

**ALTERNITY**

ISSUE

**13**

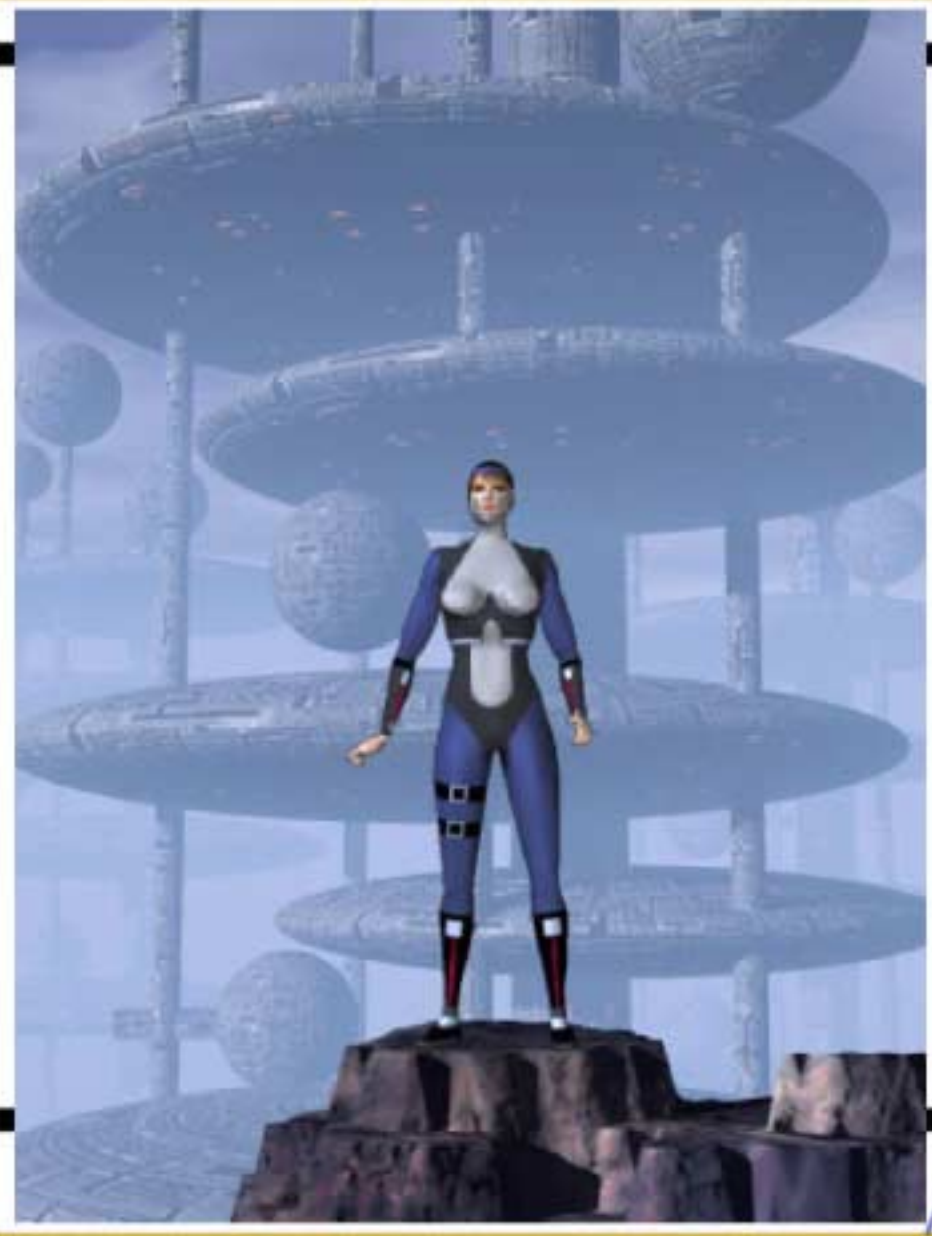
# **ACTION CHECK**

ONLINE + MAGAZINE

**STAR\*DRIVE**

**GAMMA WORLD**

**DARK•MATTER**



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 Issue #13, July-August 2001

## Editorial: Rallying the Troops

I'd like to take a few moments and borrow the editorial page from Jeff and Jim in order to reflect on the Alternity community as it stands today. Back on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2000 all of us received the official notification that Alternity would indeed no longer receive support from Wizards of the Coast. No new products. No new submissions accepted for *Dragon* or *Dungeon* magazines. The ship had sailed. And the fans of the game were left to deal with the aftermath.

Some people greeted the news with angry rants. Others calmly thanked the Alternity design team at Wizards and moved on. And still others decided to try and do something to keep the game alive. Here at Action Check we definitely fall into that latter category. And, if you're reading this, odds are you're with us. In fact, that's exactly what we want. For you to be with us. To take an active part in keeping the flame alive.

Action Check has approximately 250 subscribers on our mailing list. And, at last count, thousands of people have apparently downloaded our publications from [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net). So, it's fairly clear that there are a lot of you out there. To me, this indicates that Alternity still has plenty of life left in it. And as long as you're willing to be an active part of keeping it alive, the game will go on.

Now Jeff, Jim, and I put a fairly significant amount of time into each issue...so much so that it can often interfere with our "normal" lives. Thus, we made a decision to cut things back to a bi-monthly schedule starting in May of 2001. Not only to decrease the demands on our time, but also so we could take the extra time to carefully review what goes into the e-zine and make it the highest quality material possible. In between our regular issues, we also planned to release the *Dragon* and *Dungeon* articles that Wizards of the Coast gave us permission to reprint. So far we've done three of them: "Guns, Guns, Guns", "Starships", and "Transmissions." All of these have been super-popular and we've gotten a number of requests for more reprints.

But we need your help. Just because Wizards of the Coast granted us permission to reprint the articles, doesn't mean we actually have them on hand to do so. We want to provide them to the Alternity community, but we need those of you that already have access to the various articles to scan them into an editable format like a .JPG or .GIF and send them in. That way, we can actually publish them into a .PDF and release them to everyone else.

Now Jeff has put out this call before...both via the Alternity mailing list and even [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net), the official Alternity fan-site on the web. But we've had no dependable responses to those advertisements. So, I figured this was probably the best forum to state our need. If there are readers of Action Check out there that have the various *Dragon* magazine issues containing Ares articles on Alternity, please scan them and send them in. If you have the *Dungeon* magazine issues containing Alternity adventures, please scan them and send them in. Right now, we'd like to focus on providing the *Dragon* articles for the various Star\*Drive races. So, if you have those, please take a moment to share them with the rest of the Alternity community through Action Check. You can direct any and all scanned material to our regular submission email address: [actioncheck@hotmail.com](mailto:actioncheck@hotmail.com). We'll see that it gets properly formatted and that you receive credit for having aided our cause.

But a word of warning: If this attempt to secure the Alternity community's assistance once again fails to motivate people to support the game, the reprints may never see their way into the pages of Action Check. We don't want that to happen. But, without your help, there's very little we can do. So, please be proactive. Rally the troops. If you have a love for Alternity, do what you can to support not only its continued existence, but its growth as well. Thank you.

-- Neil Spicer, Action Check Coordinator

## Action Check Submissions

To submit an article to Action Check magazine, read and follow the **guidelines** laid out at:

[www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net)

And send all submissions (in txt, rtf or doc) to:

[actioncheck@hotmail.com](mailto:actioncheck@hotmail.com)

Regular Features:

The Oracle: Ask your Alternity rules questions to our all-knowing Oracle and watch the answers appear!

Transmissions: adventure hooks, along the lines of those previously found in *Dragon Magazine* for the various campaign settings.

Gridsites: Alternity related Web sites that deserve recognition and serve a specific purpose.

Creature Feature: Aliens, Creatures, Xenofoms, etc. for the Alternity campaign settings.

Futuretech: Gear, equipment, vehicles, weapons, armor and other hardware for the Alternity game.

Supporting Cast: NPC stats for insertion in Alternity games. All submissions must follow the Supporting Cast Template in the Alternity GMG!

Reviews: of Alternity or related-use product.

Special FX: New FX/Psi or mutations.

Plus cartoons, details of campaign ideas, star systems, full adventures, etc.

EDITORIAL



## The Reaction Score

Letters from our Readers

### THE REACTION SCORE "Letters from Our Readers"

Awhile back, we solicited the Alternity community for some creative names for our "Letters" column. Though we didn't get a lot of submissions, all of them contained multiple titles for us to choose from. Ultimately, we went with a variation of Shawn Trudeau's entry. He recommended "Reaction Check", but we thought that sounded too much like "Action Check" and we wanted a slightly different name than the title of the overall magazine. As a result, we chose to modify Shawn's suggestion into "The Reaction Score". Much like "Action Check", it's another generic Alternity phrase that cuts across all of the campaign settings. In addition, we like the ring of it since "Reaction Score" implies we're "checking the score" with our readers for their "reactions" to our publication.

On that note, Jeff, Jim, and I would like to encourage anyone and everyone to submit letters to us at [actioncheck@hotmail.com](mailto:actioncheck@hotmail.com), letting us know what you liked, didn't like, would have preferred to tweak, etc. about the articles that appear in Action Check. We may not print all of them, but we'll certainly read them and keep your comments in mind as we put together future issues. In many ways, it gives us feedback on what our readers find most useful about our magazine. In addition, the contributors that write the actual articles should also find your comments and advice encouraging and informative. Here are a few letters that we've received already:

**I searched through [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) for the May issue of Action Check and I still haven't found it. When is the May issue - or rather, the May/June issue - of Action Check going to be posted on the site? Now that Action Check is going to be a bi-monthly publication, how long before we can expect to see the next issue; in other words, how long is the "down time" between issue releases?**

The May issue was due out in...well, May. Originally, we had planned for it to be our 12<sup>th</sup> and final issue before going bi-monthly. The next issue

after May would have been June-July, then August-September, and so on. But the best-laid plans often go awry. For a number of reasons the May issue got stalled. Somewhere along the line, we decided that we'd just make it the May-June issue...in an effort to buy us more time. But we didn't even make that deadline either. Finally, in mid-July we released the May-June issue retroactively. This means our next issue (this one, actually) will be for July-August. It should have been posted to [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) at least by the end of August, and that will put us back on schedule for the foreseeable future.

We're on our bimonthly schedule now. You should expect to see a new release every other month, sometime during that month. In other words, this issue represents the months of July and August, and it came out in August. So following that schedule further out, the next issue will be for September-October and will appear in the month of October. The exact date could be sometime during the early half or the latter half of the month, depending on the amount of material our editors have to review and any last minute changes that get introduced. Hopefully, there won't be any more real-life disruptions that take us away from meeting our deadlines.

Also, the good news is that even the in-between months (such as September, November, etc.) will probably see additional "special editions" of Action Check as we reprint many of the *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazine articles on Alternity, which Wizards of the Coast gave us permission to reproduce. So, in essence, you should still expect to see something from Action Check roughly every month. Therefore, our downtime between all of our issues put together is going to be about a month (give or take a few extra days). The regular issues containing fan submissions from the Alternity community will appear every other month. That's our plan, at least. And we intend to implement it that way. Of course the plan also depends upon the generosity and cooperation of the Alternity community-at-large. (See this issue's editorial)

**Wizards' website only has Action Checks for June– November 2000. Are there more? Are more coming? --Ed**

Hi, thanks for writing. Action Check is definitely still here. Wizards' website has basically discontinued support for the Alternity game, and as such, I don't think you'll find any more of our issues there. I'm surprised you found them to begin with actually. Instead, Wizards passed the torch along to [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) and you can find all of our back issues at that site. They are the fully sanctioned and official Alternity website from now on, placing the game firmly in the hands of its fans.

In addition, Action Check has currently decided to go bimonthly instead of monthly in order to concentrate on a higher quality product...and because of time constraints on those of us that put the e-zine together. We've published 12 issues to date (prior to this one, of course), June 2000 thru May-June 2001. All of these are at [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) in their "Downloads" section. Just keep visiting [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) and you'll see our issues pop up there periodically. Or, we can also add you to our mailing list and you'll be sure to receive every copy as soon as it comes out. Subscription requests can be sent to [actioncheck@hotmail.com](mailto:actioncheck@hotmail.com).

**Hi!! My name is Gonzalo, and I'm from Peru. I'm kinda new to this Alternity - Dark Matter world, and I really appreciate e-zines for creating and publishing new material for Dark Matter. Congratulations for your great magazine!**

**I was surprised when Wizards shut Alternity down. I was shocked when Amazon cancelled my order for the *Dark Matter Campaign Setting*. But well, with all that web material I survived.**

**Recently I got the Transmissions reprint in your e-zine, Action Check. You said you had permission to re-print Dragon non-fiction articles. Well, if these are non-fiction articles to you, I would thank you very (very!) much to publish them. I found the list in the Dark Matter Portal. Thanks! --Gonzalo**

**DRAGON MAGAZINE:**

- \*Dragon Annual 1999 - "The Kindness of Strangers" - Chris Perkins**
- \*Dragon #264 - "Legacy of the Dragon" - Sean**

**Reynolds**

- \*Dragon #265 - "The Voice" - Stephen Kenson**
- \*Dragon #268 - "FX Artifacts" - Sean K. Reynolds, Andy Collins**
- \*Dragon #269 - "Urban Legends" - JD Wiker**
- \*Dragon #271 - "Top Secret"**
- \*Dragon #273 - "Arms Race" - Owen Stephens**

**DUNGEON MAGAZINE:**

- \*#80 - "A Head for Business" - JD Wiker**
- \*#83 - "London Calling" - Andy Collins**

Hola, amigo! Okay, that's pretty much the extent of our Spanish-speaking skills, but we thought we would at least say hello in your native language. It's nice to meet someone all the way from Peru. Thank you very much for your positive comments! We're quite proud of Action Check and enjoy hearing from those that find it useful, such as yourself. Thanks for writing.

We were surprised by Wizards' decision to cancel Alternity, too. Basically all of us at Action Check are simply fans like you. We were encouraged by one of the Alternity product support people (Jim Butler) from Wizards of the Coast to start our own non-profit magazine...and we've been going strong for over a year now. With the continued support from the Alternity community, hopefully we'll continue for years to come.

