

PYRAMID[®]

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SPACESHIPS II



REIGN OF STEEL: DEEP SPACE

by David L. Pulver

SMUGGLERS' BLUES
by Jason Brick

VEHICLE IMBUEMENTS
by Christopher R. Rice

THE CAPTAIN'S BOAT
by Rory Fansler

STRANGE OBJECTS AT REST
by J. Edward Tremlett

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Looking to get to other worlds? Do you want to gather some friends and engage in galactic mayhem? Then you're going to need a spaceship! Fortunately, this month's *Pyramid* is here to help.

The robots have taken over Earth . . . and now they're moving into space! From the creator of *GURPS Reign of Steel*, David L. Pulver delivers a new mini-supplement for that line. *Reign of Steel: Deep Space* moves the setting 20 years into the future with an extended history, an exciting new development, and six new void-ready robots designed with *GURPS Spaceships*.

The *Smugglers' Blues* won't get you down when you have details on how to design interesting *GURPS* black-market racketeers and suitably challenging adventures for them. Learn about the different kinds of smuggling, how this endeavor changes as technology gets better, the key stages of a smuggling operation, and more. Whether you're a fledgling smuggler stuck in a solar system of the near future or an ultra-tech scoundrel fighting against a far-flung galactic empire, you're sure to find something here!

As humanity moves out to the stars, adventurers might find *Strange Objects at Rest*. Discover the sometimes-terrifying secrets of four truly alien sleeper and generation ships in this set of systemless campaign outlines.

Push your favorite mode of transportation just a little further with *Vehicle Imbuements*. Get descriptions of 23 new Transportation Imbuement Skills, four related perks, and two new advantage variations, plus *GURPS* mechanics for how to use the skills in and out of combat. If you ever wanted to make your vessel self-healing, aquatic, or temporarily transformable, now you can!

Owning a ship is pretty expensive, but it's incredibly commonplace in any science-fiction setting. Now you can have *The Captain's Boat* with breaking the character-point bank! Learn how the *GURPS* Patron and Ally advantages can be used to represent a ship that seems to be more a minor character than simple background dressing.

This month's Random Thought Table considers the various permutations of spaceship customization, while Odds and Ends presents two ideas for getting your players to help forge distant tomorrows by putting them to work in the not-quite-as-distant future.

Whether you're fighting the good fight against bad robots or just trying to earn an honest buck by breaking galactic laws, this issue of *Pyramid* is sure to have something valuable in its cargo hold!

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* *GURPS* Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

THESE WONDERFUL TOYS

Many kids – Your Humble Editor included, way back when – smash together whatever toys are available on hand without regard or reason for whether those toys “should” go together. It doesn’t matter if characters, ships, or accessories are from different movies/cartoons/comics/etc.; they’re all going to be part of the same scene if at all possible.

“Why are some of the action figures two inches taller than others?”

“Well, they’re from an alien planet of *really big* people!”

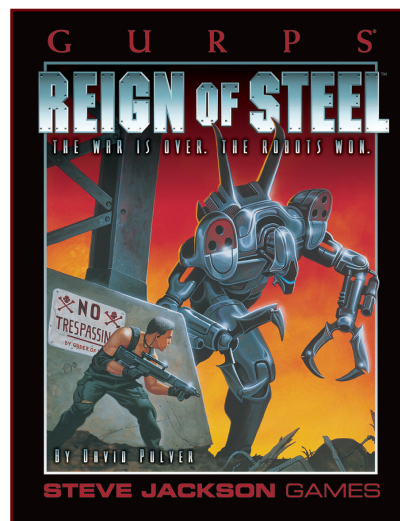
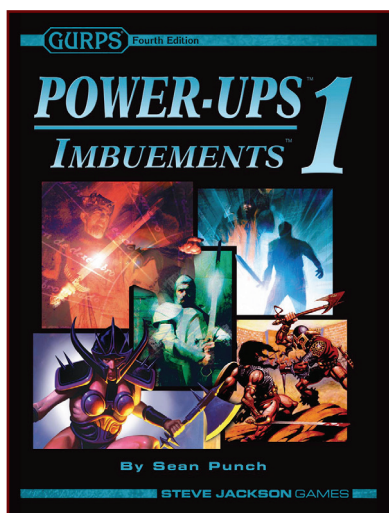
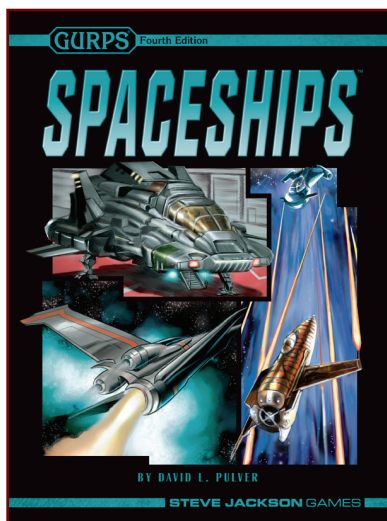
One of the great things about **GURPS** is that – unlike those action figures of old – all the various bits are *designed* to work together. Which means that even if, say, you don’t have an immediate desire to run a **GURPS** *Reign of Steel* campaign, you can make some use of the material from *Reign of Steel: Deep Space* (pp. 4-11) in *another* science-fiction campaign. (Who *can’t* use more evil-robot spacecraft – especially those designed by David L. Pulver?!)

