In This Issue

The Songs That Make the Whole World(s) Sing  
Music in role-playing and GURPS.  

More alt.conspiracy Fodder  
We had so much fun the first time, we're doing it again!
The Songs that Make the Whole World(s) Sing

Music in Role-playing

Music. It’s everywhere in our lives, but when it comes to gaming, it’s often overlooked. But a judicious injection of music into a character, an adventure, or even a world can add a lot of life and dimension.

Music in Fantasy

Music in a fantasy world typically ends up being some sort of rip off of Renaissance chamber music: lyres, recorders, lutes, basic percussion. All fine and dandy, but why not spice things up a bit? Surely elves, dwarves, gnomes and orcs all have different ideas of what music is pleasing, or what music even is! Do the last surviving members of an ancient race of dragons keep their songs alive, perhaps by teaching them to a wandering minstrel? Perhaps a violent race, such as orcs, only sees music in the carnage of battle, going as far as having their forces led by military ‘musicians’ who ‘compose’ a battle plan and ‘conduct’ the troops as they march into battle.

And of course there’s always magic. Magic items in the form of instruments are a staple of the genre, but go a step further. That helm of protection? Have it be possessed by the spirit of a dead musician, and the wearer hears inane tunes constantly while wearing it. Design a mage who can only cast spells while performing music; the better the composition and/or performance, the better the effect of the spell. Maybe a lute or lyre can serve as a temporary power stone, providing a store of manna for each period of playing.

Music in Historical Gaming

While modern day people tend to lump all of classical music together in one lump, there have been many distinctive periods in western music history, not to mention the music of Asian, Indian, African, Jewish, and other cultures through the ages. Before recording technology was available, music was always a live experience, often interactive and social. Professional musicians were sometimes taken care of by wealthy patrons of the arts, but oftentimes died penniless and destitute. The premiere of an opera or a symphony can make an excellent background for intrigue and whatnot.

Music in Modern Day

An era is defined by its music. Alluding to what’s playing on the radio or a nearby jukebox can help set the scene easily. Modern day musicians can make it big in the entertainment industry, but are just as likely to end up playing in cheap motel bars or singing on cruise ships.
Music in Cyberpunk

Of all genres, music is most wedded to cyberpunk. Whether it’s dystopic punk, throbbing techno, or depressing goth, music plays an indelible role in setting the mood in a cyberpunk milieu.

While it’s certainly fine to stick with the traditional cyberpunk musical styles, why not experiment a bit? Retro is always big; imagine a cyberpunk world where lounge music rules, and deals are sealed while sipping martinis. Perhaps it is time for jazz to make a comeback (real jazz, not that ‘smooth jazz’ crap they try to pass off these days). How about a cyberpunk world dominated by country music, along with blue jeans, hair spray and ten-gallon hats? It’s easy to see how attaching a differing music style to cyberpunk can change the feel of the game.

Or go the other way; try to imagine what the Next Big Thing will be. Maybe experimental ‘art’ music will come in vogue. How about an AI which composes music in a certain style, but never plays the same music twice?

Music in SF

When imagining contact with an alien culture, try to imagine their music. It undoubtedly will not resemble our own, perhaps not even remotely. Tone, interval, rhythm, and other basic musical concepts cannot be taken for granted. If an alien species has a different range of hearing, their range of music will similarly be affected.

Or perhaps music is the only thing that two alien cultures have in common. Remember how in Close Encounters of the Third Kind the entire dialogue with the aliens was conducted through music? Maybe regular alien speech makes use of tonal pitches that sound like music to humans.

What happens when a human tries to compose in an alien musical style, or vice versa? Will they ‘get it’? I imagine a composer who tries to blend the two completely different styles together, creating something truly unique.

Ever had a song going through your head that you just can’t shake? Imagine the absolute perversity of a telepath who plants tunes in people’s minds that they cannot forget. Oh, the horror! Or use your telepathic skills to excise a composer’s or musician’s talent. Make it impossible for a person to hear one particular note. Music can also make for an interesting limitation on psychic powers. Perhaps you can communicate telepathically, but only through song.

Music as Plot

Certainly quests and the like can be built around the recovery of a musical instruments, but also try the following on for size: a serial killer who leaves behind bits of song lyrics; a super-villain who plans his crimes according to the top 40 charts; the kidnapping of a pop singer or a famed
How about putting together an adventure or an entire campaign based around the idea of opera? If the players want to accomplish something, make them sing an aria! The heroes are magnificent tenors and sopranos, while the vile villain is a scheming baritone. Operas can be tragic or comic, but are always over-the-top.

For an Atomic Horror adventure, run it like a 50s beach musical. Again, singing should be required, and a cameo appearance by a one-hit-wonder is a must.

In a historical campaign, especially an illuminated one, it would be quite a hoot for the players to encounter a famous composer of the past.

Music with Characters

The life of a musician can make for an excellent character. They tend to be self employed or not hold down steady jobs, which leaves plenty of free time for adventuring, and if they’re successful they can have tons of money with which to keep their activities financed. Musicians on tour have a great chance to see the world and stumble into all kinds of messes. Of course, being the loan musician in an adventuring group can stretch the bonds of credibility a bit. However, if all the PCs can be convinced to be a part of the same band, things can be really interesting—can you imagine the members of Spinal Tap as a globetrotting group of part-time ghost hunters?

Of course, not every person who is associated with music has to be an active performer. A professor of musicology at Miskatonic U. might be able to shed some light on those mysterious musical manuscripts that the PCs have located. Burned out rock stars and aging, forgotten blues legends can add excellent spice to a campaign. And where exactly in Kalamazoo is Elvis living these days anyway?