Yes, we do have permission to reprint virtually all of the articles you listed. In fact, we have permission to reprint Alternity Star\*Drive and Gamma World in addition to Dark Matter material. So far, we've released three different compilations of Dragon and Dungeon magazine reprints. You can find all three available for download at [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) under their Download section. One of them, you've obviously grabbed already..."Transmissions". The other two are "Starships" for use in the Alternity Star\*Drive campaign and "Guns, Guns, Guns" which contains articles for new weapons from Dragon #273 ("Arms Race") and #259 ("Fallout II").

As for the rest of the articles you listed above, we'll get to them as soon as we can. As you can imagine, everyone is requesting that we reprint different things as soon as possible. We're planning to release a new compilation of reprints about every other month, so keep checking with us to see when the next set will be coming.



# HUNTER IN THE DARK

By Robert W. Messina

## Hunter In The Dark

*This transmission was designed with a StarCraft game in mind; although it can be easily adapted to fit into almost any Star\*Drive campaign. It is assumed that, if you are running a StarCraft campaign, you already possess and are using The Alternity Player's Handbook and Gamemaster Guide.*

**Transmission:** Approximately 10 hours ago, a wraith scout patrol came across a drifting science vessel in sector grid 08-24-69. The vessel appeared to be intact and undamaged, but attempts to hail the crew were unsuccessful. The ship's registry number and markings identified her as the "Garstang", a private enterprise archaeological research vessel from Umoja. According to starport logs, she left 13 months ago on a expedition to Callus [G2/R2/A2/P2/H2], an

arid, irradiated dustbowl, in the Herbert 601 star system. She was scheduled to return within a year's time and is 3 weeks overdue.

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The heroes have been assigned to board the Garstang to assess the situation and offer their assistance where needed. This is a search and rescue operation, and they should be outfitted as such, including at least one medic among their ranks. Along with their gear, they are provided with a crew manifest and deckplan of the ship. The adventure begins aboard the battlecruiser, Guadalcanal. After 6 hours it has just rendezvoused with the scout patrol holding a defensive pattern around the derelict science vessel. The heroes anxiously wait aboard a dropship that will carry them to the Garstang's external docking pod. To gain entry, they will either have to bypass security or cut through the airlock doors. Once



inside, the atmosphere is grim. Many passageways and compartments are without power; life support is functioning but at a minimal emergency level and there is definite evidence of foul play. Amid the carnage, large puddles and splatters of an unidentifiable blue goop are scattered throughout all decks. Most unusual is that the entire crew is missing.

#### Possibilities

- 1) Disguised as a rudimentary artifact, a Zerg Chaos Spawn (see below) was planted aboard the Garstang in hopes that it would be brought back to Umoja. The spawn is there to spy and perform acts of sabotage in precursor to a major invasion. During the voyage, however, a crewmember stumbled upon the creature in its natural state. She was eliminated before she could report her findings, but the damage had already been done. A manhunt throughout the ship for their missing crewmember resulted in the spawn seeking out and terminating each one. Now it hopes that a rescue party comes along so that it may continue with its mission.
- 2) The Garstang is not really an archaeological research vessel. The expedition to Callus was just a ruse to cover its true purpose: biochemical weapon research and development. The crew mainly focused on the Zerg Rot project, a disease engineered to discreetly and rapidly decimate large broods of Zerg. An undetected accident aboard the ship caused the latest mutation of the virus to escape and infect the crew. In a schizophrenic, homicidal frenzy, they killed each other off before finally succumbing to its effects. Zerg Rot is a powerful airborne contagion that accelerates cellular decomposition. In fact, it works too well, being just as lethal to Humans and other species, as well as the Zerg. Transmitted through breathing, ingestion or direct contact, the disease is capable of surviving in dormancy for up to 2d4+2 weeks without a host. Once exposed, the victim must make a Constitution feat check with a +1 step penalty to resist it. Zerg characters suffer a +3 step penalty to this roll. Refer to page 57 in the *Alternity Gamemaster*

*Guide* for the check result and effects of diseases. Even if a good result is rolled, the character is still a carrier for the disease and can infect others. If infection occurs, the effects are felt within 3d4 hours:

*Ill* characters become feverish and take on a pale blueish pallor. All actions suffer a +2 step penalty as the infected grows irritable and slightly paranoid. Each hour, the character must attempt a Constitution feat check: Critical Failure or Failure, worsen to extremely ill; Ordinary, no change; Good or Amazing, the character recovers.

*Extremely ill* characters literally turn blue as various skin eruptions appear all over the body, causing all actions to suffer a +3 step penalty. The infected acts irrational and violent, convinced that everyone is out to get him. If friendly heroes attempt to reason with him, he is allowed a Resolve-*mental resolve* skill check to return to reality but may slip back on an hourly basis. Each hour, the character must make a Constitution feat check: Critical Failure or Failure, worsen to terminally ill; Ordinary, no change; Good, improve to ill; Amazing, recover completely.

*Terminally ill* characters begin to dissolve away into a puddle of blue slime. They are comatose, although they can rouse themselves for a few words of conversation with a Resolve-*physical resolve* skill check. Every hour, the character must attempt a Constitution feat check: Critical Failure, suffer 2 points of mortal damage; Failure, suffer 1 point of mortal damage; Ordinary, no change; Good or Amazing, improve to extremely ill. When the hero sustains mortal damage, he must make a Stamina-*endurance* skill check as if suffering mortal damage in combat.

- 3) The crew has fallen victim to a rather innocent Protoss artifact. In the specimen holding bay will be found a wondrous, blue crystal shard. The shard stands approximately 1.25m tall, is .3m in diameter and weighs about 62kg. Any sentient life-form approaching within 2m will cause it to glow and pulsate, enough to light up

the compartment. According to documentation, the crew believes the artifact, termed the Callus Crystal, to be a healing or fertility device left behind by ancient visitors to the planet. They were at least half right. When the Dark Templar were dispersed into the void, they knew that someday they would have to reunite and return in either the defense or destruction of their beloved Aiur. For just that reason, a means to instantly summon one another was created using long-forgotten Xel'Naga lore, the Amutak (Ah-moo-Tok). An Amutak is formed when six psionic energy points are permanently infused in a specially prepared crystal. These points may be donated by one or more Dark Templars, but they are forever removed from their psionic power reserve. This power build-up causes the crystal to give off a mental resonance in a 30m radius, uninhibited by obstructions. Any character with the perk of *Psionic Awareness* should be allowed a roll to "feel" it every time they enter this range. The pri-

mary purpose of an Amutak is communication. In the hands of a Dark Templar, or character with the psionic broad skill of ESP, the crystal acts as a star transceiver and grants the power of *Empathy*, both at Ordinary levels. The crystal's secondary purpose is medical, acting as a Ordinary regenerator to anyone physically touching it. However, it is this second attribute that had contributed to the destruction of the crew. An Amutak is specifically designed to react to the physiology and psionic emanations of Templars. Any non-Templar character who handles one is first overcome by a warm, invigorating wave that stimulates the pituitary, or similar, gland. After being regenerated, the handler is bombarded by a Moderate blast of degeneration, with the effects of the illness resembling Zerg Rot above. In addition to the disease, the victim is also susceptible to a Slight mental instability. Finally, like an addictive narcotic, the victim is compelled to return and make physical con-





tact with the crystal every 2d12 hours unless he can succeed at a Will feat check. The existence and procedure of creating an Amutak is unknown to the common Protoss. Even the most learned High Templar would need to examine the pre-Strife archives in order to trace one's origin.

**The Chaos Spawn**  
by Robert W. Messina

STR	10 (0)	INT	8 (0)
DEX	10 (0)	WIL	8 (0)
CON	10 (0)	PER	8 (0)

Durability: 10/10/5/5      Action Check: 13+/12/6/3  
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4    # Actions: 2  
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks:

Claws	12/6/3	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w	(LI/O)
Acid Touch	12/6/3	(see below)	(En/O)
Confusion Pulse*		(see below)	

Defenses:

Immune to knockout effects  
Armor (amorphous tissue) d4+2 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills:

Athletics [10]- *climb* [11], *jump* [11]; Unarmed Attack [10]- *claws* [12]; Stealth [10]- *hide* [16], *shadow* [14], *sneak* [16]; Stamina [10]- *endurance* [18], *resist pain* [16]; Knowledge [8]; Awareness [8]- *intuition* [13], *perception* [13]; Resolve [8]- *physical resolve* [18]; Entertainment [8]- *act* [11]

Special Abilities:

- 1) \*Confusion Pulse: Once per round, a chaos spawn can emit a subsonic burst that disrupts the vestibular system of the inner ear in Humans. The burst emits from the spawn 15 meters in all directions causing a disorientation to all audible targets within range. Each target suffers a +1 step penalty to all actions, and may attempt a Resolve-*physical resolve* skill check to resist further effects; failure indicates the target acts as directed by the roll of a d6: 1 = stands confused unable to act; 2 = staggers away aimlessly; 3 = attacks nearest creature or being; 4 =

attacks nearest inanimate object; 5 = repeats last action taken; 6 = suffers from vertigo (dizziness and nausea). Targets that cannot hear or are wearing hearing protection are unaffected. Protoss physiology gives their race a -2 step bonus to their resistance roll. All other Zerg are immune to its influence. The pulse's effects last for 5 rounds (1 minute) and are not cumulative.

- 2) Acid Touch: In addition to its claws, a chaos spawn may deliver an acid strike in the same attack. This works exactly like the acid touch mutation as described on page 218 in the *Alternity Player's Handbook*.
- 3) Shapechange: A chaos spawn is capable of assuming the appearance of any life-form or object it has seen. The spawn does not gain or lose mass, so it cannot change its apparent size (about 80-100kg) by more than 20%. No special abilities of the assumed form are gained with the change. Wings will not allow one to fly, and gills will not allow one to breath underwater, etc. Any attempt to see through the disguise suffers a +4 step penalty to Awareness-*perception* skill checks. Changing from one form into another requires only a single action. The new form may be assumed indefinitely, however, the spawn returns to normal if somehow it is incapacitated or killed.
- 4) Biosynthetic Self-Destruction: Like an infested Terran, a chaos spawn reduced to 0 mortal points explodes. Anything within 10 meters of the explosion is splashed with a lethal acid of d6 potency.

Background: The chaos spawn is a new Zerg mutation engineered to cause confusion and panic amongst Terran marines on the battlefield. In its natural state, it resembles a purple-veined blob of light blue pus. Ever-shifting tentacles, eyes, mouths, claws, etc. form and collapse about its amorphous mass, giving no two creatures the same appearance. It feeds by enveloping its prey and quickly dissolving it with a digestive enzyme. The by-product is a blueish goop that it leaves behind. To date, no one has ever seen or identified a chaos spawn and lived to tell about it.



## SUPPORTING CAST

By Neil Spicer

### SAMUEL CARPENTER

Samuel Carpenter — A Combat Spec SCM for Alternity Star\*Drive

(Note: This SCM is designed using the alternate skill point system and the options for psionics and cybertech. If you don't use these rules, adjust his skills, equipment, perks, and level accordingly.)

Level 5 Human Combat Spec Mercenary

STR 11 [13] (+2) INT 9  
 DEX 11 (+1) WIL 9  
 CON 11 PER 9  
 Durability: 11/11/6/6 Action Check: 14+/13/6/3  
 Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4 #Actions: 2  
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1  
 Perks: Faith, Psionic Awareness  
 Flaws: Moderate Infamy, Moderate Temper, Powerful Enemy (Slight)

Attacks:

Unarmed 16/8/4\* d6+ 1s/d6+ 3s/d4+ 1w  
 Combat Knife 14/7/3 d4+ 2w/d4+ 3w/d4+ 4w  
 Pistol, 9mm ch 14/7/3\* d4+ 1w/d6+ 1w/d4m  
 Rifle, 11mm ch 12/6/3\* d6+ 1w/d6+ 3w/d6+ 1m

\* -d4 situation die modifier due to Combat Spec bonus or gunsight

Defenses:

Bushmaster Cerametal Armor d4+ 2 (LI), d6 (HI), d6 (En)

Skills:

Armor Operation [11]-*combat* [12]; Athletics [11, (13)]-*throw* [12, (14)]; Melee Weapons [11, (13)]-*blade* [12, (14)], -*bludgeon* [12, (14)]; Unarmed Attack [11, (13)]-*power* [14, (16)]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]-*pistol* [14], -*rifle* [12]; Vehicle Operation [11]; Movement [11]-*swim* [12]; Stamina [11]-*endurance* [12]; Knowledge [9]-*computer operation* [10], -*first aid* [10], -*language: Standard* [12], -*language: Hatire* [10], -*stellar nation: Hatire* [12], -*system: Algemron* [10]; Tactics [9]-*infantry* [10]; Awareness [9]-*perception* [10]; Resolve [9]-*physical* [10]; Interaction [9]-*intimidate* [10].

Note: the Ability and skill scores in parentheses

represent Carpenter's adjustments for his cyberlimb)

Gear:

Bushmaster cerametal armor, 11mm charge rifle, 9mm charge pistol, and combat knife.

Cybertech:

Nanocomputer (G) w/ comm port, cyberlimb (O), musclePlus (O), cyber-optics (A) w/ gunsight (O).

Personal Information:

Gender: Male  
 Motivation: Deeper Meaning  
 Attitude: Honorable  
 Traits: Aggressive, Hatful

Background:

Life handed Samuel Carpenter a raw deal from the beginning. Born in 2430 in the Hatire Community, he never knew anything except the conflict and pain caused by the Second Galactic War. His participation as a foot soldier in the Expansion Pentad cost him his arm, an eye, and nearly his sanity. Put back together by Nariac allies in a battlefield hospital, he was given a cybernetic replacement for the limb he lost, but it hasn't brought back the life he once knew. And now his new cyber-optic system, a perfect replica of his former eye, looks out upon the world with an angry gaze.

