

Noir: The RPG of *Film Noir*

Modifications To Balance Characters

The Problem

Characters, when created as suggested by rules of Noir, are overpowered and this hideously unbalances the game. Also, a couple of the character generation rules don't make any sense.

Revised Character Creation

Character Points

For starters, always use the 75 point level for starting characters. The 100 point limit is workable but it throws out the dice rolling by allowing attributes to be raised far too high. Limiting and rejigging the cost of attributes, skills and traits seems the best way to fix the character generation process.

For example, the rules state that an average task has a difficulty of 14. This is only so if the skill and associated attribute are both at level-2. This can best be enforced at the 75 point template.

Attributes

These are fine at five points per level of attribute. No change here.

Shticks and Skills

The current cost of shticks doesn't work and there is no real benefit in taking a shtick over buying its individual components separately. I propose the following:

- Each level in a shtick costs only 10 points. For the first level in a shtick, this gives the character, an edge and six skill levels from the 'tricks of the trade' list. Purchasing subsequent levels gives an additional six skill levels from the 'tricks of the trade' list.
- Any skill not listed in the 'tricks of the trade' section of the shtick cannot be raised about the level of the shtick. For example, if a character buys two levels of the private investigator shtick, skills not on the 'tricks of the trade' list cannot be raised above two.

These measures focus the character generation process on the shtick and the benefits it gives the character. After all, the shtick is meant to be the core of the character and the thing the character is good at.

Pros and Cons

The rulebook costing of these traits is also badly broken. While particular pros and cons require individual treatment, the basic rule is to reduce the cost in the following table. A full list of pros and cons including both the original point cost and the revised point cost appears below.

Current Trait Cost	Proposed New Cost
4 or fewer points	1 point
5 points	3 points
10 points	6 points
15 points	10 points
20 points	15 points

Moxie

The cost of moxie remains at 10 points per additional level purchased above level-1.

Tables

To make character generation easier, the following tables have been prepared which include all the modified point values for pros and cons.

Trait (Pros)	Old Value	New Value	Trait (Cons)	Old Value	New Value
Above the Law	5 to 20	1 to 15	A Few Bricks Shy	-1, -5, -10, -20	-1, -3, -6, -15
Bookworm	5, 10	3, 6	Addict	-5, -10	-3, -6
Boss	5	3	Bad Rep	-5, -10	-3, -6
Buddy	7	7	Bigot	-5, -10, -15, -20	-3, -6, -10, -15
Charm	10	6	Bimbo	-5	-3
Combat Reflexes	10	6	Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?	-5, -10, -15	-3, -6, -10
Contacts	5, 10	3, 6	Bum Joint	-5, -10, -15	-3, -6, -10
Good Rep	5, 10	3, 6	Dark Secret	-5 to -15	-3 to -10
Gut Feeling	10	6	Dependents	-5, -10	-3, -6
Iron-jawed	15	10	Drunk	-5, -10	-3, -6
Jack of All Trades	15	10	Ethics	-1, -5, -10	-1, -3, -6
John Q. Law	5, 10	3, 6	Gimmick	-1, -5, -10	-1, -3, -6
Legally Dead	10, 15	6, 10	Glass Jaw	-15	-10
Long Green	10, 15, 20	6, 10, 15	Hard-Luck Case	-3/level	-1/level
Looker	10	6	Illiterate	-10	-6
Lucky	3/level	1/level	Jumpy	-5	-3
Made Man	10, 15, 20	6, 10, 15	Nemesis	-5, -10, -15	-3, -6, -10
Man of the Church	5, 10	3, 6	Promise	-5, -10, -15	-3, -6, -10
Member in Good Standing	5, 10	3, 6	Public Enemy	-5, -10	-3, -6
Natural	10	6	Sap	-10	-6
Photographic Memory	15	10	Scatterbrained	-10	-6
Quick Study	15	10	Short Fuse	-5	-3
Sharp Ear	5	3	Slow Reflexes	-10	-6
Sharp Eye	5	3	Stone-faced	-10	-6
Straight-faced	10	6	Thin-skinned	-15	-10
Thick-skinned	15	10	Ugly Mug	-5	-3
			Vendetta	-5, -10, -15	-3, -6, -10
			Weasel	-5	-3
			Yellow	-10	-6

About Me

I've been playing or running roleplaying games in Australia since 1981 and involved in the convention gaming circuit since 1988. I want a medal for my efforts, god-damn-it.

You can contact me at sleech@ozemail.com.au if you have any questions or comments on this article. Or, visit my web site at http://www.geocities.com/chris_slee and click on the Roleplaying link.