaps between adventures and just hitting the major highlights of the period. This approach allows players to change their characters between adventures quite a bit, either to reflect different degrees of experience or to play different heroes altogether.

LEGACIES OF THE SILVER AGE

A great many legacies of Freedom City's Silver Age live on in the modern era, as detailed in the *Freedom City* sourcebook. This section looks at some of the other legacies of the time and their potential in your own *Mutants & Masterminds* series set in the World of Freedom.

August Roman: Still alive and remarkably vital in the mod-

ern day, August Roman is considerably fallen from his once great position as a crime lord. He presently runs the Circuit Maximus underground fighting ring with the aid of his daughter, Saturnalia (*Freedom City*, page 83).

- **The Bee-Keeper:** The Bee-Keeper gets out of the super-criminal game in 1968, when an encounter with a drunken Bowman nearly gets him killed and brings him face-to-face with his own mortality (and the changing times in Freedom City). These days, the elderly Brian Nisbet lives at the Southside Retirement Castle in Freedom City, where he maintains a "Bee-Keeper's Hive" Website and makes a bit of pocket money selling autographs and nostalgic merchandise over the Internet.
- **Galatea:** Galatea eventually slid into a depression and sought out the remains of a Foundry base, where she helped to restore Talos. She later discovered this imperative was a failsafe programmed into her at a basic level, but still accepted blame for the evil machine's resurrection. She sacrificed herself to stop Talos' scheme to seize control of every computer on Earth, her own digital mind destroyed in the process. Her inert body is still stored in a warehouse secretly owned by Daedalus, so it is possible for some circumstance to reactivate her.
- **Halogen:** Halogen served as a member of the Freedom League for several years before she died along with Tectonic fighting the Katanarchists. She reassumed her human form to help a mortally wounded Tectonic, just enough of an opening for a Katanarchist to stab her in the back. Halogen's body was cremated in accordance with her wishes. It is certainly possible the destruction of her physical form liberated some part of her energy "essence" in some way. That essence could return, once Maggie figures out how.
- Hepcat: As the Beat Generation gave way to the hippie era, Hepcat faded and eventually disappeared. Jonas Grey went on to become an acclaimed peace activist, journalist, and later novelist, although he kept the secret of his heroic identity, feeling Hepcat never truly "belonged" to him, but to a whole generation of people he served. Hepcat was briefly seen for the first time in decades during the Terminus Invasion, fighting off Omegadrones in the West End. Jonas Grey developed terminal cancer a few years later, and passed away in 1999.

Given Hepcat's mystical nature, it is possible that he (or a being much like him) could reappear in Freedom City, most likely among the community's hopeful, artistic, and rebellious youth.

Horus the Avenger: With Lord Set's eventual defeat and imprisonment in the Egyptian underworld, Horus returned to the otherworldly realm of Heliopolis, the home of the Egyptian gods. Henry Farrow returned to his calling as an archeologist full-time, benefiting from both lasting vitality and an unmatched knowledge of Egyptology. He still travels the world, although spends most of his time in Cairo, where he aids in the government's historical preservation efforts.

Although it is believed that the Ankh of the Avenger (also described in *Book of Magic*, page 60) returned to Heliopolis with Horus, the mystic warhammer may still serve as a means for the Lord of Light to return to the mortal world, should there be need of him. Whether Henry Farrow would ever take up the ankh again or Horus would choose a new host remains to be seen.

Jack Wolf: After Mentac and Andrea Atom marry, Jack leaves

the Atom Family for a time to become a mercenary, working with the Soldiers of Fortune. He visits Freedom City from time to time, but doesn't stay long. It is only Andrea and Mentac's apparent demise during the Terminus Invasion that brings him back for good, to look after the couple's children at the request of Dr. Atom, who is himself dying. Jack Wolf is described on page 125 of *Freedom City*.

