

Villains, Vandals, And Vermin

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Villains, Vandals, And Vermin is an enemies book for the Champions Universe from Hero Games. The books contains fifty-nine new adversaries for your games. The characters contained in the book are all new, and many of them have been mentioned throughout the various sourcebooks for the Champions Universe in passing.

Chapter One - Master Villains. Only one new Master Villain is introduced, and he comes with three powerful henchmen. Sunburst, Helios, Nuke, and Phaze are the last of the villains to be described that resulted from Project Sunburst. We also get a mostly complete history of Project Sunburst as part of Sunbursts origin story. Sunburst himself is marked as the Champions Universes most powerful Blaster, or Energy Projector, and indeed when he's pushing his limits he has one of the most powerful attacks of any published character. His three companions have a varied but roughly similar power set given their common origin. The group lacks a serious hand to hand combatant, though Nuke makes a good Blaster Brick type. They also make a good example of creating a versatile team with varying powers that have a common origin story. They're all Blasters of some type, but their effects vary while staying on a theme.

Chapter Two - Villain Groups. Three new villainous groups are introduced to the game, each a five person team.

The Brain Trust is a group with a wide power range. At the top end is the groups leader Overbrain, a powerful mentalist and telekinetic brain in a tank. A classic master villain archetype if there ever was one. Under his control four other villains. Ape-Plus and Black Mist as the heavy hitters of the group, both powerful enough to give a standard Superhero a run for their money. Ape-Plus is a sentient gorilla engineered by the Overbrain to be completely loyal, and is his answer to Dr. Silverback the Champions Universe premiere hyper-intelligent simian. Black Mist is a classic ninja character, brain washed and mind controlled by the Overbrain. At the bottom end is Lynx and Mr. Zombie. Lynx is a low-powered villainess with a cat-girl motif, genetically altered and mind controlled by the overbrain. Mr. Zombie is a low powered brick accidentally created by the Overbrain. The group comes across as slightly comical, being mostly a group of bad cliches and themes. Played right they could be a bit of comic relief at first but have enough punch to them to become a serious threat.

The Crimelords is an a tight-knit group of villains in it for the money. One of the few villain groups that came together out of, mostly, actual friendship and mutual respect. Dreadnaught and Tiger Lily are a villainous couple who were tired of the mercenary life and decided to form a group. Dreadnaught is a brick able to turn his skin into metal, and Tiger Lily is a skilled martial artist. Morgaine The Mystic is an

elemental sorceress who used to be involved with Dreadnaught, and still harbors a few feelings towards him. Starflare, a basic energy blaster, has no particular connection to the group, but does harbor a secret not even he knows about. Warhammer is the groups technical expert and a powered armor user, both he and Dreadnaught have a bone to pick with the bullies from their youth and are close friends. The group is fairly close in power level and would make a good set of adversaries for any PC group. Well balanced, and cooperative, they could prove a tough fight.

The Tiger Squad is China's official Superhero Team. This is probably the most anticipated addition to the Champions Universe, and I think they should have gotten a sourcebook all on their own. This mega-group comprises over forty superhumans, though only five of the most prominent are detailed here. The group is not a group of villains, but because they are attached to a government often at odds with the western world they frequently show up as adversaries. Some of the group are true Superheroes, some are pro-democracy, and some are actual villains with government sanction. Because China requires all it's known superhumans to join the group an extremely eclectic mix of heroes with differing views are forced together. Even with that the majority of them are out to help the people of China as much as any other national group wants to help their own country. Graniteman is really a supervillain, a sadistic bully who joined the Tiger Squad because it was better than jail and so far enjoys government sanctioned mayhem. Red Bullet is a good mirror for nationalist PCs, his primary motivation is his love for his country and belief in the government despite its short comings. Summer Cloud is the groups most outspoken Pro-Democracy member, and the most likely to get into trouble and flee to the United States, a good hook to get a group involved in a political supers campaign. Technocrat is less outspoken Pro-Democracy advocate, and a good hook for gadgeteer PCs. Winter Dragon is an outspoken supporter of the government and often comes to odds with Summer Cloud, and many outside groups, he is a Chinese Patriot NPC. Though not detailed out, there is a list of twenty-two other members of the Tiger Squad, with their basic political stance and power set. This makes an excellent group, especially if you're playing a Government Sanctioned Team, to both oppose and mirror a PC group.

Chapter Three - Solo Villains. Forty solo-villains are detailed, they range from high-powered to low-powered giving a good range to choose from for any situation.

There are nine villains that are definitely in the Low Powered arena. At the lowest end there is Buzzsaw who is a gimmick mercenary with a very low attack compared to superheroes. At the upper end of this area are Exo and Onslaught who have respectable offensive ability, but little other capabilities compared to your standard superhero. This group is good if you want some super powered henchmen, or gimmick henchmen, for a more power supervillain. Or to fill out a villain team in a scenario.

About fifteen villains occupy the middle ground, from standard to slightly more powerful, of supervillains. These are comparable to a Player in a one on one basis, or a little better. Both good offense and versatile capabilities. There are a few that could conceivably be a good threat for a whole team, Basilisk can turn people to stone but otherwise is weak offensively, used right he can be a real threat to a team. Smoke And Mirrors are twins with darkness and illusion powers, while Mirrors has no offensive capability herself when combined with Smoke and used effectively they can cause all kinds of problems.

The High Powered Villain arena has about sixteen villains in it, while none of them are Master Villain class many of them are powerful and versatile enough to be Arch Villains or a real threat for a whole team. At the very high end of the spectrum is The Curse, who is basically a one trick villain, but it's a powerful trick.

As I said, some of the villains detailed in the book are referenced in other sourcebooks from Hero Games. Here's a list of which villains mentioned elsewhere are found here. From Champions Universe; Buzzsaw, Graniteman, Leviathan, Red Bullet, Rictus, Summer Cloud, Technoract, Winter Dragon. From UNTIL Superpowers Database (one or two) image blocks; The Curse, Dreamwitch, Entropy, Fleshtone, Geos, Grenadier, Magnetica, Mindgame, Momentum, Plague, Timelapse. From VIPER: Coils Of The Serpent; Gauntlet, Smoke And Mirrors. From Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks; Mantisman, Python.

The Downside:

Between the range of characters from deadly to a bit campy, low and high powered, there isn't much going against this collection. Either you need or want more villains or you don't.

The Otherside:

For the non-Hero gamer there's a wide choice of villain types to borrow concepts and ideas from. And of course those who enjoy converting systems will get good mileage out of this book.

I would put this as a good book to add to your collection, doubly so if you need some more villain ideas. A lot of the villains in the sourcebook can be fun to play and play against.

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