

Cops, Crews, And Cabals

Book Line:	Champions	SKU:	228
Book Type:	NPCs, Organizations	Formats:	Softcover, PDF
Author:	Steven S. Long	Released:	December, 2007
Cost:	29.99\$	ISBN:	978-1-58366-108-6
Page Count:	143	Hero Designer:	No
Common Abbreviations:	CCC	Print Status:	In Print

The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Cops, Crews, And Cabals is a collection of eleven organizations for use with the Champions Universe, or any Superhero setting. Some of the groups can even be used in other genres with little change. All of the organizations introduced are designed to be either smaller adversaries for the Heroes to take on - the kind of evil organization they can actually shut down completely unlike world spanning ones. Or background groups to help the Characters and add more to the campaign as a whole.

Chapter One - Angelstone Laboratories. This company is a small technology development group and think tank. They focus on small Defense contracts as well as working to develop technologies to capture Supervillains or otherwise help the Superheroes and other groups (like UNTIL or PRIMUS) with reports and briefings of goings on in the Superhuman World. The company is a private group that serves best as a side line assistant to the Heroes, whenever they get the Latest Threat Report of Dr. Destroyer you can use this group as the origin of that element for example.

Chapter Two - Bastion Alpha Security. In a world of Supervillains you can never have enough security. This company provides low level enhanced guards and agents for protection. One the outside this groups appears to have a process to enhance human capability to help them better compete with Supervillains, indeed a group of these agents could take down your average Super. However, this organization has a sinister aspect to it that makes it more mercenary than helpful.

Chapter Three - Executive Control Solutions. Another private security company, this one is founded by former UNTIL Agents, and operates under the premise than normal people with advanced technology is all the protection you need. Unlike Bastion Alpha this group relies on technology instead of enhancement. A much less sinister security company, this group presents a friendly face to the Heroes.

Chapter Four - The Exoplanetary Society. This is a diverse group of people who are concerned about aliens on planet Earth. Some are curious, some are watching for alien threats, and some think all aliens are harmful. This group can be used in several interesting ways, aside from some background color for the game they can be sinister (part of a conspiracy), innocent and well meaning, or a large collection of crackpots. Of all the groups this one has the potential to interact with the Heroes on several levels at once.

Chapter Five - Grand Cienelago Island. This is a vacation resort for Superheroes, and like the identities of many Superheroes is a Secret. It's hard to work in scenarios with this place involving Supervillains,

but can provide plenty of interaction with many Superheroes and Super Groups in your campaign, especially if you feature a good number of them. It can be used to roleplay some down time, forge connections and create friendly rivalries.

Chapter Six - Millennium City Police Department, Special Unit Omega. This is a special unit within a special unit (MARS - Metahuman Activity Response Squad). This team of eight people are who is called when no one else on the police force can take down the Supervillain. They are good as a team on the police force to work with the heroes, or compete with them in a friendly (or not so friendly) rivalry. Like ECS from Chapter Three they are normal humans with advanced technology.

Chapter Seven - Sickbay. Even Superheroes get hurt, and going to the hospital raises all kinds of issues from filing police reports, trying not to expose your secret identity, and being mobbed by fans while trying to staunch the bleeding. Sickbay is an under the table, no questions asked medical help group for Superheroes. They don't want to know your identity, won't ask questions, just patch you up and send you back onto the streets. A good group to introduce to a game where healing isn't readily available and you don't want to deal with the issues of an actual hospital.

Chapter Eight - Trans-City Construction. Not all Super powered people have powers suitable to crime fighting, or the disposition for it. Some have low level superpowers, and the construction industry is a good place for many of those abilities. Trans-City Construction is a company run by a Metahuman capable of changing matter from one kind to another, and employs many other superhumans with low level but still useful abilities, such as Strength or Telekinesis. This is another group you can slide into the background of the campaign, notably as the company that repairs all the buildings after a super-fight.

All of the above groups are, more or less, friendly groups. Or at least appear to be on the good side. Each one describes the history of the group, the organizations setup and operations, and provides some ideas on how to use them. For some that means both as friends and adversaries. Each one also comes with some suggestions on how to run a campaign as members of that group, which can be a nice change to a Supergame, even if only for a session or two.

Chapter Nine - GMs Vault. This starts the other part of the book, the sinister organizations. The GMs Vault itself provides information on secrets and other possible dark sides to organizations in the first eight chapters. It also provides plot seeds for each of the groups to get them more involved in the campaign.

Chapter Ten - ICON. This is a consortium of would be world-ruling villains. The group, like so many others of their kind, want to take over the world for their own gain. But this group isn't as big or world spanning, yet. If you want to introduce a large group, but one small enough a group of Heroes has hope of completely shutting down, this is a good group to go with. They're also a good group to use against lower-powered Superheroes.

Chapter Eleven - Motlee's Crew. This is a group of thieves, each with a single, but useful, superpower they use to commit burglaries. Like their more powerful counterparts GRAB, they're in it simply for the money and not a fight. This group of sneak thieves is good for a short mystery burglary, or another good group for low-level supers to face.

Chapter Twelve - Villainy Unlimited. Even Supervillains need a support structure. From legal council, medical help, setting up trust funds with their ill-gotten gains, or even costume design. This is not a group the Players face, in fact there are no villains here, possible criminals yes, but no one to fight. This is simply a group you can use to give some plausible reasons for your Villains to acquire things or

get things done. You can expand the group if needed, or not. The Players can try and use them to trace back to a Supervillain as well if you need them too.

The Appendix provides character sheets for the Security Guards from Chapters Two and Three, and the guard robots for use in Chapter Five.

The groups presented here are not designed to be world-beaters or high-powered adversaries. They are decidedly low level and fairly simple to use and face. A few good uses come to mind, first is to show that the Heroes can permanently stop a group of people, medium sized groups like ICON don't have the ability to have large numbers of members captured and suffer no setbacks (like VIPER could).

Beyond that, you can port some of these organizations to other genres. Sickbay and the two Security Companies, and ICON could all fit right into a Cyberpunk Campaign with almost no changes at all. Angelstone Laboratories could be a technology think tank company for any modern setting campaign, and if you remove the low-level powers Motlee's Crew becomes another group of well organized thieves. A little bit of work can take almost any of these groups out of the Superhero setting and into any number of modern settings, or even futuristic ones, easily.

The Downside:

No one groups gets any great detail, eleven groups in a relatively short book means a lot of information is skipped over. Some of the NPCs introduced have Character Sheets, and some don't. A little more consistency in that regards would have been nice. ICON especially could have used a little more in fleshing out how it operated.

The Otherside:

For a collection of low-powered, background and support groups this does an excellent job. Too often campaigns focus on the big organizations and forget the smaller ones or the middles ground. This provides a whole selection of names, organizations and technologies you can introduce to a campaign to add depth and flavor. Even for non-Hero Gamers and those not playing Superheroic Campaigns there is something in this book you can use to add more to a game.

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