D20 Modern

Get Your Sleuth On!

Detectives

Investigation sourcebook for d20

Avalon Games

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Detectives:

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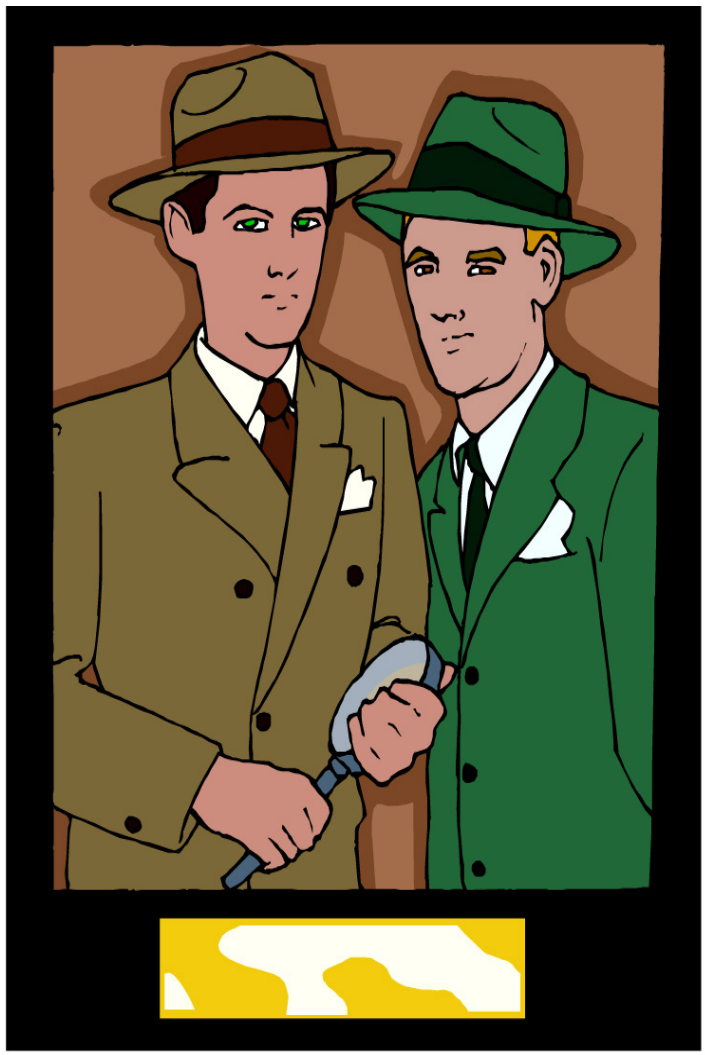
Detectives: Investigation Sourcebook for d20

Introduction

Detectives: Investigation sourcebook for d20 Modern provides a GM with tools for creating campaigns in which investigating foul plots and solving mysteries is the primary focus. This book covers the various elements of an investigation campaign from crafting the story to keeping the players in suspense to providing leads for them to follow. Whether the characters are secret agents fighting to save humanity from a madman or ordinary people caught up in circumstances beyond their control, the game will revolve around the chase for clues and the quest to unravel the truth.



Unlike a combat-oriented adventure, planning an investigation campaign can be rather complex. A GM simply has more things to consider in this style of play. An investigation campaign involves a great deal of skill use, role-playing and logical thinking. In a good mystery, the suspense and pressure of a crisis unfolding serves to drive the story along while a sense of drama and a few well-timed action scenes keep things fresh. Combining all of these elements in your adventure can be a daunting challenge. It can also be a challenge to keep from railroading the players down a predetermined course. A GM has to keep watch to make sure that the players don't become bored or get stuck running in circles. Planning ahead can help a GM avoid the pitfalls of an investigation game.

This book serves as an aide for a GM who is looking to guide a group of characters through a race against time while delving into layers of deceit and treachery. Whether your villains are conventional lawbreakers, outrageous archcriminals or rogue government agents, Detectives: Investigation sourcebook for d20 has story material to help you out. Also included are tips for handling skills and feats in this campaign style as well as new skills and feats. Advanced classes are provided to help players build on their characters with archetypes suitable for an investigation campaign.

Chapter One: Story Structure

Putting together the story for an investigation campaign can be a lot easier if you break the structure down into its basic elements. It also helps to construct a timeline. Try to plan for multiple decision points and multiple ways of solving each problem. You should also try to be flexible and ready to improvise; a good mystery is never predictable, even for the GM. A timeline is a useful tool for keeping track of events in motion, such as where the villains are and what they are doing.

Every investigation campaign will include certain basic elements that the GM must provide. The story will revolve around a mystery to be solved and that mystery usually involves the misdeeds of one or more villains. An investigation campaign needs intrigue to draw the characters into the action. The campaign also needs to have clues that the characters can follow and people they can tap for information. The other essential story elements are red herrings to throw the characters off the trail and attempts by the bad guys to halt the investigation altogether.