His Hatire friends and family view Samuel with pity or outright disgust, expressions that only further his own self-loathing. The Hatire have always reviled invasive cybertech, and though the priests of the religious Community absolved him of the sin so he could continue to faithfully serve their armies, he hates them for it. Once, he had the makings of a true war hero. Now he lives in infamy, always regarded as the soldier that succumbed to the battlefield, and then polluted his body with the technology to survive it. Often they (as well as he) wonder why he didn't just have the decency to die instead?

Frankly, they think he sold out, when in truth he never had a choice. Mixed troop deployments

and fortification overruns threw all of the Pentad's forces together in some planetary systems. Somehow his identification as a Hatire soldier was lost in the confusion of the battlefield. The Nariac doctors couldn't tell the difference between him and any other dying patient, and an unconscious man can't really protest all that much anyway. Wartime conditions mandated that all soldiers be returned to active duty as soon as possible, regardless of nationality. But no one wants to understand that. Those are just excuses for an unforgivable sin.



When Samuel finally emerged from his coma, he nearly killed a nurse due to his rage and the fact that he hadn't yet mastered the use of his cytronic-controls. If the staff hadn't restrained him, he even would have torn the offending cyberlimb and eye from his body, or killed himself instead. As a result, it took much longer to heal the mental wounds caused by the operation than the physical ones it had sought to address.

During his time of rehabilitation, Samuel also came to realize the trauma had undone the fledgling psionic powers he once had at his command.

Never a full-fledged Hatire mind-walker, he had at least enjoyed the capabilities of a biokinetic talent. The mastery of mind over body is a complicated thing. It's unclear whether the loss of his original arm, or the invasive cyber-surgery that involved the portions of his brain where the nanocomputer and cyber-optics attach, might have contributed to the loss of those abilities. But now, whenever Samuel tries to extend his mental energy, there is no response. His muscles, skin, tissue, and bones reject his commands to reshape themselves and adapt to his surroundings. The only mental pathway open to him now is an intermittent psionic awareness; a curse that allows him to recognize when others are using the gift that he will forever be denied.

After his release from the hospital and sanitarium, Samuel briefly tried to resume his duties as an officer in the Hatire army. He remains a powerful warrior and skilled martial artist with much to teach raw recruits. But the sight of a Hatire soldier with a cybernetic limb and eye was enough to spark more than a few offhand comments that fueled Samuel's temper. He regularly lashed out at those that spoke openly and derisively of his prosthetics. For the rest, he suffered the paranoia that they might be saying the same

things behind his back.

It's that hot temper and aggressive attitude that landed him in worse trouble. He nearly killed the son of a respected Hatire diplomat in a sparring session. The boy was a fellow officer that had purposefully riled Samuel in order to distract him and possibly win the contest. But Samuel's skills proved superior anyway, and his temper ran unchecked. The military hierarchy was pressured into making an example of him and he received a dishonorable discharge for "striking a fellow officer" in a situation that was deemed to be "for non-educational purposes." Samuel was devastated and felt as if his life had finally reached rock bottom.

No longer able to find gainful employment due to his notoriety and 'disfigurement,' Samuel decided to leave the Hatire Community once and for all, abandoning his family in the same way it had abandoned him. Under the advisement of one of his few remaining friends (the Hatire priest that worked to absolve him of his sin), Samuel struck out for the Verge hoping to find a new life for himself. One where he could find acceptance from those around him, and also from within.

Setting aside the stricter teachings of the Hatire faith, Samuel has learned to embrace technology as much as his conscience can allow. He is still embarrassed by his cyberlimb and wears a long-sleeved black glove to cover it at all times. He is just beginning to experiment with more advanced equipment such as his cerametal armor and charge rifle, finding them a necessary evil to once again survive the harshness of 26<sup>th</sup> century battlefields in the Verge. However, at times, he is still influenced by his faith, allowing it to guide some of his decisions and reactions to the outside world. He constantly struggles as an on-again-off-again follower of the Cosimir while also being the physical manifestation of hypocrisy itself.

His journeys have taken him from Tendril, to Lucullus, and finally to Algemron, always as a mercenary-for-hire. He has a fatalistic approach to his assignments, believing that he died long ago on the battlefield that cost him his humanity. Any combat he participates in now is viewed as an opportunity to finally go out the way he always should have. But he won't go quietly. Samuel Carpenter intends to challenge others without

fear of dying, not simply as a way to commit suicide. It is a dangerous combination that has actually proven useful in seeing him through situations where a weaker man would have run. Currently, he has rallied to the cause of the beleaguered Alitarins as they struggle to regain their homeworld from the Galvinite occupation force. He studiously avoids the Hatire colony of Grith in the Corrivale system, having run into a relative there of the officer that caused his dishonorable discharge. He also keeps an eye on the Hammer's Star system, prepared to head in that direction if any further skirmishing should break out with the Externals.

Though he has come to accept his cybernetic attachments, Samuel doesn't yet realize he also carries a Nariac tracking monitor in his nanocomputer, standard issue for those that go under the knives of the Domain's cyber-surgeons. With classic subterfuge, at least one Nariac doctor knew Samuel was a Hatire soldier before installing the cybertech into his body. The procedure was completed in the interests of having a Hatire mole unwittingly serve the Ministry of State Security and the Nariac Intelligence Directorate. This initiative was approved primarily because Nariac spies were so easily detected and interrogated by Hatire mindwalkers during and after the Second Galactic War. Samuel's nanocomputer routinely defeats their best ESPions and records input from his cyber-optics without his knowledge in order to gather information that might be useful to the NID. While he sleeps, this information is then transferred to Nariac probes, starships, and visiting dignitaries up to several kilometers away through the communications port in his nanocomputer. His brief return to the Hatire training facilities gave the NID a wealth of insight into the Community, but his departure to the Verge has frustrated all further attempts to reveal the secrets of the Hatire government. Unknown to him, plans are now being implemented to record any involvement he has with the military forces of the Verge or the Galactic Concord should he venture into the Hammer's Star system.

Samuel stands 6'1" tall and weighs about 185lbs. He has dark brown hair, suntanned skin, and blue eyes. He speaks a little of the old Hatire language, but rarely uses it so as not to attract attention to himself as a former member of the Community. He dresses in the standard mercenary

garb of combat armors, usually with a forest-camouflage pattern for use on Alitar. Often, he hides his eyes behind a pair of dark shades and likes to chew gum.

Samuel's personality is a study in anger. He always seems quietly upset with life in general, operating on a slow burn. Often he uses these emotions to drive himself to succeed at whatever goals he sets. Those that receive the full measure of his wrath can always sense an irrational element to it...almost as though they aren't the sole object of his rage...and that realization is enough to unnerve most folks just a little bit. He reserves his highest disdain for those that believe they've suffered a hard life, knowing full well just how cruel life can be from personal experience. In general, he dislikes Nariacs, Mechalus, and cyber-heads...not feeling any kinship with them whatsoever. He also feels uncomfortable around people that make him feel emotions other than the anger and self-pity he enjoys nursing.

**Fitting into a Campaign:**

Samuel can be an adversary or an ally, depending on the GM's needs.

As an enemy, Samuel can be someone the heroes are forced to deal with by being on the opposing side of a conflict in which he's involved. The battles between Galvinite and Alitarin forces in the Algemron system could present such a situation. Alternatively, the vindictive family of the Hatire officer that caused Samuel's dishonorable discharge could have hired the heroes to locate him for them. Or, some other recipient of Samuel's rage could be looking for revenge and somehow get the heroes involved. Lastly, Samuel could easily have a relapse of his mental problems from the cyber-surgery, either as a manifestation of cykosis or some horrifying anguish brought about by his former psionic abilities. This could cause him to become homicidal and law enforcement officials could retain the heroes to bring him in after a particularly violent episode.

As an ally, Samuel could hire on with the heroes as an extra gun, providing a certain measure of security, but he can be an annoyance too as they have to deal with his bouts of anger and depression. If they take an active role in Alitar's fight to regain its independence from Galvin, he could be assigned to them for a dangerous and potentially

suicidal mission. If they are headed for the Hammer's Star system in order to participate in combat actions against the Klicks, he could also sign on for the adventure. Or, if the heroes are investigating a cybertech chop-shop of some kind, they might encounter Samuel there, either as a customer (for removal of the Nariac tracking device after discovering it) or as a vigilante trying to shut down the proprietor's operation.

In either case, over several encounters, the GM can slowly reveal more details about Samuel's problems. The Nariac Intelligence Directorate will eventually try to manipulate him further, thus complicating the heroes plans regarding Samuel, either by rescuing him from their clutches or trying to separate him from their employ so they can use him to further their goals in the Verge. If the heroes become genuinely concerned about Samuel's well-being, he could eventually be turned away from his path of self-destruction, finally coming to terms with what he has become. In this capacity, he could play a recurring role in their lives as a mercenary contact with connections to military matters throughout the Verge. It's nice to have friends that don't mind going the extra mile for you and if Samuel ever does get his anger under control, he could certainly make for a powerful friend and ally.



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# CYBERDEMONS

By Daryl Blasi

## Digital Ruin and Cyber Demons

As human society became more entrenched in technology and the digital world, certain malevolent beings from the nether regions evolved to reflect the new tech-reliant reality. These cyber demons integrated the use of technology into their diabolical manipulations of humanity and reality. Eventually many of these demons melded with the technology to become truly cybernetic in nature. There are a wide variety of cyber demons, differing in their methods and use of tech. Some of these demons travel the grid, playing upon the vices of those who use the digital world to feed their dark impulses. Other demons revel in the negative side of industrial development, finding easy prey in the urban squalor created from industrial growth and subsequent economic crash.

### Cyber Hells

As cyber demons grew in number they broke away from their more traditional brethren and claimed parts of the hellish dimensions for themselves. The cyber demons mixed technology with diabolical perversions to create their realms, resulting in a nightmare landscape of harsh neon glows and metallic ruin.

### Realms

The cyber hells are divided up into different realms ruled by cyber demons of great power and status. The following is a short description of a few of these kingdoms.

**Neogaddam:** Lokazon, Lord of Despair, rules this deadly realm. Unlike other cyber hells, this realm is brightly lit and clean. The material that is used to make the structures in this domain appears to be the well-polished metallic bodies of the damned. A blue fluorescent light radiates from this soul substance, creating a sickly glow that numbs the senses and thoughts of anyone who spends too much time in this realm.

**Trop:** Skane, Lord of Rage, rules this hellish urban wasteland. Rows of decaying skyscrapers spread out into an endless landscape of the worst possible features of urban life. The roads are

filled with vehicles stuck in eternal traffic, giving off toxic fumes that eat away at unprotected flesh. Raging mobs of demons and damned souls periodically run through the streets ripping apart anything and anyone they encounter. The noise of the city is a mix of screams of rage and pain, tearing away at the sanity of anyone within its confines. This constant din eventually drives the listener into a homicidal rage.

**Cytica:** Tazarazat, Lord of Lust, rules this underground den of perversion. Garishly lit with neon lights of all colors and decorated with instruments of torture and erotic pleasure, this realm would make even the most jaded dominatrix blush. Demons and the damned take part in endless orgies and demented revelry, but no one ever finds satisfaction, either spiritual or physical.

### The Damned

Unfortunate souls who find themselves condemned to the cyber hells often appear as their former selves with cybernetic additions made to their soul material. Most of the time the cyberware is anything but an enhancement, though. Usually the cybernetics are designed to impede and antagonize the soul in a variety of ways. Rusty malformed cyber legs that lock and throw the soul to the ground, cyber devices implanted in their torsos that leak burning acid, cyber eyes that intensify light to a painful degree, and other such techno tortures.

When souls first enter the cyber hells, they are hunted down by demons that take them to hellish workshops where they are fitted with a variety of cybernetics at the whim of the demons. A fortunate few are chosen to be servants of powerful cyber demons and are shaped and fitted accordingly with tools appropriate to their new function. Of course "fortunate" is a relative term in the cyber hells. Some of these souls function as mobile communication devices, with computer monitors imbedded in their torsos and their heads melded with satellite dishes. Other souls are shaped into warriors with machine guns for arms, facing annihilation at the hands of demons, other damned souls, or even angels. These are but a few exam-

ples of the use of the damned, who find themselves mere tools and playthings for the pleasure of the cyber demons.

### Seductrix

Seductrix are cyber demons created from the concentrated lust and perversion inspired by the numerous pornographic sites on the grid. Seductrix can enter the real world if summoned or at times or in places where the barriers between dimensions are weak. They can automatically transmit their demonic shadow into the grid at any time and prefer this method in contacting mortals.

**Description:** In their natural form, a seductrix appears as a beautiful human-like female between 1.7 and 2 meters tall with reflective glasslike skin of a dark blue hue. Their hair appears to be made of light blue metallic filaments that dimly glow, fluctuating in intensity every second. Their pitch black eyes appear to be made of the same glasslike substance as their skin. Seductrix have sharp, glowing, blue claws. Small green digital 0s and 1s race across their skin as if flowing across a computer monitor, fading in and out in random patterns. They can change shape at will to appear as the ideal beauty to any person or alien (both female and male) they encounter (Treat

as the Great Looks perk). This ability is innate and does not cost FX points.

**Encounter:** In the real world, seductrix will attempt to seduce and manipulate people to fulfill their goals. If confronted with physical violence, a seductrix turns into a vicious fighter using her claws and electrical energy blast to cause harm. They are also likely to utilize guns of the latest design. On the grid, a seductrix's shadow can perform normal actions, including shadow combat and hacking (see grid section below).

**Habitat/Society:** Seductrix usually work for a greater cyber demon, recruiting mortal servants for the demon's cause. Many seductrix like to set themselves up as secret advisors to powerful peo-



ple who control the proliferation of the grid and digital entertainment. Such individuals could be politicians who are in a position to control grid regulations, corporate leaders pushing technology to new levels, or movie studio heads creating entertainment for a large, impressionable audience. On the grid, seductrix will often set up provocative sites that entice grid users to experience any pornographic entertainment they can imagine. Their goal is to addict the grid user and weaken his will, eventually making him a mind-controlled slave.