- **Jasmine Sin:** Jasmine Sin's daughter Callie eventually became the new Raven after her mother sacrificed herself to save her husband from death at the hands of a returned Dr. Sin.
- Mary Minstrel: Although she appreciated helping others, Mary was deeply unhappy about the loss of her singing career due to her powers. Her close friendship with Daedalus might have blossomed into romance, but the opportunity never arose. Instead, Mary sacrificed her own life in battle with the League against the Foundry to save Daedalus. The guiltridden immortal attempted to give Mary a kind of immorality as well, using her brain-patterns to create the android Chorale, who ultimately became the Furies Three (see the *Iron Age* sourcebook).
- Queen Khana: The deposed Queen's son, Kinan Khan, went on to reclaim not only his birthright, but also the whole of Zultas, building an interstellar empire as the Star-Khan (*Freedom City*, page 219).
- The Red Death: Although Yussef Smerdyakov was eventually captured and imprisoned for his crimes, his secret hideouts remained hidden until a reporter named Cecilia Rogers discovered one in a warehouse along the South River. She used the weapons and identity of the Red Death to take on corrupt businessman Hieronymus King, as detailed in *Freedom's Most Wanted* (page 97).
- Set the Destroyer: Horus eventually returned Set to his extra-dimensional exile, the body of his former human host carefully mummified and entombed as a seal on his banishment as Set's influence made it otherwise indestructible. Heroes like Eldrich know the location of the hidden tomb and it is guarded by powerful warding spells designed to alert the Master Mage of any disturbance. Set himself is immortal and ageless, of course, and his decades away from Earth are little more than moments to a

decades away from Earth are little more than moments to a god. He has not given up planning and plotting his eventual return or his revenge against those responsible for his renewed exile.

- Star Knight: When he completed his mission and captured Blackstar, Star Knight was recalled to Citadel and left Earth and the Freedom League behind. He is now a member of the Inner Council of the Order of Star Knights. An Earth-born Star Knight, Sri Maria Montoya, has taken A'Lan's place on Earth and in the current Freedom League.
- **Tectonic:** Tectonic's youthful overconfidence and willingness to put himself in danger to help others eventually got him killed fighting the Katanarchists during an ambush. Given the mutant origin of Ramon's powers, some have wondered if any of his brothers or sisters (and now nieces or nephews) might possess similar abilities of their own.

INDEX

A

Adamant 117
Addiction (complication)52
Adrian Eldrich107
Alien-Gator 117
Alister Usher 121
Amphibian Warrior (archetype) 56, 64
Andrea Atom101
Arrow
Astronaut
Atom Family 100-104
Attorney70
August Roman123
Avenging Disco
Godfather (archetype) 57, 64

B

Baron Samedi 117
Beast of Kilimanjaro 117
Beaumont Mansion
Bee-Keeper123
Benefit: Draft Exemption (feat)48-50
Benefit: Military Rank (feat)50
Bigfoot 104, 105
Bionic Hero (archetype)58, 64
Black Avenger
Blackbird 117
Blackthorn
Bowman
Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign 117

C

Cabbie	70, 71
Campus Radical	71
Centurion	99
Cerberus	117
Combat Driver (feat)	51
Combat Pilot (feat)	51
Communist Brute (archetype)	
Complications	51–52
Computers	41–42
Computers (skill)	
Connected (feat)	50
Conqueror Worm	118
Corrupter of Youth (archetype)	77
Cosmic Mind	118
Crimson Katana	118
Cult Hero (feat)	50

D

Daedalus	99
Doc Holiday	118
Dr. Atom	101
Dr. Sin	118

E

2
2
Э
7

F

Fallen Golden	
Age Hero (archetype)	78
Fame (complication)	52
Fashion	34-35
Fear-Master I	118
Feats	48-51
Feminist Heroine (archetype)	59, 64
Femme Fatale (archetype)	79
Field Artillery	
Foundry	118
Freedom League	93-100

G

H

Hades 119 Halogen 95, 123 Hard-Traveling Hero (archetype) 61 Hard Travelling Hero (archetype) 65 Hatred (complication) 52 Honor (complication) 52 Horus the Avenger 109, 123 Hot Rodder 72	
Hot Kodder	

.

