

The Ultimate Mysitc

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The Review:

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The Upside:

The Ultimate Mystic is a guide to creating, running and using Mystics, Magic and related elements in a campaign. Unlike most of the Ultimate Series books this one focuses less on the Character aspect of the Archetype, and more on the campaign elements around the Archetype.

Chapter One - Mystical Character Creation. Diving right in we start with Types Of Mystics, focusing on both origin and source of magical power. From True Mystics (such as Scholar Mages, Wild Talents, and Priests) to a number of supernatural creatures (Ghost, Therianthropes, and Gods). Making A Magus covers the origin the Character themselves, from venerable sages to the prophesied ones. It also covers What Magic Is For, a section on various ways magic is purported to be used, this roughly covers various kinds of magic from divination to control over nature. All of this gives a good solid set of ideas to work from when creating a character that wields supernatural powers (be they learned spells or inborn power).

The rest of the Chapter is more Hero System centric, but still has a good amount of information for anyone creating a Mystic. Skills covers the ways a Mystic might use the Skills in the system, and expands on several. Inventor can be reworked into Spell Research, several Knowledge Skills are looked at as being particularly useful to Mystics, Navigation looks at Dimensional, Astral, and Temporal Navigation and ways they might work. And there's a side bar of how to use Skills to create 'fake magic,' or ways to pretend you have magical power or are using magic. Perks covers ways to use the Access and Membership Perks as ways to get to Mystic Places and into Mystic Societies. Talents has an option for Non-Personal Danger Sense, which allows a Mystic to know when an area he is assigned to protect is in danger, but not much good to his person. Powers covers various abilities a Mystic might have. Since this Archetype can be a reason to be another type of Character as much as a Character itself (such as a Brick with a Mystical origin) the Powers section is wide open to the Mystic. Some interesting ideas are still covered. Detect Magic and Aura Vision are Enhanced Senses that both get some space. As well as a good look at different ways to use Summon. But the most interesting part is the builds on Astral Projection. The book provides five different possible ways to build the idea of projecting ones spirit or mind outside their body. Each has it's own Advantages and Drawbacks. Disadvantages covers not just appropriate Disadvantages for Mystic Characters, but possible origins for them adding more to the Character's background.

This chapter is focused completely on creating a Mystic Character, and it does a good job covering all the various aspects you would want to consider. But it needs to go hand in hand with a Mystic World, because unlike other Archetypes the Mystic character usually has his own sub-group to interact with.

Chapter Two - Mystic Dimensions. In many campaigns such as Fantasy Worlds or Superhero Games what lies beyond the Earth is as important as Earth itself. The chapter covers all the things you should at least consider when setting up a Multiverse full of strange worlds. Dimensional Purpose and Function are two sections that covers reasons a Dimension exists, and how it interacts with the Characters and the rest of the Campaign. Designing Dimensions goes into further detail; Types of Dimensions (afterlives, divine planes, elemental planes, etc), Environments, Inhabitants, and Structuring The Multiverse - which is a very good section on how to fit all the Dimensions together. Contact And Travel is the next major section, covering how easy you want access to other Dimensions to be, how to get to them, and Dimensional Invasions and ways to work with that concept.

The last part of the chapter is an example multiverse called Ptolemy Resurgent which looks at all the parts of the chapter to create an entire campaign settings multiverse.

Chapter Three - Styles Of Magic. This chapter covers how Magic works and feels itself. Classes Of Magic starts by discussing the major ways magic works - force of will (High Magic), ingredients (Natural Magic), or rituals (Ritual Magic), and everything else (Witchcraft as a catchall term). It also covers how to handle Magic by various Campaign Types; Heroic, Superheroic and "Realistic" styles.