#### Special Abilities:

**Seduction (Unique Mesmerism spell):** Seductrix use a powerful charm magic that allows them to create feelings of infatuation and desire in the target. The victim of the spell feels a need to please the seductrix, seeing her as a person to court and win over. In this state, the victim will react toward the seductrix according to the degree of success. On an Ordinary result the target's attitude is automatically changed to Charmed. The victim sees the seductrix as a potential lover. He will follow reasonable suggestions given by the seductrix and will try to impress her, even to the point of defending her from harm. A Good result changes the attitude to Fanatical. The target is in love with the seductrix and will do almost anything she says unless it is totally against his nature. A ruthless mercenary will kill at her request, while a law-abiding cop will certainly balk at a command to murder. An Amazing result changes the attitude to Fanatical as well with an enhanced effect. A person in this state will do whatever the seductrix asks without question, including killing his best friend to prove his love for the demon. This spell even works on people who are Hostile or Combative towards the seductrix. This effect lasts for 10 minutes.

**-More Targets:** At ranks 4, 8, and 12 the seductrix may affect 2 additional persons with the use of this power.

**-Seduction Ritual:** A seductrix is able to perform a special ritual that changes the target into a Fanatical slave (as the Amazing result) for a much longer duration than the normal use of the power. This ritual can take many forms, but always involves manipulating the lustful desires of the victim. The most direct method is actual sexual activity with the victim. After a series of successful trysts, the victim eventually becomes a willing slave to the seductrix. Another way the seductrix

can perform this ritual is by setting up a pornographic site on the grid that actually acts as conduit for her power. As the grid user involves himself in the pornographic media, his will is weakened by the seductrix's power, eventually succumbing to her domination. In game terms, the ritual is a complex skill check requiring the seductrix to achieve 5 successes. If successful, the victim becomes Fanatical as described earlier. The seductrix makes a check for every hour of activity. This complex skill check does not have to be made continuously and the demon can even break off from the ritual and return another day to complete the magic. For instance, the grid user may visit the porn site one hour each day eventually losing control to the seductrix. If the ritual is successful, this effect lasts for one day. At the end of this period, the victim may make a *Resolutional* check to break free. At Rank 6 the duration becomes a week, while at Rank 12 the duration is a month.

**Electrical Bolt:** A seductrix is able to discharge a bolt of electricity from her mouth. This is equal to the super power Energy-Energy Blast. A seductrix who uses this power while kissing someone gets a -5 bonus to her skill check.

#### Seductrix Game Data

STR 9 (d8+6)  
DEX 13 (d6+10)  
CON 10 (d6+8)  
INT 12 (d8+8)  
WIL 10 (d6+7)  
PER 14 (d6+11)

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action Check: 14+ /13/6/3

#Actions: 2

Move: sprint 22, run 12, walk 4

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 3

FX energy points: 10

#### Attacks

Claws 11/5/2 d4w/d4+ 1w/d4+ 2w (LI/O)

Electrical Bolt 12/6/3 d4+ 1w/d6+ 1w/d4m (En/O)

(PL5) 9 mm Pistol 15/7/3 d4+ 1w/d4+ 2w/d4m HI/O

(PL6) 9 mm Charge Pistol 15/7/3 d4+ 1w/d6+ 1w/d4m HI/O

(PL7) Laser Pistol 15/7/3 d4+ 1w/d6+ 1w/d4m En/O

(PL8) Maser Pistol 15/7/3 d6w/d6+ 2w/d4m En/O



**Defenses**

Armor: d4+1(LI), d4+1(HI), d4+1(En)  
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks  
 +1 INT resistance vs. encounter skills

**Skills**

Athletics [9]; Unarmed [9]-*brawl* [11]; Modern [13]-*pistol* [15]; Acrobatics [13]-*defensive* [14], *dodge* [15]; Stealth [13]-*hide* [14]; Vehicle [13]-*land* [14]; Stamina [10]-*endurance* [14]; Computer science [12]-*hacking* [16]; Knowledge [12]-*language (specific human)* [15]; Awareness [10]-*intuition* [12], *perception* [14]; Investigate [10]; Resolve [10]-*mental* [12]; Culture [14]-*diplomacy* [16], *etiquette (human)* [16]; Deception [14]-*bluff* [16]; Entertain [14]-*dance* [16]; Interaction [14]-*bargain* [17], *charm* [18], *seduce* [19].

**FX Skills**

Mesmerism-*seduction* [17]; Energy-*energy blast* [12]; Diabolism-*black warding* [14], *rend the weave* [14], *tongue of the damned* [17]

**Seductrix on the Grid**

A seductrix can send her spiritual essence onto the grid from the hellish dimension she originates. When a seductrix sends her shadow to the grid, the following information applies according to the Progress Level of the grid technology.

**Progress Level 5:**

**Tactics:** At PL5, where true shadow forms have not been developed, the seductrix are special entities jumping about through various computer servers and stealing space to host their arcane websites. When a seductrix interacts with grid users, she takes over sections of another user's system to run her programs and send messages. This can be a nasty surprise for a user when the seductrix's activities are traced back to the user's computer. When communicating with a user, a seductrix will often send X-rated pictures of herself or a digital animation of herself performing provocative poses. The seductrix is able to use her seduction power through the pictures or the playing of her animation. When she has captured the attention of the user she then will direct the user to her websites, where the stronger seduction ritual can be performed. Due to the primitive nature (relatively speaking) of the technology used, the seductrix suffers a +1 penalty to her seduction power. At PL6 and higher a seductrix

will have a true shadow form that can perform normal functions within the virtual reality of the grid. Her tactics will be similar to that mentioned before but the enhanced interaction of the technology allows her powers to act normally. She has no penalties for the use of her seduction powers in this environment. Of course a seductrix may use more sophisticated means to make someone do her bidding, especially when the intended victim is a powerful mortal with which long-term interaction is desired. She will set up a mortal identity for herself and then attempt to seduce the target through normal means, both on the grid and in the physical world if possible. She will resort to her mystical power only when necessary.

Other than noted above, treat the seductrix as a normal computer user with access to any PL5 computer program. They favor programs such as decode, virus, corrupt, and break-in. Remember that any trace performed against the seductrix's grid activities will take the curious to an innocent user's system.

**Seductrix Grid Shadow (PL 6 or higher):** A typical seductrix's form on the grid is equal to an Ordinary shadow form, which takes up no active memory slots. When using programs on the grid, the seductrix acts as if she is using a gridcaster with a processor of Ordinary quality, giving the normal -1 bonus on action checks. Although the description and function of these programs are identical to actual grid technology, they are arcane in nature. They combine technology with the seductrix's diabolical power. This means a spell or psychic power that could be used to detect or counter arcane or even evil energy would be effective against these programs. For instance, a splash of holy water may protect a computer system from a seductrix's virus. More powerful seductrix may have Good or better quality shadow forms, programs, or processors.

**Typical Shadow:** (using PL 6 technology)

STR 10  
 DEX 10  
 CON 10  
 INT 12  
 WIL 10  
 PER 14

Durability: 10/10/5

Action Check: 13+ /12/6/3  
 #Actions: 2  
 Action Check Modifier: -d4  
 Reaction score: Ordinary / 2  
 Grid Movement: 20  
 Grid Base Skill Check: 16/8/4  
 Processor: Ordinary (6 active memory slots)

resistance modifier vs. Grid attacks: +1  
 resistance modifier vs. encounter skills: +1 (INT)

**Programs utilized** (all Ordinary quality)\*Slots

Break-in (appears as snake burrowing) 2  
 Shadow Armor (appears as electrical energy field) 1 d4 (+1 penalty)  
 Shadow Bolt (appears as lightning from mouth) 2 d4s/d6s/d4w  
 Shadow Weapon (long sharp claws) 1 d4+2s/d4w/d4+2w  
 Trace (black metallic demon dog appears to sniff out prey) 1

\*These are the typical programs used. Since they are of Ordinary quality the seductrix receives a -1 bonus to all skill checks using these programs. A seductrix may have other programs available at the PL of the campaign's technology.

**Story Seed for Seductrix in PL 5**

The peace of an affluent, suburban community is shattered with the horrific death of a visiting religious leader. To the shock of the community, three bright high school boys are revealed to be the murderers. With no apparent motive, the boys killed and then mutilated the man by cutting strange markings into his torso. Fingers are pointed immediately in all directions trying to place the blame. The common bond of the boys is their obsession with computers and violent video games. When an investigation is performed, the police find large amounts of downloaded pornography on their hard drives.

Unknown to the public, a seductrix had contacted each of the boys on a chat site and established a digital relationship centered on sex. Eventually she magically seduced each one in turn with her websites and then ordered them to murder the minister using a satanic ritual. The minister was in fact a member of a religious order of demon hunters who had foiled earlier plans of the seductrix. His ritual death weakened the barriers between dimensions and allowed the seductrix to pass through into this world. The seductrix has

taken on a mortal identity as the beautiful new computer teacher at the local high school (the old teacher mysteriously left one day, tendering his resignation through e-mail). Now the seductrix has a large number of potential slaves to do her bidding as she sets her sights on seducing the owner of a successful software company conveniently located in the town.

**Story Seed for Seductrix in PL 6+**

A grid detective is found dead in the red light district of a large space station found at the crossroads of human space. The autopsy report shows the cause of death to be electrocution, with the point of contact to be around the mouth region. Only one witness is privy to the event—a brain-damaged grid junkie who repeats the words “blue suck bus” when questioned by the authorities. The police dismiss him as unreliable and release him. Later that night the grid junkie is found dead with the same wounds as the detective, an arc rifle lying nearby. The station police close the case assuming the grid junkie is responsible, despite the protests of other junkies who knew him and thought he couldn't hurt anyone.

A seductrix is preying on the patrons of a pornographic grid parlor, enslaving a variety of spacers and workers on the station. After interacting with them on the grid for a couple of months, she was able to use their worship to draw her over to this reality. The grid detective had been investigating the financial records of one of the seductrix's victims at the behest of the victim's wife, who had noticed sums of money being drained from their account. The grid detective traced the records to the seductrix's financial accounts and then went to investigate in person, setting up a meeting with the seductrix's mortal identity as a prostitute. She magically seduced him and then killed the poor detective with a lightning bolt kiss. After she found out about the grid junkie, she dispatched him as well, covering her tracks by planting the rifle.

The seductrix has her sights set on the chief communications officer of the station and hopes to find an opportunity to seduce him in person. After she has built up enough money and slaves, she will take on the new persona of a rich businesswoman and then enact her plans to infiltrate the station's communications and spread her influence throughout the galaxy.

**Bludjag**

Bludjag are cyber demons created from the hate and violence of racism that has infested modern society and the grid. The bludjag are rage-filled creatures whose very presence causes others to be agitated and hostile.

**Description:** Bludjag appear as humans with grotesquely large muscles and rage-twisted faces with lips permanently curled back to show large yellow teeth. Bludjag can change their skin color at will to match whomever they are trying to inspire to violence. A bludjag's body is covered with tattoos of infernal runes, diabolical scenes of cruelty, and other hideous markings. Most bludjags have numerous piercings ranging from simple nose rings to hellishly designed apparatus that would kill a normal human. Bludjags always have a large weapon melded with one of their arms, replacing the forearm and hand. This weapon can be detached by the bludjag and replaced by another, depending on their mood or need.

**Encounter:** In the real world, the bludjag react to most situations with aggression and cruel violence. They favor any sort of weapon that causes extreme pain or heavy damage such as flamethrowers, heavy machine guns, and sabot cannons, depending on the Progress Level of the campaign. This weapon is attached to the bludjag's arm and can be reloaded as normal. Bludjags are also adept at Pyromancy, enjoying the havoc these powers can

cause to a crowd of people.

Bludjags are not subtle in their tactics and prefer a fist to the face over complex schemes. If a bludjag is successful in crossing over from the cyber hells to normal reality it will take the leadership of a militant organization dedicated to some form of racism or prejudice and inspire them to ever increasing acts of violence, until the group inevitably self-destructs. The bludjag then moves on to another group, where the cycle begins again. The bludjag feed on the hatred and violence they inspire and can actually be physically damaged if they are unable to influence others to violence. For each day a bludjag is unable to force someone to inflict Wound or Mortal damage



Artwork by Dragan Ciric, kvasaclimited@beotel.yu

on another, the bludjag must make a *Resolve-mental* check with the following results: a Critical failure causes d4+1m, a Failure 1m, an Ordinary d6+2w, a Good d6w, and an Amazing d4w. A bludjag may only heal this damage by getting someone to commit acts of violence against another. For each amount of damage caused, the bludjag heals the same number of durability points. Therefore it can only regain Mortal points by having its pawn inflict Mortal damage. Wounds inflicted upon the bludjag through other means may be healed in this manner as well.

**Habitat/Society:** Bludjag are numerous in the cyber hell of Trop, where these demons scour the damned cityscape for victims to feed their rage. Bludjag are sometimes the foot soldiers of more powerful cyber demons, but their nature predisposes them to follow their own particular agenda to spread hate and paranoia.

**Special Abilities:**

**Hate Aura:** Bludjag may project an aura of intense hatred at will that can affect anyone within 10 meters of the demon. This aura causes everyone within its range to increasingly become more aggressive and paranoid towards anyone or any group of people that the bludjag chooses, eventually leading the victim of the aura to attack the focus of the hate. All those within range must make *Resolve-mental* skill checks every round with the following effects: Amazing-no effect and no further checks are necessary for that entire scene; Good-no effect; Ordinary-attitude towards everyone shifts one step down; Failure-attitude shifts two steps down; Critical Failure-attitude automatically becomes Combative towards the bludjag's chosen victims. Once Combative is reached, a person under the influence of the hate aura will automatically attack the chosen focus of this power, regardless of any danger they might face. The effects of this power lasts for one hour. This power does not cost the bludjag any FX points to use.