Indestructible Shield	
Indigo	105
Invalid Relative	72, 73
Invisible, Inc	119

J

Jack-A-Knives	119
Jack Wolf	103, 123
Jacob "Jake" King	104



asmine Sin	123
immy Carter	
immy King	
ohn F. Kennedy	
K	

N

J

I

J

Knowledge (physical sciences) (skill)......47-48

King Cole

-	
Labyrinth	
Lady Liberty	
Lady Lunar	
Lenore	119
Luna Moth	
Lyndon B. Johnson	

M

Malador the Mystic 119
Mary Minstrel
Mastermind120
Mechanic72, 73
Medicine41-42
Mentac103
Minorities
Money
Mortars
Motocycle Daredevil (archetype)65
Motorcycle Daredevil (archetype)62
Mr. Infamy120

Ρ

Parapsychologist	73
Pegasus, the	
Pilot	73, 74
Power Levels	
Prejudice (complication)	
Pseudo	
Psychic (archetype)	63, 65
0	
u	

Queen Khana.....123



S

..... 119

Scarab, the97, 98
Sea King97
Sea-King
Serafina106, 107
Series Frameworks121
Adventures Into the Unknown 121
Mysteries in Space121
Strange Visitors
from Another Planet 122
World's Greatest Heroes 122
Set the Destroyer123
SHADOW120
Siren100
Skills
Sky-Car100
Snoopy Girl Reporter74
Space Ranger 110
Spinneret Gauntlets53
Star Knight100, 123
Street Informant74
Superheroines
Superior120
Survival (skill)48
Swingline Club54
-

T

U Una

Technology4	11-42
Tectonic), 123
Teenage Politician	74
"The Man"7	2,73
Tick-Tock Doc	120
Tom Cyprus	120
Toxic Waste Creature (archetype)	82
Transformer (archetype)	83
Trawler	

W

White Lion	.100
Winged Harness	54
Wonderbus, the	.104



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

"SUPER" STEVE KENSON, DESIGN

Faster than a speeding deadline... More powerful than a natural 20... able to complete entire paragraphs in a single run-on sentence! Look! In the credits section! It's a nerd ... it's a gamer... it's Super-Steve!

Yes, Super-Steve, strange designer from New England, who can change the course of game systems, bend rules with his bare hands, and who, disguised as Steve Kenson-mild-mannered writer for a great metropolitian publisher-fights a never-ending battle for rules, fun, and the dice-rolling way! www.stevekenson.com

CHRISTOPHER MCGLOTHLIN, DESIGN

A freelance writer for the Mutants & Masterminds line, Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed. is a lifelong Virginian whose prior works have been published by PEG, WEG, Guildhall Press, Gold Rush Games, Comic Images, and Spectrum Games. He holds Bachelor of Science Degrees in Political Science and Journalism, as well as a Master's in Education, from Radford University. For the past fifteen years, he has worked as a high school social studies teacher.

Mr. McGlothlin is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the Military Order of the Stars & Bars, and the Confederate States Army. His hobbies include the Miami Dolphins, MST3K, the JSA, and classic sci-fi. All good things in his life are made possible by God, his wonderful wife Tanith, his wonderful dog Jackson, and Buster & Maggie (his invincible bulldog army).

ROB TOTH, ADDITIONAL DESIGN

Robert J. Toth was an anonymous, put-upon editor, droning his days away on the staff of a major metropolitan newspaper, when tragedy struck. While testing an advanced content-management system, Rob was horribly disfigured by radiation from a faulty drop-down menu-but blessed with conceptual powers far beyond those of ordinary men. Now he leads a double life-corporate milquetoast by day and one-man fightin' army by night. Among his crepuscular jaunts, he has contributed to numerous Green Ronin books as a writer and editor, most recently designing *Damnation Decade* for the Mythic Vistas line. Only a trusted few know his secret, including his wife, Ablative Lass, and young sidekick, The Newsboy. He is grateful to Chris McGlothlin for the chance to team up and wants to know if he left his utility belt over at his place the other week.