A timeline helps keep everything moving fluidly. While no schedule of events is etched in stone, knowing what the bad guys plan on doing on an hourly or daily basis can be a useful tool. Many events that take place in the campaign are independent of the characters' actions. For example, if a bomb placed aboard a ship is set to detonate in six hours, the villains may have no way of speeding up the blast if the characters arrive to disarm the explosive. Likewise, an international summit of world leaders isn't going to be called off because the characters have a hunch that they can't prove. Other events might change position on the timeline according to the character's actions. For example, a kidnapper might alter a ransom deadline or a hired killer might make his move early because of the PCs interference.

Schemes and Dirty Deeds

The investigation is generally going to center on a crime that needs to be solved or a conspiracy that needs to be unmasked. The mystery might also be an attempt to prevent an atrocity from occurring. Providing a good mystery can be difficult sometimes. You have to give the players a fair chance of solving the crime without giving away so much that the players start guessing the ending. Building a good mystery starts with the GM putting his or her self in the bad guys' shoes. Ask questions; What are their goals? What is the plan? What might go wrong? What will they do afterwards? How will they react to a response by the PCs? After you have answered some of these questions, construct a timeline and figure out when the characters become aware that something is wrong.

Characters might hear about a crime or odd happening in the news, as the result of a successful skill check or through a personal contact. They may even witness the event first hand. The way a GM introduces the characters to the misdeed at hand can greatly influence the way they approach solving it. For example, if the police and media portray a recent murder as a gang slaying, investigators may choose to focus their initial efforts on local gang members. The GM may have to provide a number of clues to the players before they begin looking at other motives.

Some investigation campaigns feature outrageous villains and over-the-top plots to take over the world. In these adventures, the PCs generally learn of the villain's master plan by spoiling a small part of it. For example, a crazed inventor may send his thugs out to steal components that he needs to complete his weather-control device. The characters investigate one break in, then another before realizing that there is a pattern to the robberies. They now know that the bad guy intends to steal a variety of cutting edge technologies but still don't know why. Outlandish conspiracies are complicated by nature, tracing the movements of the smaller players inevitably leads to the larger plot and the archvillain himself. Breaking an elaborate plot down into a series of simple plots is a good way to preserve a sense of mystery because the lower level henchmen are not going to know anything about the villain's true goals.

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Avalon Games is happy to offer tons of little games, that we like to call Mini-Games, and with over 30 titles, you are sure to find one or more games that will blow your mind. Little, however, does not mean lame. No, these are great gaming gems, just in small bite sized forms. Fun, fast and cheap, they are a great way to get some gaming fun into a short block of time. Have a look, you might be surprised at what you find.

Worlds of Wonder
Worlds of Wonder is a fast, simple to play RPG system designed for use by advanced players who wish to create detailed characters without having to roll on endless charts and deal with endless rules.

After 30+ years of playing, running and designing games, be they RPG's or board games, we at Avalon have come to one conclusion. Its not the game's rules that make it enjoyable, but the people you play with. With that in mind, Worlds of Wonder takes the most important aspect of any RPG, the character creation, and tries to offer players, and their GM, the tools needed to make the time spent playing together well worth the time spent creating the characters.

Worlds of Wonder Expansions
Want more Worlds of Wonder? Try one of the many expansions for the system. More monsters, foes, magic, skill sets and gaming stuff to keep you occupied for weeks, months, hell maybe for a lifetime. Ever expanding, the WoW system is made for gaming fun, so don't wait, have an adventure and enter Worlds of Wonder.

Arcana
Arcana is generic world, designed for use with any Fantasy RPG System, and so the information presented here and in other Arcana expansions will of course be a bit vague as to stats, levels and powers. The intention is to give the GM and players a world rich in personality, history and depth, one where they can seek adventure, but use any RPG system they feel most conferrable with.

The basics of the game world are presented here in the core book, but as expansions are released, the complexity of the world will grow as more and more of its history, dangers and wonders are explored. When it is all said and done, Arcana will become a vast world of detailed and expansive depth, one where that you and your friends can full explore.

Game Geek
Avalon's Monthly game magazine, inside you will find tons of gaming goodness, free games, add on materials for many of Avalon's titles, and a monthly sections dedicated to S&G, Battle Axe and Arcana. Great game stuff each and every month.

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S & G Battle System

Avalon's premier game system the S&G battle system allows you to play skirmish level engagements, and do so with a fast, easy to learn system that also allows for endless expansions and genres. With S&G you can fight battles between fantasy based elves and orcs, or blast off into the cold hard future with space marines and aliens.