**-The Awakening of Blood:** Bludjag often use the grid to interact with mortals who have leanings toward racist or antisocial behavior, infecting them with the bludjag's hate. The bludjag can project their hate aura through the grid in a special ritual that will leave the victim of the power seething with anger that can only be quenched with violence and murder. This hate ritual, called the Awakening of Blood by bludjag, requires a

complex skill check using the bludjag's Leadership-*inspire* score. This check is made every hour the grid user is online interacting with the bludjag's gridsites, dedicated to hate rhetoric towards a specific group of people. This complex skill check does not have to be made continuously and the demon can even break off from the ritual and return another day to complete the magic. For instance, the grid user may visit the hate site one hour each day eventually succumbing to the bludjag's rage. If the bludjag accumulates 5 successes the grid user immediately becomes Combative towards a particular group of people and will seek out violent confrontations with anyone of that group. If the ritual is successful, this effect lasts for a week. At the end of this period, the victim may make a *Resolve-mental* check to break free.

A side effect of this hate ritual is the weakening of barriers between dimensions. If the bludjag inspires his pawns to kill thirteen people, the demon will be able to cross over into normal reality.

**Bludjag Game Data**

STR 16 (d6+12)  
DEX 11 (d6+8)  
CON 14 (d6+11)  
INT 9 (d6+6)  
WIL 10 (d8+6)  
PER 10 (d8+6)

Durability: 14/14/7/7

Action Check: 14+ /13/6/3

#Actions: 3

Move: sprint 26, run 16, walk 6

Reaction score: Good/3

Last Resorts: 1

FX energy points: 10

**Attacks**

Unarmed 18/9/4 d4+3w/d4+4w/d4+5w (LI/O)

Sample attached ranged weapons (according to PL)

(PL5) Heavy Machine Gun 18/9/4 d6+1w/2d4+2w/d8m (HI/G)

(PL6) Heavy Machine Gun, Charge 18/9/4 d8w/2d6w/2d4m (HI/G)

(PL7) Sabot Cannon 18/9/4 d8w/d4+1m/d6+2m (HI/G)

(PL8) Maser Cannon 18/9/4 d8w/d4+1m/d6+2m (En/G)

### Defenses

Natural Armor: d4+1(LI), d4+1(HI), d4+1 (En)  
 + 1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks  
 + 3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

### Skills

Athletics [16]-*throw* [17]; Heavy Weapons [16]-*direct* [18]; Melee [16]-*blade* [18]; Unarmed [16]-*brawl* [18]; Modern [11]-*pistol* [12], *rifle* [13]; Vehicle [11]-*land* [14]; Stamina [14]-*endurance* [20], *resist pain* [22]; Computer science [9]-*hacking* [11]; Knowledge [12]- *language (specific human)* [15], *antisocial organizations* [16]; Awareness [10]-*perception* [15]; Resolve [10]-*mental* [13], *physical* [18]; Interaction [10]-*intimidate* [14], Leadership [10]-*inspire* [13]

### FX Skills

Diabolism-*rend the weave* [14], Pyromancy-*fiery bolt* [12], *storm of flames* [12]

### Bludjag on the Grid

A bludjag can send its spiritual essence onto the grid from the hellish dimension it originates. When a bludjag sends its shadow to the grid, the following information applies according to the Progress Level of the grid technology.

#### Progress Level 5:

**Tactics:** At PL5, where true shadow forms have not been developed, a bludjag is a special entity jumping about through various computer servers and stealing space to host its arcane websites. When it interacts with grid users it takes over sections of another user's system to run its programs and send messages. This can be a nasty surprise for a user when the bludjag's activities are traced back to the user's computer. A bludjag will go on chat sights looking for individuals with leanings toward racism or antisocial behavior, contacting them and directing them to the demon's gridsites where the Awakening of Blood ritual can be performed. Due to the primitive nature (relatively speaking) of the technology used, the bludjag suffers a +1 penalty to the hate ritual. At PL6 and higher a bludjag will have a true shadow form that can perform normal functions within the virtual reality of the grid. Its tactics will be similar to that mentioned before but the enhanced interaction of the technology allows its powers to act normally. It has no penalties for the use of the hate ritual in this environment.

Other than noted above, treat the bludjag as a normal computer user with access to any PL5 computer program. They favor programs such as virus, corrupt, and break-in. Remember that any trace performed against the bludjag's grid activities will take the curious to an innocent user's system.

**Bludjag Grid Shadow (PL 6 or higher):** A typical bludjag's form on the grid is equal to an Ordinary shadow form which takes up no active memory slots. When using programs on the grid the bludjag acts as if it is using a gridcaster with a processor of Ordinary quality, giving the normal -1 bonus on action checks. Although the description and function of these programs are identical to actual grid technology they are arcane in nature. They combine technology with the bludjag's diabolical power. This means a spell or psychic power that could be used to detect or counter arcane or even evil energy, would be effective against these programs. For instance a splash of holy water may protect a computer system from a bludjag's virus. More powerful bludjag may have Good or better quality shadow forms, programs, or processors.

#### Typical Shadow: (using PL 6 technology)

STR 9  
 DEX 9  
 CON 9  
 INT 9  
 WIL 10  
 PER 10

Durability: 9/9/5

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

#Actions: 2

Action Check Modifier: -d4

Reaction score: Ordinary / 2

Grid Movement: 18

Grid Base Skill Check: 11/5/2

Processor: Ordinary (6 active memory slots)

resistance modifier vs. Grid attacks: + 1

#### Programs utilized (all Ordinary quality)\*Slots

Break-in (appears as metallic boar tearing with tusks) 2

Shadow Armor (appears as spiked armor) 1  
 d4 (+ 1 penalty)

Shadow Bolt (appears as cyber weapon melded to arm) 2 d4s/d6s/d4w

Shadow Weapon (spiked gauntlet) 1  
 d4+ 2s/d4w/d4+ 2w  
 Trace (fiery wolf appears to sniff out prey) 1

\*These are the typical programs used. Since they are of Ordinary quality the bludjag receives a -1 bonus to all skill checks using these programs. A bludjag may have other programs available at the PL of the campaign's technology.

### Story Seed for Bludjag in PL 5

A small city experiences a series of brutal attacks on immigrants, most dying from their wounds. The victims of these attacks all have racist slurs spray-painted on their bodies, while the few who survive recall their attacker muttering about the "the Angel of Purity". The police eventually catch the killer, who turns out to be a librarian who is described as polite and soft-spoken by his co-workers and acquaintances. As the city celebrates the capture of the killer, a new series of attacks begins, this time the victims are people in an affluent neighborhood.

Determined to cross over to the Earth's dimension, a bludjag had contacted the librarian on a racist chat site with the intention of corrupting him with the hate ritual. Sadly, the librarian wasn't a true racist and was actually researching hate groups for an article he hoped to write for a local magazine. After the librarian was caught the bludjag began controlling a new pawn, a college student who had taken an interest in radical social movements. The bludjag hopes the student will complete the thirteen murders it needs to cross over.

### Story Seed for Bludjag in PL 6+

Mutants in a mining colony on a desolate planet are confronted by a growing number of anti-mutant organizations who are blaming the mutants for the bad living conditions and the colony's poor economy. One militant group has even begun to hunt down mutants and execute them in a brutal fashion. Colony security forces search for members of the organization, finding the group's hideout and the decapitated body of the group's reported leader.

A bludjag has taken advantage of the growing unrest in the colony, which is currently experiencing an economic depression. The bludjag took over leadership of the anti-mutant organization, killing the former leader when he resisted giving

up control of the group. Now the demon is directing the group to commit violent acts against the mutants, delighting in the terror it is creating. The bludjag's ultimate goal is to cause the colony to fall into constant civil unrest, where it can feed on the hate for a long while.

### Cyberdemons in Star\*Drive

Although the seductrix and bludjag were designed for a campaign using elements of diabolism and magic, with a few adjustments to background and details cyberdemons can be incorporated into the Star\*Drive universe.

Perhaps the seductrix is a biotechnical construct sent by the Gardhyi to infiltrate human society and influence individuals in positions of power in the Verge. The demon's seduction power is an advanced psionic ability, while its other powers such as the energy bolt and shape changing ability are duplicated by advanced technology. For instance the outer shell of the seductrix's body is made of a gel material that is shaped by nanotechnology into different forms and colors, effectively giving the creature the power to shapeshift.

The bludjag might be the result of a top-secret experiment by a stellar nation such as the Nariac Domain or Thuldan Empire, which is attempting to build a super soldier by incorporating psionic ability, mutation, and cybernetics (a munchkin's dream). Unfortunately the experiment has gone seriously wrong, with the bludjag mentally unstable and psychically projecting its madness to everyone in close proximity.

Gamemasters should feel free to adjust these creations to fit their campaigns, especially if mixing the arcane with science is something normally avoided in their games.



# Hitchhiker's Guide

By Neil Spicer

## A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Stellar Ring of Star\*Drive

To many dedicated Alernity fans, the Star\*Drive universe is a rich campaign setting that eclipses the meager offerings of other science-fiction role-playing games. This is in no small part due to the introduction of the stellar nations and their diverse cultures. If nothing else, the stellar nation benefits lend an exciting element to the character generation process as each player tries to define a unique background for his hero. This provides interesting quirks, perks, and sometimes flaws, but the actual action of the game largely ignores the Stellar Ring as a setting, and is left instead to take place outside of most heroes' birthplace and in the frontier region of the Verge instead. This left some Gamemasters dissatisfied. Having become intrigued by the Stellar Ring, many of them looked forward to future products from Wizards of the Coast that would elaborate on their favorite stellar nation.

With the decision by Wizards of the Coast to abandon support for the Alernity product line, this never happened of course. Gamemasters have become limited to the Verge as their setting of choice unless they decide to develop the Stellar Ring or another parallel universe on their own. Interestingly enough, I once received an email from Richard Baker (co-author of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* and co-creator of the Alernity system) in response to my suggestion that he develop a product that would further define the Stellar Ring. Rich informed me that the game designers would continue to focus on the current development schedule at that time, which involved expansions to the Alernity rules such as *Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics* and supplementary campaign material for the Verge such as the *System Guide to Aegis*. Despite those words, he did encourage me with an indication that the designers would eventually turn their attention to the Stellar Ring. They had every intention of developing those products as well.

Unfortunately, the market just never supported that effort. Sales of Alernity and Star\*Drive prod-

ucts remained low. Wizards of the Coast had to cut their losses and focus their attention on the new edition of Dungeons & Dragons and eventually Star Wars. Ultimately, Star\*Drive was left in the hands of its fans for further refinement. A couple of efforts have already begun in that vein. Originally, the Alernity mailing list put together a team for the creation of a Stellar Ring Netbook, divvying up each stellar nation to an enterprising A-list lurker to be further detailed following the format outlined in Chapter Six of the *System Guide to Aegis*. This effort eventually stalled as multiple distractions arose to claim the team members' attention (myself included). Thankfully, on its heels a new Stellar Ring Project sprang into existence courtesy of the enterprising members of Alernity.net. The A.net project team has enthusiastically set about the task of providing a valuable service to those of us eager for more Star\*Drive material. At last check, a creative designer has claimed each of the stellar nations, and you can visit [www.alernity.net](http://www.alernity.net) to see some of their work in progress.

In the interest of adding something to the mix, and as part of a question originally submitted to the Oracle column of Action Check, I decided to write this article and examine the Stellar Ring at a general level. Basically, I wanted to explore the question of just how large is the Stellar Ring? Where does it lie in relation to the Verge and where do both regions lie in relation to the Milky Way Galaxy as a whole? How many star systems have each stellar nation actually colonized and how remote are they? I will attempt to answer all of these questions and while I cannot guarantee this to be the "official" explanation, I will try to make reference to as much supporting evidence as I can find within the previously published Alernity Star\*Drive products.

### The Milky Way

According to our best efforts in astronomy, the Milky Way is defined as an average-sized spiral-class galaxy that contains at least 300 billion stars. This means that there is a central bulge, with arms extending for several light-years curv-

ing around that bulge in a spiral pattern. Current estimates place the size of the entire galaxy to be around 100,000 light-years in diameter, so it's obvious that these 'arms' are very long indeed. The Milky Way has five distinct arms recorded by astronomers (though more may exist): the Cygnus, Centarus, Sagittarius, Orion, and Perseus. Our sun, and hence the Stellar Ring of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting*, lies in the Orion Arm. According to the *Externals* ESD on pg. 6, the aliens collectively referred to as the I'krl Theocracy come from the Perseus Arm, but have journeyed across the intervening distance and the Lightning Nebula in order to enter our region of space. This puts the Verge somewhere at a point that must bring it fairly close to the stars of the nearby Perseus Arm.

As additional information, one of the stars of Sagittarius is generally believed to be closest to the center of the galaxy. Presumably, this is the direction that the Far Reach lies, and according to the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* those colonies are only about 1,000 light-years away from Sol and aren't actually at the center of the Milky Way. They are simply further inward along the Orion Arm instead. Sol is somewhere between 24,000 and 28,000 light-years removed from Sagittarius along the curving arm of Orion. The actual constellation of Orion lies about 1,500 light-years from Sol very close to the far end of the Orion Arm. This is the most likely direction in which the Orion Frontier would be placed, and again according to the *Star\*Drive* manual, that colonized region of space lies only about a 1,000 light-years from Sol, so obviously it isn't at the very edge of the galaxy. In the 26<sup>th</sup> century, mankind still hasn't reached either end of the Orion Arm and hasn't managed to cross over to a new one either (i. e., the Perseus Arm, etc.).

### The Orion Arm

On pgs. 38-42 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* there is a lot of useful information that provides clues to just how far mankind has explored his arm of the galaxy. The following information is paraphrased from that text. Basically, humanity has explored the Orion Arm for 1,000 light-years in both directions of the galactic plane. Imagine a flat circle 2,000 light-years in diameter. The Orion Frontier lies on one side of the circle. The Far Reach lies on the opposite side. And

somewhere on that circle's edge, where it comes closest to the Perseus Arm, lies the Verge. In the third-dimension, humanity has only explored a region about 100 light-years in each direction. Imagine stretching the top and bottom of that flat circle until it becomes an ellipsoid 200 light-years deep...kind of like a discus...or ironically enough, a flying saucer. This represents the extent of explored human space in the 26<sup>th</sup> century.