It’d be crazy to try to include *every* **GURPS** rule and option in a game, and not just because some of those possibilities

specifically contradict others. However, part of the appeal is that – like a toy box full of possibilities – all those options are there to sift through, waiting to be picked up, fiddled with, and become part of a game . . . if only for a brief while. And unlike needing to clean up a bedroom or basement, putting away the digital toys of PDFs and well-thumbed hardcovers tends to be a *lot* easier.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Does this issue’s offerings fit in well with the rest of your toolbox? Is there something we can do to make them *even cooler*? Beam your transmissions privately to pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the wretched hive of fun and hilarity at forums.sjgames.com. Recent topics on the forums have included readers’ must-use articles from past issues, as well as some designer notes and “cutting room floor” material from other articles. Life on the forums is like being locked in a toy store with *really cool friends!* And there’s always room for more.



Additional Material: Sean Punch and Antoni Ten Monrós

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<i>Rear Hull</i>	<i>Systems</i>
[1]	Light Alloy Armor (dDR 2).
[2-3]	Cargo Bay (total 10 tons).
[4-5]	Fuel Tank (water; total 5 mps delta-V).

<i>Rear Hull</i>	<i>Systems</i>
[6]	High-Thrust Fusion Torch, water reaction mass (3G acceleration).

It is winged and unmanned.

TL Spacecraft dST/HP Hnd/SR HT Move LWt. Load SM Occ dDR Range Cost

PILOTING/TL10 (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

10	Hypersonic Shuttle	30	0/4	12	3G/5 mps	100	50	+6	0	2	-	\$2.86M
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VNU-07 “ROCKSTAR” SPACE TUG (TL10)

This 100-ton, 60'-long (SM +6) unstreamlined robot spaceship is the Machines' rugged workhorse for short-range space operations. They are based at Mobile Factories and on larger space stations like Orbital, HEO, or Kali. Although primarily intended for mining, prospecting, orbital transport, and tug duties, its “mining laser” also serves as a weapon. Robots can ride in the cargo or hangar bay (humans need space suits). A few variants exist.

VNU-06 “OrbStar” is an old TL9 space tug with a nuclear thermal rocket instead of a fusion torch, using hydrogen fuel. The mining laser is not improved (its RoF is not doubled). A few remain in service. Subtract 1 from comm/sensor array and 2 from Complexity. Orbital had 20 during the 2040s.

XNU-11 “Deadstar” is a VNU-07 tactical upgrade. Its secondary battery is replaced with major battery (3 MJ rapid-fire particle beam turret). The mining system and robot arm are replaced with two more major batteries, each with fixed 24cm missile launchers. Two cargo holds are replaced by extra fuel tanks, but the engine is high-performance, doubling acceleration but halving delta-V per tank.

New Delhi and Luna use all models and add two control stations, increasing cost by \$100,000.

<i>Front Hull</i>	<i>System</i>
[1-3]	Light Alloy Armor (total dDR 9).
[4]	Robot Arm.
[5!]	Mining (total 0.5 ton/hour).
[6]	Hangar Bay (3 tons).

<i>Central Hull</i>	<i>System</i>
[1-2]	Light Alloy Armor (total dDR 6).
[3-5]	Cargo (total 15 tons).
[6!]	Secondary Battery (3 MJ improved laser, 4.5 tons cargo).
[core]	Control Room (C7, comm/sensor 5, no control stations).

<i>Rear Hull</i>	<i>System</i>
[1-2]	Light Alloy Armor (dDR 6).
[3-5]	Fuel Tank (water, total 15 mps delta-V).
[6]	Fusion Torch (water reaction mass, 1.5G acceleration)
[core]	Fission Reactor (1 Power Point).

It is unmanned.