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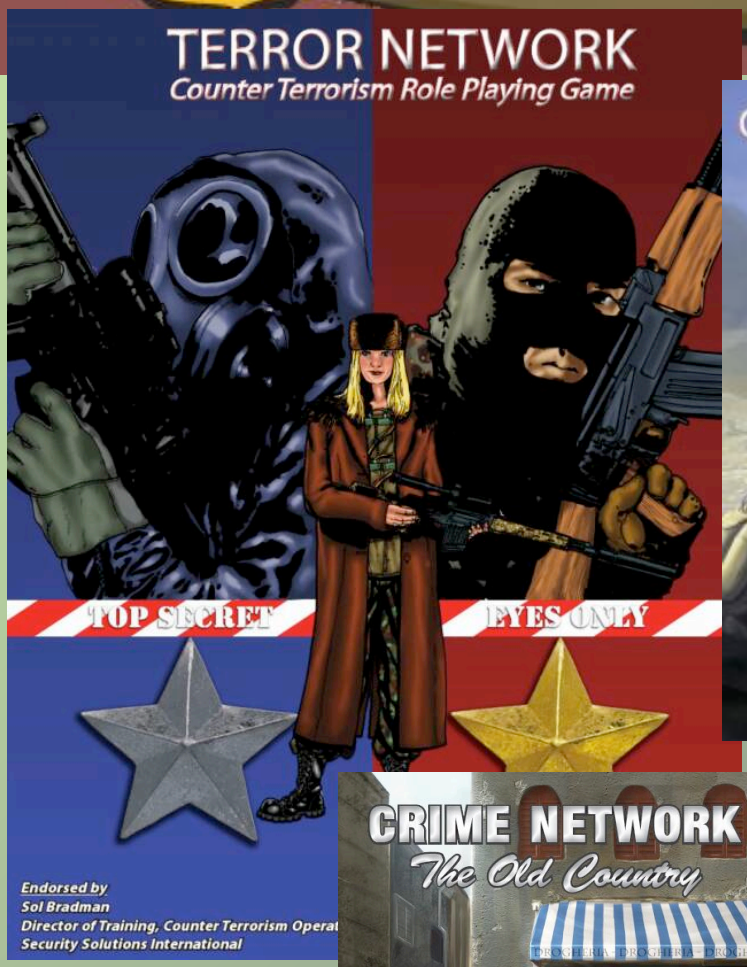

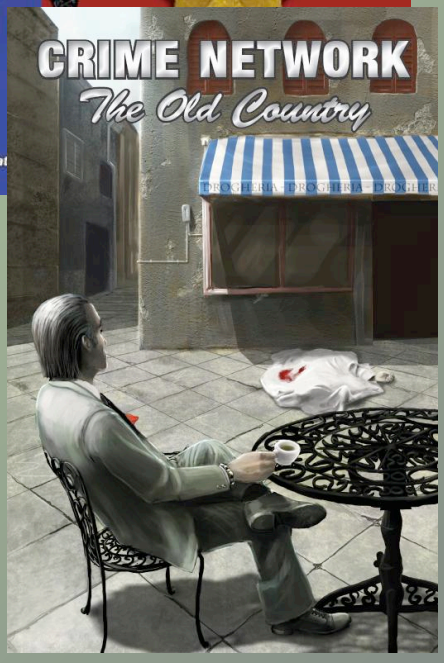

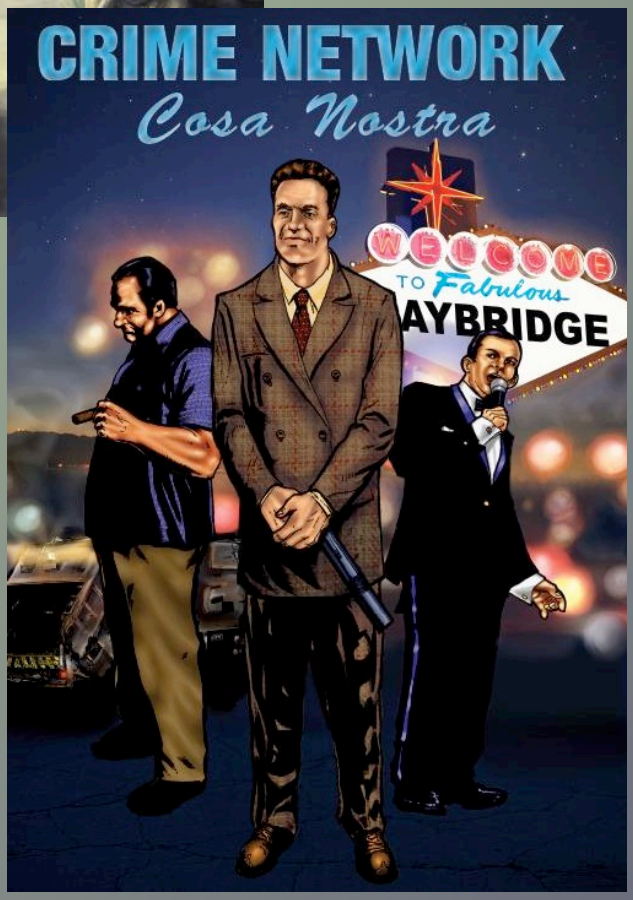

Battle Axe is a simple to play tabletop system for skirmish level battles. Using cards instead of dice, you will find the game to be less luck based and much more tactical in nature. The rules and cards provide here will be enough to get you started, and new characters and rule expansions are on the way so you can continue to increase both the size and composition of your War Bands.