To support this description of the Orion Arm and the Milky Way, refer to pg. 41 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* where it clearly states that "...humans have mapped an area 2,000 light-years in diameter and 200 light-years deep." Also measure the distances represented on the map on pg. 40 and it's clear that the Far Reach, Orion Frontier, and the Verge all lie about the same distance from Sol...a radius of about 1,000 light-years. Lastly, the Sagittarius Neutrality of the Galactic Concord points toward the Far Reach...and modern-day science seems to indicate Sagittarius lies at the center of the galaxy. Meanwhile, the Orion League points in the direction of the Orion Frontier...and astronomers generally believe Orion lies at the far end of our arm of the galaxy.

### The Stellar Ring

On pg. 39 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* it states "...while humanity has stretched its wings to explore the Orion Arm for 1,000 light-years in every direction, only about half of that space has been annexed by the stellar nations." This means that the Stellar Ring territory indicated on the map on pg. 40 represents a ring roughly 500-600 light-years in each direction from Sol and again the measurements provided by the map's legend seem to generally bear this out. That implies the outermost borders of each stellar nation represent the halfway point to the Far Reach, Orion Frontier, and the Verge.

Within the Stellar Ring itself, there are several "layers" of systems much like the rings of an onion. Again on pg. 39 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting*, it states "The heart of the Stellar Ring is Old Space, the region within 200 light-years of Sol. Each nation began its expansion here, and the first-world planets of Old Space represent the core of human territory." Notably enough, the Union of Sol lies entirely within this ring and takes

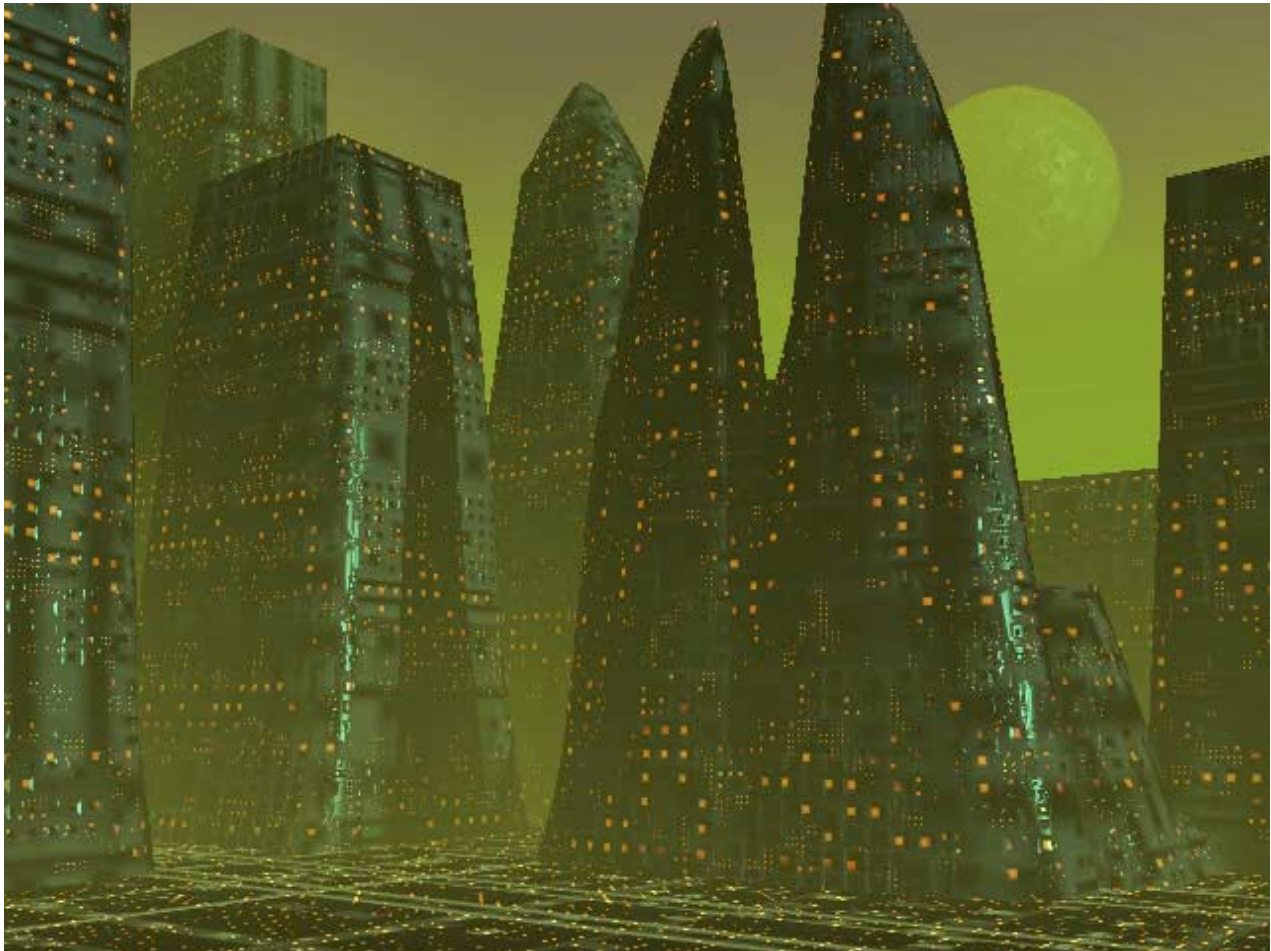


up the first 100 light-years in all directions. The other stellar nations hold a piece of Old Space in the next 100 light-years of their “slice”, or “wedge” really, of territory. This region is comprised of First-World systems that are heavily urbanized, sometimes containing city-planets with sprawling metropolises from pole-to-pole. Not every world in Old Space is characterized this way, but those that are tend to lie within 200 light-years of Sol.

Beyond Old Space lies the remainder of the stellar nations’ territory. This region doesn’t have a unique name, though obviously it is viewed as an integral part of the core worlds making up the Stellar Ring. This pseudo-frontier comprises many Second- and Third-World systems where civilization hasn’t become quite as urbanized as the First-Worlds of Old Space. They can be viewed collectively as the suburbs of that region. A Second-World system generally contains plan-

ets with at least one continent that has been settled and developed by its inhabitants, while providing ample opportunity for growth and expansion. A Third-World system contains planets with only a single city of significant size, sometimes dedicated to the establishment of a larger colony or simply the processing of some valuable resource for supplying the population of Old Space and the rest of the interstellar economy. All of the stellar nation territories outside Old Space contain thousands of other systems that have yet to be visited, too. In general, about one-fourth (in volume) of each stellar nation’s territory (or one-fifth in the case of the Thuldan, Rignunmor, and VoidCorp territories) indicated on the map on pg. 40 represents Old Space and the remainder is left to these Second-World and Third-World systems.

Beyond the Stellar Ring lies Open Space, clearly delineated by the outermost boundaries of each



stellar nation. The Treaty of Concord set those boundaries (and each nation's common borders) in 2472 in an effort to slow down the aggressive expansion that occurred during the Second Galactic War. The treaty still left room for all of the stellar nations to explore Open Space and establish new colonies, discover new alien species, and in the case of the Solar Union, to relieve any overpopulation problems. Of course, the administrators of the Galactic Concord closely monitor this activity to insure another intergalactic war doesn't break out over territorial disputes or alien persecution. Mostly, Open Space has been left as an area of independent homes and corporate holdings that may someday grow to become a new stellar nation, or voluntarily petition to join an existing one. Clearly, Concord law, as well as each nation's ability to support the new colonies, limits such options. The depths of Open Space are a lonely, desolate, and sometimes dangerous place to make one's home. The settled star systems, space stations, and relay points dotting that great void mark the interstellar travel lanes to and from such regions as the Far Reach, Orion Frontier, and of course, the Verge. According to the archives of the Alternity mailing list, and posts from the original game designers, the Verge lies approximately 350 light-years from the Kendai star system located on the edge of StarMech's outermost border.

### Star Systems of the Stellar Nations

Now that we have an idea of how large the Stellar Ring is, and where it lies in relation to the outermost boundaries of human-explored space and the Milky Way Galaxy as a whole, let's turn our attention to how many systems each nation has colonized. This is really a question that should be closely explored by the A.net Stellar Ring Project. Each team member will be endeavoring to define the stellar nations in more detail and, presumably, estimate how many systems they control. In the absence of any official numbers, I turned to the population census figures in the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* on pg. 42. I also referred to the information presented on pg. 19 for a rough estimate of the number of worlds (not systems) that are known to exist, reasoning that one to many could lie within a single star system. In addition, I extrapolated some judicious estimates regarding population density for each nation based on their descriptions and history. And fi-

nally, I set an estimate for how many people we can reasonably expect to exist in a First-World, Second-World, and Third-World system (not planet) of the 26<sup>th</sup> century. The results are listed in the table at the end of this article, but first I should probably explain the calculations that I used.

The text on pg. 38 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* indicates that "while they vary in size, even the smallest nations control tens of thousands of star systems and are home to more than 200 billion sentients." Obviously, not all of these star systems are actually colonized, but rather each stellar nation controls a vast area of space that even now hasn't been fully explored. The *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* goes on to say that, "given their immense size, the nations contain hundreds of diverse star systems, client regions, and allied planets." This seems to be a more accurate figure to work with. We can expect the sum total of star systems controlled by the stellar nations to reach into the hundreds, but probably not the thousands (i.e., less than 2,000). Some of the larger stellar nations might approach a couple of hundred star systems on their own, however.

On pg. 42, Table S3 indicates a total stellar nation census figure of 9,810,000,000,000 (or 9.81 trillion) sentients. The table also indicates each stellar nation's individual population estimate. All of those people are spread across a number of First-World systems, Second-World systems, and Third-World systems. On pg. 19, the text also states that "current surveys place the total number of first worlds at just over 200....second worlds are more common; humanity has established several thousand of these...[and] average a population of a billion sentients or less." It's important to note the distinction between a "first, second, or third world" and a "First-, Second-, or Third-World system". For example, a first world is simply a single planet whereas a First-World system must contain at least one first world, but could also have an extended population throughout the system. For the purposes of my calculations, I decided to set an average population figure of 20 billion sentients for First-World systems, 8 billion for Second-World systems, and 1 billion for Third-World systems.

Obviously some of these systems would contain a

higher population and others might be slightly less. But, we can assume that the total number of systems remains constant while we shift people from one system to another in order to increase or decrease those populations accordingly. Of course, there can actually be more than a single colonized world per star system. The estimates above already take that into account. Presumably a single overcrowded planet in a First-World system would hold close to 8 or 10 billion on its own. Two such worlds might exist in a single system...or at the very least additional moons, asteroids, and space stations that might collectively amass a similar population. Also, a second world is given an estimate of 1 billion sentients on pg. 19 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting*, but I decided to give a Second-World system the larger number of 8 billion sentients to reflect the addition of multiple planets and other habitable regions throughout the system.

In addition, not every landmass is going to be able to support life in each system anyway. It could be restricted by the individual environments of the planets inside the system, such as the capacity to produce food and water, overall land-size (especially in the event of water worlds), and volatility in terms of hazards which inadvertently control the population size. Also, PL7 technology ought to give humanity the ability to cope with some of those problems better than we do today. They would have several artificial living environments on airless moons, asteroids, and space stations. And, they would have found ways to terraform worlds to better meet their needs, as limited by the high expense of doing so, of course. All this means is that some systems would have a higher average population than 20 billion/8 billion/1 billion and some would have more. Again, this is just an estimate.

To help offset such an average, each stellar nation should be examined in order to arrive at a density factor. This factor should consider such things as overcrowding (in the case of the Solar Union), war torn sectors (such as the donated systems to the Galactic Concord), and societal constraints (such as the Hatire Community's philosophy regarding high technology or the Rigunmor Star Consortium's wealthy landowners). This population density factor could then be applied to the average system populations for First-World, Second-World, and Third-World systems to arrive

at a more acceptable figure tailored specifically for each stellar nation.

Lastly, the stellar nations should also be examined with regards to how many such systems it might have in Old Space vs. Open Space. Again, by checking the map on pg. 40, we should be able to visually perceive a certain percentage of territory that would be classified as First-World (i. e., Old Space) and then roughly estimate the remaining territory into Second-World and Third-World systems (Open Space). Again, all of this must be done while keeping an eye on the history, culture, and extenuating circumstances of each stellar nation. The Galactic Concord, for instance, is recognized on pg. 42 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* as "in terms of population density...the most thinly settled nation." The Rigunmor Star Consortium, although assumed to possess many fully urbanized and technologically advanced star systems, also carries a number of smaller systems with tiny outposts designed to feed its ever-hungry economy and wealthy landowners that procure entire systems for their leisure. The Union of Sol is also a notable exception. Virtually every system claimed by the Solars is overcrowded and stretched to its limits. In fact, they almost break the curve for the purposes of this comparison since the first worlds of Sol are "...inhabited by more than 100 billion..." according to pg. 19 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting*. Obviously not every world the Solars own is a First-World by the literal definition, but each type of system should have its estimated population adjusted to consider their population crisis. I tried to average it out as best I could.

If we can finally put all of these numbers together, the following calculations should provide a sufficient answer to the question of how many star systems each stellar nation has colonized in the Stellar Ring:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{(Stellar Nation Census Figures x Percentage of} \\ & \text{First-World Systems) / (Density Factor x 20 billion)} \\ & \quad = \text{Estimated \# of First World Systems} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{(Stellar Nation Census Figures x Percentage of} \\ & \text{Second-World Systems) / (Density Factor x 8 billion)} \\ & \quad = \text{Estimated \# of Second World Systems} \end{aligned}$$



(Stellar Nation Census Figures x Percentage of Third-World Systems) / (Density Factor x 1 billion) = Estimated # of Third World Systems

The following table indicates the computed results for each stellar nation, and keep in mind that these figures are for the number of systems, not worlds. Presumably the number of worlds are slightly higher (up to twice as many in some cases):

Why Are These Figures So Low?