TL Spacecraft dST/HP Hnd/SR HT Move LWt. Load SM Occ dDR Range Cost

PILOTING/TL10 (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

9	OrbStar	30	-1/4	12	0.5G/1.35 mps	100	22.5	+6	0	9/6/6	-	\$2.51M
10	RockStar	30	0/4	12	1.5G/15 mps	100	22.5	+6	0	9/6/6	-	\$4.01M
10	DeadStar	30	0/4	12	3G/12.5 mps	100	8	+6	0	9/6/6	-	\$4.71M

TNU-10 “MOBILE FACTORY” (MoFac) (TL10)

The basic tool of the Machines' outreach into space is the Mobile Factory complex, of which scores are now operating beyond Earth orbit.

The factory ship is an Orbital development that is now common to all spacefaring Zones. First built by Orbital and copied by New Delhi/Luna, this is an unstreamlined, cylindrical station massing 10,000 tons (SM +10). It's a collection of solar-powered industrial robot factory modules and pods attached to a structural frame.

It can unfurl a large lightsail for slow interplanetary travel. However, usually that is retracted and the vessel is parked by an asteroid or moon to serve as a local space station.

Its hangar bays typically carry a few Rockstar mining tugs, Deadstar escorts, and perhaps an Enforcer, although it can transport a shuttle to allow landings on Earth, Mars, Venus, or Titan. It has engineering labs for Machine projects in which hard vacuum or microgravity are useful or which might violate the Brisbane Accord (*Reign of Steel*, pp. 12-13) if performed on Earth. Above the station are large solar panels that provide power for its fabrication systems.

Mobile Factory operations also support engineering and physics research, typically into exotic industrial processes that thrive in microgravity and hard vacuum. While it has a habitat system, this holds no cabins! Instead it is entirely devoted to engineering or science laboratories (plus a cell block for holding any captive bioforms for experiments).

SMUGGLING THROUGH THE AGES

Tech level is the most important factor of *when* a smuggling adventure takes place. Depending on the century, space-faring smugglers could be crossing between galaxies or sneaking payload onto their planet's first space elevator.

Early Efforts

Human history on Earth demonstrates the ingenuity of smugglers even with the limited technology of the pre-space age. The core tool of the smuggler's trade – shielded and hidden cargo compartments – are available by TL7, well before a species sheds the bonds of gravity. The technologies of a pre-space civilization offer alternative ways to move or hide a cargo:

- Hiding contraband in a container of dangerous material, such as radioactive waste or a basket of scorpions.
- Digging tunnels beneath borders or checkpoints.
- Training animals to carry contraband over the border without human assistance.
- Launching forbidden items via a cannon or similar device to land on the opposite side of the border.

These are all historical examples of smuggling techniques using technology a spaceship crew would find laughably primitive. Space-faring and star-faring ages offer even more ways to move goods from point A and across point B to arrive safely and profitably at point C.

At TL9

Spaceflight is at its infancy. Nearly all spaceships are owned by governments or large corporations. Most smuggling is orbit-to-earth and consists of high-value cargoes subject to heavy taxes or regulation. In rare cases, it's an attempt to get an interdicted material into the hands of a group or nation the rest of the world wants to keep it away from.

Hiding a cargo in this situation is limited to placing it in containers or holds that conceal it from visual inspection and active scanning. Since it's unlikely any individual character will own his own ship, smugglers must add these systems and modifications to an existing ship rather than building the perfect hold from scratch.

At TL10

Fast interplanetary space flight makes smuggling between planets a reality. People live throughout the solar system in a variety of situations and governments, creating numerous opportunities for trafficking in prohibited or overtaxed items.

At this level, ships made specifically for moving contraband are available on the free market. Shielded holds and electronic countermeasures are common, though sometimes restricted. Navigation is less of a concern – routes and distances are well understood and about as complex as a TL8 interstate highway system.

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO HIDE A CAT

Human history up through TL8 demonstrates how ingenious and creative smugglers can be with the technology at their disposal. Here are a handful of possible ways smugglers might (mis)use future technology to get the upper hand on the galactic constabulary.

TL9

- Spoofing robotically controlled drones to bypass automated security.
- Engineering human tissues to resist toxic or otherwise hazardous materials, reducing risk for human mules.
- Cybernetic implants with hidden storage compartments.
- Drone surface-to-orbit vehicles to transport contraband with limited exposure.

TL10

- Applying nanotechnology to move contraband, or to assemble it from raw materials on site.
- Firing cargo covered with inert rock across space via a mass driver.

TL11

- Using cellular regeneration technology to create a new class of mules who must get the cargo to a buyer before they die from a removed organ.
- Modifying force technology to tow or “drag” cargo behind a ship for easy jettisoning should the authorities approach.

TL12

- Regenerating limbs, organs, or entire beings once they have carried a payload across the border.
- Using uplifted animals as mules, disguised as regular animals.

Superscience!

