

Champions Universe: News Of The World

Book Line:	Champions	SKU:	225
Book Type:	Setting	Formats:	Softcover
Author:	Darren Watts, Steven S. Long	Released:	April, 2007
Cost:	29.99\$	ISBN:	978-2-58366-061-4
Page Count:	158	Hero Designer:	No
Common Abbreviations:	CUNotW	Print Status:	In Print

The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Champions Universe: News Of The World is the 2007 update of the happenings in the Champions Universe, the default Hero Games Superhero setting. It covers the happenings to both the major cities (Millennium City and Vibora Bay), gives stats for two major US Teams we haven't seen before, and updates the happenings of the rest of the world as well.

First off though, we're going to start with the cover. For those who don't follow music News Of The World is a name of a Queen album, a rather popular one at that. And the cover of that album depicts a robot holding the members of Queen. Well, the Champions Universe cover features Mechanon (the CUs premiere robot villain) holding the Champions. I like it. Any show of appreciation for good music wins me over instantly. (Though it would have been extra awesome had they named chapters after tracks from the album...)

Chapter One - Meanwhile, In Millennium City. After a very brief note on current city politics the chapter dives right into The Champions - the signature hero team of the setting. Going through the exploits of the team from the published adventures. It covers how they handled Interface (Champions Battlegrounds), The Black Paladin (Shades Of Black), King Cobra (Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth), and a dimensional crisis (Reality Storm). As well as several other exploits that didn't come from published adventures (but stem directly from Plot Seeds throughout the various books). We get updated stats for the Champions as well, plus a full write-up for one of the new members and a reference to another source book for the second. The last part dedicated to the Champions covers Nighthawk's new organization, formed after he left The Champions, Project Mongoose with two brand new heroes presented (Duke Steel and Scarlet Archer II), and new information on two previous characters (Juryrig from Vibora Bay) and a villain turned hero, Signal Ghost (from Millennium City).

A short section on other heroes covers Cavalier and another brand new hero, Hydro, who specializes in protecting Millennium Cities coast line. After that Ravenswood Academy (from Teen Champions) is covered, updating all four classes presented from the genre book, and the new incoming freshman.

Chapter Two - Down In Vibora Bay. This is a very short chapter covering recent political events in the city, a bit on how Hurricane Katrina played out in the setting and a few of the major events that occurred in Vibora Bay. The last section provides one new hero, a sidekick for Black Mask, who can be used as a street level crime fighter should you need one.

Chapter Three - The Sentinels. The chapter opens with the history of this particular superteam, which

starts in 1961 with a rather convoluted story involving a super computer, nuclear missiles, and hypnotism. Like any good story should. After that we have write-ups for the six current members of the team. Bravo wins for Coolest Hero Ever, he defies the standard archetypes that most of his teammates fall into. He's a swashbuckler, possibly a gadgeteer, mostly a fantasy character way out of place, but definitely a hero.

Chapter Four - The Justice Squadron. Another New York based team, this one playing the big leagues of the CU. This six member team is nicely filled out, and powerful compared to most of the Champions Universe superteams.

Chapter Five - In Other World News. The first part covers the rest of the United States, covering in brief Super Teams in Boston (The New Paladins), California (The California Patrol), Chicago (The Peacemakers), Denver (The Alliance), Houston (The Hero Corps), Miami (The Watch), New York (Nova, previously detailed in Teen Champions), Philadelphia (The Liberty League), San Francisco (The Bay Guardians, and The Freedom Patrol), and Washington D.C. (The Capitol Patrol). With a very short section on solo heroes in the US, with one new hero, The Messenger, introduced.

The second part is Organizations. Giving an in depth update on UNTIL, a short update on The Trismegistus Council. And a new Organization for the setting, The Goodman Institute, a tip of the hat to early editions of Champions. Part three covers major events in the rest of the world. Eurostar has a new member, Singapore has a new villain team, the 2008 Beijing Olympics have been threatened by a mystical force, and the war in Iraq continues, among other events. The fourth part of this chapter covers enemy organizations and villains. ARGENT, DEMON and VIPER all get short updates on their current strengths and recent major exploits. We get updates on several master villains. Dr. Destroyer lost another island, Gravitar gets serious about this whole villainy thing, Menton has been captured, Takofanes is busy trying to capture the Crowns Of Krim and The Warlord has upgraded his powered armor. And two villains groups are highlighted, the Crowns Of Krim are lying lowing trying to avoid Takofanes and GRAB has added a new member to their ranks. A bunch of solo villains get some updated information, the most notable is that Foxbat finally had a Master Plan succeed! Inna Gadda De Foxbat! The last part of the chapter provides two new Hidden Lands, Selenus a city on the moon and Thaar a city of bird-people in the Indian ocean.

Chapter Six - The Rogue's Gallery. Divided into two parts, updated villains and new villains. Here's a list of which villains got updated character sheets: The Warlord, Anklyosaur, Anubis, The Black Paladin, Hornet, Lady Blue, The Slug, Talisman, Utility, Zephyr, and Zoran The Artificer. New Villains contains nine new enemies to the setting, many of which were mentioned earlier in the book. None of the new villains are of Master Villain level, but a few are powerful enough to take on a team of heroes.

Chapter Seven - The GMs Vault. This chapter covers even more secrets and behind the scenes plot twists in the Champions Universe. Confirming or not confirming several of the rumors, perceived truths and guesses from the first four chapters. And we get one more Hidden Land an enterprising GM can use.

The Downside:

Notably missing is any word of an update on The Motor City Defenders from Teen Champions. Which is too bad, it would have been interesting to see what happened with that group of loosely organized teen heroes, even as a side bar footnote. There's no information on the war brewing behind the scenes in Vibora Bay, I'd have expected such a possible world shaking event to get some kind of update.

Normally artwork in a gaming book doesn't even cross my mind. But I felt that the updated characters should all have had new artwork, or even just a different artists take on the same character.

The Otherside: Being an extension of the Champions Universe setting, there isn't much use for this book for non-Hero Gamers unless you've already converted the Champions Universe sourcebooks for your own use.

The book does a good job of updating most of the major plots, and a lot of the minor plots from several sourcebooks. Even if your games CU deviates greatly from the presented setting material there's probably a good chunk of information you can use. Only six heroes get updates, but sixteen new heroes are introduced. Eleven updated villains and nine new ones can make sure your PCs don't get any downtime. At the very least this sourcebook can help enterprising GMs flesh out a lot of the goings on in the backgrounds of their campaigns, opening up new plots for the PCs to encounter.

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