At first glance the total number of star systems for each stellar nation might seem lower than expected. For territories that contain "tens of thousands of star systems" you might think humanity would have colonized more of them. After considering this, I came to the conclusion that there are two powerful indicators for why that probably isn't the case.

Stellar Nation Colonization					
Stellar Nation	Population Density Factor	Percentage of Systems Within Territorial Boundaries			
		First-World	Second-World	Third-World	
AO	1.0	32%	58%	10%	
BR	1.0	31%	64%	5%	
HC	0.9	27%	66%	7%	
IN	0.9	32%	63%	5%	
ND	1.0	33%	59%	8%	
OL	1.0	33%	59%	8%	
OT	1.0	32%	60%	8%	
RC	0.9	38%	50%	12%	
SM	1.0	32%	61%	7%	
TE	1.0	34%	58%	8%	
US	3.0	42%	53%	5%	
VC	1.0	33%	59%	8%	
GC	0.8	30%	60%	10%	

Stellar Nation	# of Sentients (in billions)	Number of Colonized Systems			
		First-World	Second-World	Third-World	Total
AO	646	10	47	65	122
BR	368	6	29	18	53
HC	457	7	42	36	85
IN	278	5	24	15	44
ND	636	10	47	51	108
OL	893	15	66	71	152
OT	782	13	59	63	135
RC	740	16	51	99	166
SM	530	8	40	37	85
TE	1072	18	78	86	182
US	1812	13	40	30	83
VC	964	16	71	77	164
GC	631	12	59	79	150
Totals	9810	149	653	727	1529

First, to increase the number of systems that contain colonies we would have to stretch the average population estimates of 20, 8, and 1 billion even smaller or drastically change the percentages of Old Space vs. Open Space territory. We can't do that without stretching the definitions presented in the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* of what makes up Old Space, Open Space, and First-World, Second-World, and Third World systems. Also, consider that the Earth is overcrowded even by today's standards and has around 6 billion people. A First-World planet with urbanization from pole-to-pole would easily outstrip that figure...and presumably a First-World system contains more than a single planet. The various moons, space stations, and other planets in the system probably hold sizeable populations as well. When everything is examined closely, the 20, 8 and 1 billion figures might be low estimates already.

The other powerful reason for why the stellar nations don't control even more star systems is the generally accepted theory that the I'krl Theocracy is large enough to be compared with the Stellar Ring. In other words, the Externals are on equal footing with us in terms of population and size of territory. That's really a myth as well. According to the *Externals* ESD, on pg. 6 it states, "they come from beyond the Lightning Nebula and... they control hundreds if not thousands of systems in the Perseus Arm of the Milky Way galaxy." Compare that to pg. 39 of the *Star\*Drive Campaign Setting* where it says "even the smallest nations control tens of thousands of star systems." Keep in mind that "control" does not necessarily equate to "colonized". As a result, it's pretty obvious that the Stellar Ring is already considerably larger than the I'krl Theocracy.

So just how many systems *does* the Theocracy comprise? Well, for starters, on pg. 45 of the *Externals* ESD it states, "over four centuries ago, a Sifarv kr'l'osar named Kolluss rose to the throne of the arnak and placed much of the arnak's power over the 121 systems of the Demesne in the hands of the church." Later, on pg. 46 it says, "the most important planets among the 121 systems of the Theocracy are those from which the primary species sprang." It sounds as though a good case could be made that the I'krl Theocracy is really about the size of a stellar nation back in the Stellar Ring. But that would fly in the face of the the-

ory that the Theocracy is just as big as we are.

I did some further research looking for ways to increase the size of the Theocracy in order to make it come out better. But, the highest possible number that can be derived from the *Externals* ESD is given on pg. 45 with the indication of "sixteen Greater Holy Sees (religious control of around ten systems)." Doing the math, we can expect, at most, 160 star systems in the I'krl Theocracy. We might try to declare that the 160-figure represents only the major star systems (perhaps the equivalent of First- and Second-Worlders back in the Stellar Ring). In that case, we could reasonably expect to add another few hundred Third-World systems, but even that wouldn't bring the Theocracy's territory to the same size as the entire Stellar Ring. There is an indication on pg. 47 of the *Externals* ESD that the Theocracy military is divided according to its core, slave, heretic, and frontier worlds. Perhaps the 121 or 160 figure could be related simply to the core worlds of the Theocracy, leaving us with a higher overall number when we include the slave, heretic, and frontier worlds? In that case, each category could be given the same number of worlds as another stellar nation, perhaps?

Regardless, all that this exercise serves to do is illustrate that the stellar nations and the I'krl Theocracy probably aren't as "big" as they sounded at first. If we can accept the fact that the Theocracy has between 121 and 160 star systems, we have to intentionally limit the possible number of systems controlled by the Stellar Ring in order to maintain the perceived threat of the Externals. We need them to be big enough to make the leaders of the stellar governments tremble. So, the figures on the table above are the closest that we can reasonably expect to use for the Stellar Ring. Space is an incredibly vast place, after all. As much as we like to think upon mankind's accomplishments, the colonization of thousands of systems is still beyond our reach, even in the 26<sup>th</sup> century. I tried moving the figures in either direction, but these are the ones I finally settled upon for my own campaign. Hopefully, you will find them useful as well.

Good Gaming,  
--Neil



# THE SIGNAL FROM SPACE

By Pal Wilhelmsen

## Adventure Hook

### Reliq Station

Reliq Xenology Research Facility, an uncharted research lab deep in the jungles of a presumably unsettled world, spearheaded the secret Minota Corporation medical research program. For decades, the Facility, a large compound with a padport, subterranean labs, and living quarters for almost 100 people, was a well-kept secret.

However, during a crisis in the interstellar community, Minota lost contact with Reliq. What happened to it and the people working there is unclear even today. Some of the scientists never left the station, barricaded the entrances and secured the perimeter, hoping for better times. Others dared the turmoil of open space, hoping to reach a safe haven somewhere. None were heard from again. Minota made several attempts to restore the station, or at least salvage whatever was left of it, but the trouble following the crisis still lingered and they forgot the whole matter as time passed and new management took charge of the company. Naval scouts have since visited the system, picked up no signals or readings from the base, and concluded that it must be deserted and destroyed.

Rumors about terrible experiments, biological weapons and treachery have occasionally circulated since anyone last heard from the station. Minota officials have refused to comment on the matter. The media has also discounted the matter as spacer-legends and none have bothered to check it more closely, until now.

### The Signal from Space

The heroes' involvement begins when the authorities pick up a distress signal from Reliq Station and ask them to investigate. You, as the GM, need somebody to introduce the hook and a reason why this person or organization asks the heroes. You also need to devise a way to incorporate this relatively generic hook into your game.

Once there, the heroes find the aboveground parts of the base plundered and abandoned. Most of the scientists and guards left in a hurry. Those who

remained were slaughtered. The underground parts of the base are still intact, sealed off and defended by automated defense systems. Inside, the heroes find grotesque test-subjects and insane scientists, surviving on the meager resources they get from the generators and hydroponics bay.

The story takes a turn for the worse, when an escaped test-subject crawls into the engines of the heroes' ship and destroys the engine-cooling system. Once stranded, the heroes must explore the nearby area to find parts to get off-planet. The closest surviving human settlement is not willing to aid off-worlders, so the heroes must be prepared to bargain for, or steal what they need to get their ship flying again. The settlements in the area around the station have developed into tribal societies. The survivors are suspicious of off-worlders and possibly ruled by violence, so getting the equipment and parts they need for the ship's broken engine should pose a significant challenge.

The last twist of fate comes when the pirate ship *The Inertia Princess* attacks the heroes on the way out of the system. The pirates are using the system as a base of operations, and have spotted the heroes' ship landing at the derelict station. The pirates, having done their homework, realize that anything left on the station could be valuable to Minota or on the black market.





# GRIDSITES

By Jeff Ibach and Neil Spicer

GRIDSITES

## GRIDSITES

This month's collection of websites focuses primarily upon GM tools and resources that can enhance your game from an artistic standpoint. Whether it's drawing out a new map or finding the right character portrait for a Supporting Cast Member, the Web can always provide solutions. Good artwork can often become the inspiration for great adventures, too. One thing to keep in mind, however, is the all-important concept of "copyright law." Unless specifically stated otherwise, you should assume that the original authors and artists own the rights to anything you see on the Internet. As long as you plan on using the material just for game-night and non-commercial purposes, it's probably okay to borrow it. But, the best practice is to always ask. Email the artists or the original programmer and get his permission. A little bit of preliminary work of this kind can save you a lot of headache in the end. And a few words of praise can often go a long way toward rewarding the author or artist for all that hard work.

The following sites are just a handful of what's generally available on the Internet. No doubt you may have already found your own favorite haunts for picking up handy images, sound or music files, and Gamemaster software aides. These are some of the more recent:

### Mapping Made Easy

Dungeon Crafter evokes images of medieval fantasy roleplaying games, but the devoted fans of this software tool have created many add-on's and tile-sets for science fiction gaming as well. The software is available as a free download from the generous programming and graphics-art skills of Remco 'The Furnisher' Durinck and Patriek 'Dark Angel' Jeurriens, two lads from the Netherlands. There are also a number of custom designed tile-sets that can

be downloaded separately and used with the basic tool. The website hosts a chat forum so that individual users of Dungeon Crafter can meet and discuss their custom designs for new maps and tile-sets. One of the users even runs an occasional "challenge" scenario as a contest for who can come up with the best tile set for a particular theme. At the moment, the owners of the website are designing a second version of Dungeon Crafter and you can follow their progress on the DC2 Ready O'Meter. Find them at:

<http://www.dungeoncrafter.com>

### High-Flying Computer-Gen Art

Andreas Maaninka is an artist that has appeared in Action Check before. He did the cover art for our recently released Star\*Drive adventure entitled "Just a Few Baubles". You can also see his artwork "Alien Dome" in this month's issue. Andreas makes his home in Sweden and aspires to work full-time in computer-generated art. His images come with a hard sci-fi feel to them, full of great lighting effects and breathtaking landscapes. He also keeps his own personal gallery and loves to hear comments about his work. Look him up at:

<http://spacefx.cjb.net>

Victor Egorov is another artist that dabbles with computer-generated effects in his work. Some of his images have more of a "painting" feel to them, however, as he tends to use software mostly for enhancements to the final piece. He lives in Russia and provided interior art in Action Check issue #12 as well as this month's release. You can find his personal art gallery at:

[http://island.atomlink.ru/e\\_gal.htm](http://island.atomlink.ru/e_gal.htm)

### Art the Old-Fashioned Way

Sometimes you just can't beat a good pen and pencil drawing. These skills are as important to an artist as the ability to maintain suspense is to an Alternity Gamemaster. Dragan Ciric is another artist whose work can be seen in Action Check. He's from Yugoslavia and submitted his first piece in issue #12. You can also find his drawings all throughout this month's issue. Dragan has graciously provided his talents to Action Check on an as-needed basis in order to provide accompanying artwork for article submissions we receive from other contributors. You can see more of Dragan's pieces at:

<http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/lothlorien/d/r/dragan/dragan.html>

### Art for All Occasions

All of the individual artists listed above can also be found at Elfwood, a very special website that hosts over 12,000 different contributors. Elfwood provides links to gallery pages for everything from fantasy to science fiction, starships to sea-going vessels, and action scenes to character portraits. Gaining acceptance into Elfwood is a hard won prize, and though the website recently closed its doors due to some personal problems, it has since reopened to the delight of many art enthusiasts. It is by far one of the premier places to make contacts with amateur and semi-professional artists. And it provides a treasure trove of material that can enhance any roleplaying game.

<http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/elfwood.html>







## ASK THE ORACLE

By Neil Spicer

ASK THE ORACLE

**Q: I browsed through the cybertech section of [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net) and looked at the biotechnology that Vance Avalon created for his Dark Star campaign. My question is this: Since the Externals use biotech - or rather, cy-biotech - the way Humans & Mechalus use cybertech, would Vance's biotech be roughly the equivalent of those used by the Externals?**

**A:** We really aren't prepared to answer questions pertaining to supplemental rules, equipment, etc. that have been designed by fans of the Alternity/Star\*Drive campaign setting, even though Vance Avalon's work is still a very valuable addition to the Alternity community. Instead, the Action Check Oracle column is designed to address specific questions related to the official products. As such, your question can be reinterpreted to address External bio-cybertech in general. In that case, you can refer to a previous issue of Action Check (March #10) to find a more in-depth answer of their capabilities in that particular science. Basically, the Externals should have a bio-organic version of virtually every piece of cyber-gear made by human hands. This is supported in the *Externals* ESD product on pg. 62 where it states that their superior medical skill "gives them the ability to mimic the cybernetic components detailed in the Alternity rules."

After reviewing Vance Avalon's Dark Star campaign setting on Alternity.net, it's pretty clear that he does explore the concept of cybertech created from bio-organic material, but not specifically in relation to the Star\*Drive universe. His work is very similar to what other sci-fi RPG's have done. ShadowRun, GURPS, Shatterzone, and numerous other games incorporated both true cybertech and at least some form of biotech. The Star\*Drive universe accomplishes the same concept through the use of three unique methods. 1) True cybertech is made available through Human and Mechalus engineering, which the Externals don't fully understand yet, but have a great interest in studying further. 2) True bio-manipulation is made available through genetic science in the form of mutations, which human scientists (primarily the Thuldans and Borealins)

have only begun to understand and not nearly as well as the Externals. 3) A combination of the two forms of enhancement is demonstrated by the additional External technology as genetically-altered living organisms (sometimes sentient, sometimes not) which can be introduced into a host to provide the same sort of advantages as common cybertech or full-fledged mutations.