- Transporters make bypassing physical checkpoints trivial, through matter transmission might leave energy signatures the authorities can detect.
- Time travel introduces a whole new kind of contraband, whether it's relics from the past or technology from the future. An entire campaign could be based on temporal smuggling and its legal and temporal consequences.
- Psionics, especially long-range telekinesis, opens up brave new worlds for moving contraband cargoes.

At TL11

Interstellar flight creates opportunity for even more exotic plants, animals, and substances to enter areas where the legitimate government would prefer they remain absent. These flights are slow and over vast distances, so most smuggling happens at the system-wide level. Smugglers usually interact with starships only when moving cargo from one hold to their own.

Efficient Vehicle

General, Lasting; DX/VH

Default: Specialty for related vehicle at same penalty as vehicle default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

NEW PERKS

The following new perks are useful to those with Imbuement Skills. Perks marked with a * require specialization by piece of equipment, skill, etc.

*Imbued Vehicle/Mount Bond**

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

This perk is identical to the Vehicle/Mount Bond perk (below), except instead of special training or uniquely suited equipment, it represents a supernatural attunement to a specific vehicle or animal. Unlike Vehicle/Mount Bond, you can freely shift the bond to another vehicle or mount with a day of mediation. You may have multiple Imbued Vehicle/Mount Bond perks, but their effects are not cumulative.

Improvised Imbuement

You can use Imbuement Skills without knowing the actual skill. Each try costs an additional 2 FP, and requires a roll against DX-7, with a bonus equal to any relevant power Talent (such as Magery or Psychokinesis Talent). Whether this is a natural connection with the forces in play or due to extensive knowledge of the mechanics of Imbuement is setting specific and up to the GM to explain.

Lingering Mastery

Prerequisite: Lasting Imbuement Skill at 16+.

As long as you can pay the FP cost *and* your effective skill remains at 16+, you don't need to make a skill roll to prolong your Lasting Transportation Imbuement Skill. You must specialize by skill.

*Potent Imbuement**

Pick a particular Imbuement Skill. When using it, you may voluntarily spend FP to increase your skill roll. This costs a flat 1 FP per +1 to the roll (maximum of +4 or the level of a related power Talent, whichever is better). You cannot combine this perk with the penalty to reduce the FP cost for using the skill (p. 26).

*Vehicle/Mount Bond**

You own a vehicle or mount that is uniquely suited to or specially trained to your needs. You must acquire it with cash or as Signature Gear. When you use it, you get +1 to the skill associated with that vehicle or animal, regardless of actual quality. This is cumulative with any bonus inherent to hardware or training. This perk reflects the fact that you're used to *your* stuff or your mount is used to *you*. If you lose the vehicle or mount, you lose the perk. You *can* acquire a new Vehicle/Mount Bond in play and may have multiple Vehicle/Mount Bond perks – but their effects are not cumulative.

This skill improves the Range of your vehicle. On an unmodified roll, machines can double the Range a given tank of fuel will operate on. Animals temporarily gain the Reduced Consumption 2 advantage (p. B80).

Modifiers: For machines, -3 to triple range, -6 to quadruple it, or -10 to ignore it completely. For animals, -2 gives Reduced Consumption 3, -4 gives Reduced Consumption 4, or -6 gives Doesn't Eat or Drink (p. B50); -4 to add Doesn't Sleep (p. B50).

Hardy Vehicle

General; DX/VH

Default: Specialty for related vehicle at same penalty as vehicle default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

This skill improves the HT score of the vehicle, perhaps by magically fortifying it or projecting your chi into it. On an unmodified roll, add +1 to the vehicle's HT.

Modifiers: -2 per additional +1 HT; -2 to add one of Sealed, Pressure Support, or Vacuum Support. You can combine multiple advantages for a cumulative penalty.

Hasten Vehicle

General; DX/VH

Default: Specialty for related vehicle at same penalty as vehicle default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

You can temporarily increase the Move of your vehicle. On an unmodified roll, this increases Move by +10% or +1 (whichever is better). This increase affects both Acceleration and Top Speed. If your vehicle has more than one method of movement, you must pick which one is affected.

Modifiers: -1 per additional +10% or +1 increase in speed; -5 if you can affect all modes of movement at once.

Phantom Hold

Machine or Unpowered; Lasting; DX/VH

Default: Specialty for related vehicle at same penalty as vehicle default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Your vehicle can hold more cargo than it otherwise would be able to. This is usually the result of dimension-altering magic or psychoportive "pockets." On an unmodified roll, increase the vehicle's Load by 10% or 10 lbs. (whichever is better).

If Phantom Hold expires (and is not immediately prolonged) before the additional cargo can be emptied, it is immediately and violently ejected from the vehicle! Every crate or loose piece takes thrust damage based on the ST of the vehicle (treat HP as ST for unpowered vehicles) on its way out.

ABOUT *GURPS*

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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