JON LEITHEUSSER, DEVELOPMENT

Jon works as a game developer, designer, writer, and editor. He's had the pleasure of working on a number of M&M books, including the core rulebook Freedom City, Ultimate Power, Iron Age, and Warriors & Warlocks. Jon originally hails from Burlington, Wisconsin, now calls Seattle, Washington his home, and currently lives in Los Gatos, California where he works as a Content Designer for Cryptic Studios. He wishes he could teleport in real life like he can in-game.

JIM LONG, EDITING

Jim Long lives in the heart of God's country with his wife, two daughters, a dog, and (surprisingly) a kitten. He spends his time making games, designing games, talking about games, and wishing he had more time to play games.

HAL MANGOLD, GRAPHIC DESIGN/ART DIRECTION

Hal has been involved with roleplaying games since he was 9 years old, and shows no sign of stopping now. His graphic design skills have been applied to over well over si gaming products, and he's written material for Pinnacle Entertainment Group, White Wolf Publishing, Atlas Games, Twilight Creations, and Green Ronin Publishing. Hal resides in Alexandria, VA with far too many books and CDs, and a temperamental cat.

SCOTT JAMES, ART

Scott graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1995, and hasn't looked back since. He began freelancing right out of collage. He began working for Fasa's *Battletech, Shadowrun*, and *Earthdawn*. At this time he began to do work for White Wolf and Pinnacle Entertainment Group as well. He then began doing work for AEG, which he parlayed into a part time staff. He continues to freelance for a multitude of companies, along with teaching college art classes.

ANTONIO ROJO, ART

Antonio is an artist born and raised in La Linea, Cadiz, Spain. Now he has ended his main international debut making tandem with Christoff and Chris Camp in the comic-book series "Serpent Wars", where he gives rein to his talent.

ALBERTO FOCHE, ART

Alberto is also an artist born and raised in La Linea, Cadiz, Spain. He had worked for some titles in Spain, but his international debut will be with the first issue of the "Blackwatch" serues in Urban Style Comics during this year.

MKULTRA STUDIO, ART

Is a studio formed some years ago in La Linea. Daniel, Antonio and Alberto worked together in some projects before starting to do it continuosly as a proffesional career. This studio is recently born, but with a lot of talent, and hopes.

ALEX JOHNS / IDS, ART

Alex Has worked for over 14 years in the comic book and graphic arts world. Currently the lead apenciler,Inker and painter on Stephen Nelsons "IMPALER" Credits also Include Crusades: Shi, Joe Casey's Full Moon Fever (Develompment for the comic book , and film), several RPG's, Video Games, Character Sculpts, and lead artist alongside Crusade's Billy Tucci on the Sci-Fi network's "First Wave" TV shows Crossover into comics. Alex is Also TheFounder, Art Director, and CEO of Infinite Dreams Studios.com , One of the freshest new studios in comics, who has recently launched an apparel line primarily based on his his art, along with several new original comic/ graphic novel titles.

LICENSE

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a)"Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b)"Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d)"Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability

with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

- System Reference Document, Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.
- Modern System Reference Document, Copyright 2002-2004, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, Charles Ryan, Eric Cagle, David Noonan, Stan!, Christopher Perkins, Rodney Thompson, and JD Wiker, based on material by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, Peter Adkison, Bruce R. Cordell, John Tynes, Andy Collins, and JD Wiker.
- Mutants & Masterminds, Copyright 2002, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC.; Author Steve Kenson.
- BESM d20, Copyright 2003, Guardians Of Order, Inc.; Author Mark C. MacKinnon.
- d20 Mecha, Copyright 2003, Guardians Of Order, Inc.; Author David L. Pulver.
- Advanced Player's Manual, Copyright 2005, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC.: Author Skip Williams.
- Silver Age Sentinels d20, Copyright 2002, Guardians of Order, Inc.; Authors Stephen Kenson, Mark C. Mackinnon, Jeff Mackintosh, Jesse Scoble.
- *Mutants & Masterminds, Second Edition,* Copyright 2005, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC.; Author Steve Kenson.
- Damnation Decade, Copyright 2006, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC.; Author Rob Toth
- Silver Age, Copyright 2010, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC.; Authors Christopher McGlothlin and Steve Kenson.

LICENSE