**Q: Based on the given stats for the Blix, Evrem, Gardhyi and N'sss, if any players wanted to create a Blix, Evrem, Gardhyi or N'sss PC, what would their ability score ranges & free broad skills be? Also, based on the stats given in the *Externals* ESD for the Kadarans, Bareem, Sifarv and Thaal, if any players wanted to create a PC that was Kadaran, Bareem, Sifarv, or Thaal, what would their ability score ranges & free broad skills be?**

**A:** There's no right or wrong answer here. Allowing your players to create heroes based on these races is a sticky proposition at best. Presumably any Gamemaster that makes such an option available must be prepared to handle the hero's foreknowledge of the mysteries regarding the Externals, the Exeat, and the Perseus Arm of the galaxy. Either the character will know too much about the Star\*Drive plot...and the Gamemaster will have to react accordingly. Or, some kind of amnesia might have resulted in the hero not fully understanding his or her origins. Either way, the presence of these kinds of player-controlled heroes will cause a lot of extra effort and preparation on the GM's part.

With that in mind, and in the interests of providing some unofficial statistics for you, the following is merely a suggested set of ability scores and free broad skills:

Most of the rationale behind these tables comes from the statistical information provided for the average species in the *Externals* ESD and the *Alien Compendium*. In most cases, those numbers were compared wherever possible with the basic species detailed in the *Player's Handbook* (i.e., the Fraal, Mechalus, Sesheyen, T'sa, and

External Ability Score Limits:

SPECIES	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Bareem	9 – 16	5 – 12	8 – 16	4 – 12	6 – 12	4 – 12
Blix	4 – 10	7 – 15	4 – 11	9 – 16	4 – 14	4 – 13
Evrem	4 – 11	4 – 12	4 – 11	9 – 16	9 – 16	9 – 15
Gardhyi	6 – 14	9 – 15	4 – 14	9 – 15	6 – 14	4 – 14
Kadaran	6 – 12	9 – 15	4 – 14	9 – 16	9 – 15	4 – 10
N’sss	4 – 8	4 – 14	4 – 14	9 – 16	4 – 13	4 – 13
Sifarv	4 – 13	9 – 16	4 – 12	6 – 15	4 – 14	4 – 13
Thaal	4 – 11	4 – 11	4 – 10	9 – 15	9 – 16	4 – 15

Free Broad Skills for External Heroes:

SPECIES	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Bareem	Athletics Unarmed Attack	-	Stamina	Knowledge Security	Awareness	-
Blix	Athletics	Manipulation	Stamina	Knowledge Technical Science Techno-Organic Science	-	-
Evrem	-	Vehicle Op	-	Knowledge	Awareness Resolve	Interaction Telepathy
Gardhyi	Athletics	Stealth	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Kadaran	-	Acrobatics Vehicle Op	-	Knowledge Life Science Techno-Organic Science	Awareness	-
N’sss	Armor Op	Vehicle Op	-	Knowledge Techno-Organic Science	Awareness	Interaction
Sifarv	Athletics	Acrobatics Vehicle Op	-	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Thaal	-	Vehicle Op	-	Knowledge	Awareness Resolve	Interaction Telepathy

Weren) to preserve game-balance. Special consideration was also given to the descriptive text detailing each race’s history, habitat/society, and physical characteristics.

**Q: Do the External races use any of the technologies described in the *Warships* accessory, and if so, what are they?**

**A:** Each of the External races has a certain number of “technology tracks” that are available to

their civilizations. These technology tracks are all described in the *Warships* supplement on pg. 52 and given a letter designation that can be found on each of the following tables of devices and shipboard systems throughout Chapter 5. This information sets the limits of which technologies can be achieved by each race based on overall access to the track as well as the necessary progress level indicating advancement in a particular track. Humanity and its allied races are pretty much bound by the same limitations and are

SPECIES	TECH TRACKS
Gardhyi	Gravity Manipulation, Dark Matter Tech, Fusion Tech, Psi-Tech (at PL6), Computer Tech (at PL8)
Kadaran	Gravity Manipulation, Dark Matter Tech (at PL8), Fusion Tech, Super-Materials (at PL8), Computer Tech, and symbiotic hulls
Sifarv	Gravity Manipulation (at PL8), Dark Matter Tech (at PL8), Fusion Tech, Quantum Manipulation, Super-Materials, Computer Tech
Thaal	Gravity Manipulation (at PL8), Dark Matter Tech, Fusion Tech, Psi-Tech (except psychoportive drive), Computer Tech

listed on pg. 52 as well.

Unfortunately, only a few of the known External races are presented in the *Warships* description. The more advanced races are left open to interpretation. In the interests of providing some unofficial guidelines, the following should help to clarify the available technologies for the remainder. Note that each technology track is assumed to be PL7 unless otherwise noted, and just because two separate races might have the same track, it doesn't mean they used the same methods to reach their current progress level. For instance, Kadaran Computer Tech is based primarily on the use of biotechnology while Sifarv Computer Tech is more similar to that of humanity. On the otherhand, the technology of the Thaal can be assumed to be very similar to the Fraal, other than the fact that they've had the opportunity to learn more about Dark Matter Tech from the other External races.

Much like the Weren and Sesheyans, the Bareem and Teln are fully dependent on the technology of the more advanced races in their alliance and as such, haven't reached PL6 on their own yet in any of the tracks presented in *Warships*. Even the Gardhyi, though in possession of starwebs that exercise the truly advanced technology of Matter Transmission, don't understand enough about such devices to claim ownership of the track. This is why they too only share the technology tracks of their Thaal masters. It can be assumed, however, that the Gardh Technarchy does possess such technology, but closely guards its secret so that even the outcast Gardhyi don't fully comprehend it.

**Q: Since the Kadarans, the Sifarv, and the Thaal have a far longer history of interstellar travel, and they make use of technologies more advanced than those of Humans, Fraal, Mechalus & T'sa, do**

**they use drivewaves in their starships or do they use conventional stardrives?**

**A:** The availability of drivewave generators is open to each GM's interpretation. According to the *Warships* accessory, the drivewave is essentially a PL8 device requiring the technology track of Gravity Manipulation. Technically, this should mean that both the Fraal (who have PL8 Gravity Manipulation according to the *Warships* supplement onpg. 52) and the Thaal (who should share the same basic knowledge as their wayward brothers) have the capability of manufacturing a drivewave. In addition, the Sifarv are also assumed to have Gravity Manipulation at PL8 because of their close association with the Thaal and their inherent interest in studying the effects of gravity upon their avian physiology. So, a good case could be made that all three of these aliens could conceivably possess drivewave technology if it's based purely upon Gravity Manipulation as suggested.

However, on pg. 66 of *Warships*, you should also take notice that the description of the drivewave generator makes reference to it being "simply an improvement of the stardrive. It resembles the earlier engine in most details..." except for its quicker recharge and shorter travel times. As such, it sounds like the drivewave might be unattainable without first discovering the stardrive. Indeed, the stardrive is a PL7 Gravity Manipulation device, so the drivewave generator seems to be a natural progression along the same technology track.

If this is true, the Fraal only recently acquired the stardrive by combining their knowledge of gravity technology with humanity's knowledge of dark matter physics. This makes it clear that the stardrive requires a combination of two technology tracks: Gravity Manipulation (at least at PL7)

AND Dark Matter Tech (at least at PL7). This conclusion is reinforced by the Star\*Drive manual on pg. 78 where basically the T'sa belief is shared that humanity lucked onto the stardrive by stumbling across dark matter physics and then a benevolent alien race like the Fraal who shared at least some of their gravity manipulation technologies. Only by combining mankind's mastery of Dark Matter Tech (PL7) and the Fraal's knowledge of gravitics (at PL7 or PL8), was the stardrive possible. A drivewave generator probably follows the same combination, only at a higher level (i.e., Gravity Manipulation at PL8 and Dark Matter Tech at PL8). As such, the drivewave would probably be beyond the reach of the Fraal-Human alliance at the moment since the Fraal still don't possess a thorough enough understanding of Dark Matter Tech and humanity doesn't fully understand Gravity Manipulation. Clearly, however, both the Fraal and humanity are on the verge of making such a discovery. They just need to advance their knowledge of Dark Matter Tech and continue to cooperate with one another.

Presumably the situation was very similar between the Thaal and the Sifarv. Initially, the Thaal should have had access to the same gravity technologies as the Fraal (at PL8), but probably lacked the research into dark matter (at PL7) until they met the Sifarv. The Sifarv probably already possessed stardrive technology, having researched Gravity Manipulation on their own (for obvious reasons based upon their avian physiology) and already having a comparable knowledge of Dark Matter Tech to that of humanity. This is what allowed the Sifarv to carve out an interstellar empire long before they ever encountered the Thaal. Once the Thaal became allies of the Demesne, they also reaped the benefits of stardrives by merging their technology with the Sifarv in much the same manner that their Fraal brethren did by allying with humanity. Later, as the other External races joined the alliance, Dark Matter Tech continued to advance all the way to PL8. So, if anyone stands on the verge of producing a drivewave generator, it would be the Externals, specifically the Sifarv and maybe the Thaal. To date, however, no indication has been given that any of the races, External or otherwise, have achieved such a breakthrough. As such, the Sifarv should be seen as recent arrivals to the PL8 technology tracks for Gravity Manipulation and Dark Matter Tech. This means the Externals are

subject to the same drivespace limitations as the Verge Alliance and this fact figures prominently into the strategies of both sides during the External War.

**Q: Would the starship perks & flaws described in *Starships* also apply to *Warships*?**

**A:** Awhile back we reprinted the "Starship Perks and Flaws" article that appeared in Dragon magazine by David Eckelberry and Andy Collins. These options allow for ships to possess certain unusual characteristics that give them advantages or disadvantages, much like the perks and flaws system used during the hero creation process in the *Player's Handbook*. Acquiring a particular perk or flaw for a ship can be a result of the initial design, or by acquiring a modification, or even suffering damage from a battle. There's really no reason why capital-class ships can't meet these same criteria as well.

Individually, each perk and flaw needs to be analyzed to determine what kind of systems they can affect. In a warship, there are also going to be a much larger number of systems that do the same thing. Not all of them might be affected, so special consideration is going to be needed to track which systems enjoy the perk or suffer the flaw, and which do not. Holistically-speaking, there are some perks and flaws that will affect the entire ship, but their cost should probably be increased to reflect the size differences between Starship-vessels and Warship-vessels. Also, remember that the option points needed to buy a perk, must be off-set with a flaw. As long as the total nets out to zero, you'll be sure to preserve your game-balance appropriately.

For Gamemasters that want to throw caution to the wind, the alternate methods for purchasing perks and flaws can leave out the option points altogether. In this case, an overall higher price and/or durability cost must be assessed to the Warship. Each ship should set a certain percentage of durability points or Concord dollars that apply to the perk or flaw.

**Q: Recently, I looked in the section of the *Externals* ESD concerning External technology and I thought long and hard about making the tech available for PCs and SCMs to use. However, the cost and availability of each weapon was never**

**addressed in the Externals ESD. So, if someone ever wanted to create a list of External weaponry for players to use, what would those stats be?**

**A:** Making such technology commonly available to your heroes is a dangerous proposition. External weaponry and equipment are generally provided in the Star\*Drive campaign setting as unusual artifacts and near-magical devices for your heroes to discover in the course of their adventures. As the Star\*Drive setting is defined, these items are rare, difficult to understand, and don't work in human (or non-External) hands because of their dependency upon the bio-electric signatures of External species. Making them commonly available in your campaign completely leaves behind the premise of Star\*Drive's foundation, and comparisons can no longer be made with human equipment. The cost and availability of such weapons would be entirely dependent upon your own decisions with regard to your specific, individual campaign universe.

**Q: I attempted to input the stats for External weapons into the WAlter (Windows Alternity Character Manager) program, but when I came to a column with variable stats, the weapon input would not accept a slash mark when I entered it in. How would you deal with that?**

**A:** The WAlter program is the intellectual property of J.E. Christgau. You can find this invaluable utility at [www.thecastle.com](http://www.thecastle.com) and download it as free-ware. All questions and/or software defects should be directed to him. His email address is readily available at his website.

Doing a little investigation of my own, I also attempted to add a new weapon to the database and found that no "slash" marks are necessary. You pull up the Edit-Edit Weapon List menu option. Choose the Add... button and begin filling out the pop-up window with your weapon's statistics. The "Normal" damage for every weapon is simply entered into each of the three boxes corresponding to Ordinary, Good, and Amazing results. When you save the information, the "slash" marks are automatically displayed for you on the resulting entry. If you need an example for how to properly fill out the information in the pop-up window, choose the Edit... button for an existing weapon and simply review its damage statistics.

**Q: What was the original intent of the TransVerge News Network and the news articles that were posted on the Star\*Drive portion of Wizards.com website? Also, now that the Alternity line is not being supported online, where could the TransVerge News Network be supported now?**

**A:** These questions should really be directed to the Wizards of the Coast customer service. However, since Alternity is a defunct game, I'm not 100% sure you'd receive an answer from them. In general, I think the original intent of the TransVerge News Network was to provide "Transmissions" as potential adventure plot hooks for enterprising GM's. TVN is listed in the Star\*Drive campaign setting as the premiere news network for the Verge...and as such, it made for a useful tool to make these "Transmissions" of adventure ideas sound official...by portraying them as news articles.

Now that Alternity is no longer supported by Wizards of the Coast, there are at least three primary sources where you could get this kind of information. 1) Action Check continues to accept "Transmissions"-style articles for publishing. It's up to the fans to create them, of course, and send them our way. We also recently republished all of the Transmissions from *Dragon* magazine with permission of Wizards of the Coast. 2) A.net, or [www.alternity.net](http://www.alternity.net), also provides space for resources done in the same style as "Transmission" articles. If you or someone else created a specific "Transmission", it could be uploaded there for everyone to download. In addition, they carry the reprinted Transmissions that I mentioned above in their Downloads section. 3) Tequila Starrise, or [www.tequilastarrise.net](http://www.tequilastarrise.net), was voted as the official Star\*Drive website by the members of the mailing list and sanctioned by Wizards of the Coast to continue support for that campaign setting. I visited them recently and didn't find any new transmissions, but I imagine they could provide that same sort of function as A.net and Action Check. In addition, since "Transmissions" are specific to Star\*Drive, Tequila Starrise might have a particular interest in hosting such a thing...but they would have to take on the responsibility for producing the "Transmissions" on their own since the WotC staff won't be providing any. Without official Wizards of the Coast support anymore, the game is ultimately in our hands.