Real Magic Styles takes a look at real world examples of how various kinds of Magic are reported to work, and how you can adapt that to a Hero Campaign. Each section covers the theory behind the Magic, notes on how the Style works, how to adapt those in Hero Mechanics and then provides a few Hero System Spells as examples. The styles looked at are Hermetic Theurgy, the commonly seen magic in pop-culture evolved out of Europe as Ceremonial Magic. Shamanism, a tribal ritual magic seen in many places around the world. And Voodoo, an Afro-Caribbean Witchcraft. Fantastic Magic styles does the same thing only with types of Magic that is most common in fantasy stories, though has some roots in real world ideas, it covers Alchemy and Necromancy. Variant Or Minor Styles goes even further out from mainstream ideas of magic and looks at ideas from other parts of the world; The Evil Eye, Kabbalism, Mantra-Vidya (from India), Rune Magic, and Taoist Theurgy.

With this chapter the GM can take a look at how he wants Magic to work, both at a Mechanic level and at a Descriptive Level and create a consistent (or inconsistent depending on their desires) framework for the Mystic Character to use.

Chapter Four - Magic Genre By Genre. This chapter takes a look at how to treat, create and use Mystics and Magic in various genres. From the almost anything goes of Superheroes. Cyber Hero and Dark Champions look at how to use what appears to be Magic in "realistic" and near future campaigns. Fantasy Hero covers a number of concepts, being almost as open as Superheroic Campaigns, usually they limit themselves to one or two kinds of specific Magic. It covers several subgenre of Fantasy, Urban (modern fantasy), Historical and Alternate History, Juvenile (where the main characters are usually teenagers), and introduces a new style of magic, Technomancy. Ninja Hero isn't covered very extensively, but does note that the genre is steeped in Mysticism and almost can't be played without it in many instances. Pulp Hero covers the classic Satanistic Cults and Lovecraftian Horrors, both of which were Pulp staples. Star Hero touches on using Psionics as a kind of Magic. Victorian Hero goes into the idea of The Medium, which was a popular form of Necromancy for the time period. And finally Western Hero, while short, touches on using Shamanism in the Wild West.

Chapter Five - The Mystic World. This chapter covers creating the subculture the Mystic World revolves around. The first part covers populating the Mystic World with People, Arcane Societies, Cults, Lost Civilizations, and the classic Mystic Tomes. Providing some real world examples of these legends, how to incorporate them into a Campaign, and in the case of the first three motivations for

them. Magic And Society goes into how the Mystic world interacts with the rest of the world and itself. Covering the Tradition of Secrecy, Misinformation, Public Attitudes, Magic and Law And Government, and finally using Magic to explain the many odd phenomenon that occur in the world. This section covers possible ways to treat Magic in the campaign from not believed in completely integral to the society. Denizens of the Mystic World is a very cool part of the book, taking a (very brief) look at the many real world legends, stories and ideas of otherworldly beings; Angels, Cosmic Entities, Demons, Faeries, Ghosts, Gods, Therianthropes (shapeshifters), and Vampires. Mysticism In World History covers a few real Mystic things, listing fifteen people reported to be mages or some other form of Mystic in history, and ten real world artifacts reported to have mystical power. The book ends with three accounts are real world Mystic organizations and accounts (The Golden Dawn Cult, Nazi Occultists and the Satanist Cult fears of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States).

The book differs in many ways from the Ultimate Series that focus on Character Archetypes by moving beyond the Character itself and into what the Archetype embodies. Since the Mystic can duplicate any other Archetype you could use this in conjunction with another of the Ultimate Series to create various kinds of Mystics and magics.

The Downside:

The biggest down side is there are no example Characters or Mystic Creature examples written up completely in Hero Terms. The Genre-By-Genre section has several character descriptions in the side-bars, but to make the book more useful to Players a few fully written-up Characters would have increased the books utility overall.

The Otherside:

The Ultimate Mystic is mostly a guide to creating a Mystic Campaign, or a Mystic backdrop to a campaign, from sketchy to detailed. In this regard it's very useful to Hero and Non-Hero Gamers alike, there are almost no actual System Mechanics in the book at all, being mostly a discussion on how to build and play with Mystic elements. The book is definitely aimed more at the GM than the Player with the focus that way it is, though Players can still get a lot of ideas from it and a group as a whole can create a rich and detailed Mystic Aspect to their Campaign fairly easily with the advice and breakdown of the book.

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