

Gadgets And Gear

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Gadgets And Gear is a collection of example Power builds focused around making various pieces of equipment. While it would be easy enough simply say "Add The Focus Limitation To Any Power" in the other example builds books Hero has put out, sometimes there's more to it. And sometimes it's just to have a collection of prebuilt gadgets to help.

Chapter One - Super-Weapons. This chapter breaks down into several different categories of weapons available to the modern superhero or supervillain. First the ever popular and classic Blasters. These are basically builds of various damage causing weapons from Pulson Weapons, Heat Rays, Vari-Blasters and simple Lasers (and we can't forget the classic Disintegrator Ray). Everything in part one is designed to cause direct damage. Part Two is Gas Weapons, Fear Gas, Knockout Gas, Gas Guns are all here. Part Three is melee weapons, because sometimes you just need to hit them really hard. Almost a dozen weapons of various kinds from electrified whips to tricked out billy clubs. Mind Affecting Weapons includes hypnotic musical instruments, mind reading head bands and the like. Muscle-Powered Range Weapons is similar to melee weapons, with several commonly seen weapons. Dropped marbles, half a dozen types of grenades, two examples of how to build a Super Bow And Arrow for archer types (with twenty-one trick arrow builds), hurled lightning (my personal favorite from this section), among others. Restraining Weapons includes Power Negators, various nets, paralysis darts, capture foam to mention just a few. Theme Weaponry can provide all kinds of fun, toy weapons, candy weapons, a Halloween arsenal and another favorite in th book the Combat Yo-Yo. Miscellaneous Weapons includes a few dozen other types of things you can use in combat to subdue or otherwise defeat your enemies. From various power gauntlets, shrink rays, mini-missiles, hologram projectors, and trick umbrella's to name only a few.

Taking up almost half the book this chapter should provide Powered Armor and Gadgeteer Supers with enough ideas to keep their enemies on their toes.

Chapter Two - Defensive Gadgets. This chapter is divided into two parts, Powered Armor and More Defensive Gadgets.

The Powered Armor section isn't just a collection of things that go into a Powered Armor character, after all an enterprising Player could use any device in the book that way. Instead is provides a short How To Build Powered Armor section, while not a complete source book in itself, it is useful to anyone looking to create such an archetype. Starting by dividing Powered Armor into five sub-sections: Helmet, Chestplate, Gauntlets, Boots, and External Modules. There's a guidelines table of how many

Active Points worth of Powers a typical Powered Armor device might carry based on it's type, Full Armor, Heavy Exoskeleton and Light Exoskeleton. The Point totals for all the Powers include using either the Only In Hero ID Limitation of the Obvious Inaccessible Limitation as the most common representations of the build. First up are Basics, a collection of Powers that any given Power Armor might have, from the armor plating itself, Life Support, Communications, and finally Power. Helmet Systems is short, a defensive power and more Sensory options. Chestplate systems include some offensive weaponry, defensive abilities (like hologram projectors or smoke screens), and other similar options. Gauntlet systems contains mostly offensive abilities, but a few other useful tools are included. Boot systems contain a few movement powers, your typical flight and running, and Rocket Skates! External Module systems is more weaponry that attaches to the armor, shoulder mounted or arm mounted weapons and the like, this is where weapons from Chapter One might be added on if you need more ideas. Each section comes with a table to generate a random suite of Powers to create a quick suit of Powered Armor. Good for the GM if he needs some enemies quickly, good for the Player if they're stuck on ideas or having trouble choosing. It's an excellent short guide to creating a Powered Armor character for either a Champions game or for a Star Hero game that features such things.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to some general defensive type equipment. Concealment And Stealth Devices is several builds for Stealth Suits. Force Field devices, a number of ways of creating defenses. Helmets with both protection and other functions. And some Miscellaneous defensive equipment, the most interesting part here is the Questionite Shield, a very good interpretation of Captain America's Shield in Hero System terms.

Chapter Three - Movement Gadgets. This chapter is a collection of various ways to move around. Copterpacks, Jetpacks, Teleportation Discs, Lineguns. Almost every form of Movement Power in Hero is represented here (missing is Extra-Dimensional Movement). A good collection of ways to get around without buying a Vehicle.

Chapter Four - Sensory And Communications Gadgets. Split into two parts. Sensory Gadgets provide ways of using Enhanced Perception, and a few other devices. The Spy-Sphere is a good example of building autonomous gadgets the Character controls. Communications Gadgets provide a number of ways to build communications devices using the Hero System, one of the most interesting is building one as a Computer. Most of these are good for Modern or Cyberpunk style games as well, and the more advanced builds excellent for Star Hero games.

Chapter Five - Costume Based Gadgets. This chapter is gadgets built into various pieces of clothing. Starting with the Costume itself for various effects, such as Biker Leathers and the Distracting Costume. Arm attachments provide to types of arm-wings. Belts provides a few options, but the most useful build is the Utility Belt, complete with thirty-three gadgets of varying types - enough to make any Adam West Batman lover happy. Boots provide a few things you can do with footwear. Capes gives a number of ideas to make the cape a useful item instead of just looking cool. Gloves And Gauntlets provides a few more uses for gloves, all of them some form of attack. Masks provides only two ideas for this ever present superhero costume bit, a defensive mask and a sensory mask.

Chapter Six - Miscellaneous Gadgets. The last chapter provides a number of gadgets that don't fit well into any one category. Booster Pills, Cosmic Gems, Power Staffs, and a few other similar devices. Some of these are simply alternate Special Effects or methods for using a lot of the other builds, or Powers from the UMTIL Superpowers Database in a gadget like device.

The Downside:

A few of the gadgets are repeated in the book, but not so many it became an exercise in redundancy.

Considering the universal nature of the Hero System, this particular book could have included a section on adapting any of the gadgets to other genres. Several of them would work well in a Star Hero game and more than a few would fit into a Fantasy Hero game.

The Otherside:

Just because the books says it's Gadgets for Superheroes doesn't mean it can't be used elsewhere. Change a few Special Effects and Names and you can create Magic Force Bracers, various Science-Fiction Equipment, Cyberpunk add on Cyberwear and strange Pulp Villain Doomsday Weapons. Almost all of the builds come with a "Realistic" option to make it less Super-centric and more accessible to other genres.

For Powered Armor Players who are looking for some ideas that they might not have seen before, or simply more ideas, this is a great book to pick up.

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