Even if music is not the primary focus of your character’s life, it is still an important aspect to his or her personality. At the very least, a character should have a favorite style of music, or actively hate a particular genre (and if your character hates all music, well that’s a personality trait too). Maybe you just play an instrument for fun, or played in your high school marching band but haven’t picked up your trumpet since.
Music In GURPS

Really good musicians in real life are rare, so you might think that it takes a lot to become a good musician in GURPS. But of course you’d be mistaken. Since the powers that be figured that musical ability wouldn’t be of much use in a game, it only takes a few points to create a musical master.

The musical aptitude advantage is incredibly cheap. One lousy point gives you a +1 to Singing, any musical instrument skill, and Musical Composition. The Voice advantage will also give you a +2 to Singing (plus a host of other, non-musical, advantages). Musical Instrument skills default to similar instruments at -3. The rules don’t define what a similar instrument is, but I’d say that good groupings would be: brass instruments (trumpet, tuba, etc.); woodwinds (clarinet, flute, etc.); classical strings (violin, viola, etc.); keyboards (piano, organ); guitar-like strings (guitar, ukulele, etc.). Percussion should be treated as three separate skills: all rhythm percussion (snare drum, timpani, etc.); all melodic percussion (xylophone, marimba, etc.); and all multiple-player pitched percussion (handbells, pitched bass drums, etc.), which relate to each other as a group of similar ‘instruments.’

Singing is treated as one separate skill—presumably if you can sing one type of music, you can sing all types equally well. I recommend allowing for optional or required specialization for this skill, with a character specializing in a particular style. Examples of specializations for singing styles are: solo; choir; a cappella; barbershop; pop vocals; country-western; opera; chanting; musical theater, etc. Most singers fall roughly into one of six vocal ranges: soprano, mezzo-soprano, and alto for women’s and children’s voices; tenor, baritone, and bass for men’s voices. In truth, very few people fit exactly comfortably into one of the six categories, but most people fit close enough. Really talented singers can sing over multiple ranges. Male voices can also sing falsetto, shifting their range much higher by singing ‘differently’ (it is very hard to describe, but it’s rather similar to the voices used when Monty Python members would play women); and of course there are the castratos...

The Musical Composition skill says that a ‘composer must have a skill in each instrument in the composition at IQ-2 (and one of the instruments at IQ) in order to compose for a particular group of instruments.’ The is absolute hogwash. Plenty of people write and orchestrate compositions for instruments that have no talent in whatsoever. Part of learning how to compose is knowing how an instrument sounds, what its range is, what’s difficult or easy, etc., for instruments you’ve never played. Also note that the Musical Notation skill is required to be able to write down your composition so that others can read it—John Lennon & Paul McCartney, for example, both had a very high Musical Composition skill but couldn’t read or write music!

Of course, musicians need more than just musical skills to survive. Skills in business, marketing and management can help the aspiring musician to keep from getting screwed by the system. Savior Faire or Carousing are important social skills, depending on your genre of choice. Poetry can come in handy for writing lyrics. And many musicians have some other marketable skill to ‘fall back on’.

D. Carter, ed.
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The Hits Just Keep On Comin'
Manifesto, ordering the murders of dozens of Whitewater witnesses (one day's worth), *and* having sex with a sheep. Falwell (a long-time business partner of Satan) explained that the effect of this ritual was to sell the soul of every American citizen to the Devil for eternal damnation and torture, and that in return, Clinton would be assured of winning the election, and Hillary would be allowed to convert all American schoolchildren into gays and lesbians. • Hillary Clinton contracted with three government thugs to kill Dick Morris. The planning of the hit began well before the *Star* started talking to Dick Morris's hooker girlfriend Sherry Rowlands. Apparently Morris gave Hillary too much competition for the ear of the President. • It's a fact: When you handle a penny the government gets your DNA code. By now they have everyone's code! Welcome to the world of Big Brother! I tried to stop them but it was too much for one guy. • New York City police dogs will soon be styling in the latest police state K9 designer wear: a device called the "Remote Canine Optical Navigator," or RECON. RECON, a three pound infrared video camera attached to a dogs neck, will allow police to gain a live eyewitness account of areas without sending in a police officer. For example, the dog can scout-out the inside of a building looking for guns, drugs or suspects targeted for removal. • A convicted hacker, in prison for nothing more than possession of electronic parts easily obtainable at any Radio Shack, has been savagely beaten after being transferred to a maximum security prison as punishment for speaking out publicly about prison conditions. Ed Cummings, recently published in Wired and Internet Underground, as well as a correspondent for WBAI-FM in New York and 2600 Magazine, has been the focus of an increasingly ugly campaign of harrassment and terror from the authorities. At the time of this writing, Cummings is locked in the infectious diseases ward at Lehigh County prison in Allentown, Pennsylvania, unable to obtain the proper medical treatment for the severe injuries he has suffered. • Capt janeway of Dyke Trek is a lesbian plot to take control of the far reaches of the galaxy and promote sexual perversion. I know so. • Iraqi supersguns, shadowy NATO anti-Communist vigilante groups, political assassinations and charges of high-level protection for paedophiles — Belgium has it all and more! • The CIA and other spy agencies have systematically tapped the phones of overseas Drug Enforcement Agency Administration offices, according to a class action lawsuit against the FBI, and the Board of Health in DC. She said something over a few beers the other day about Tofu not being made of Soy Bean but being made of people. • You say you are going to get New Zealand. I dont think so because the Christians here are praying against such groups as the Masons. You will not get your hands on this beautiful country. We will fight the good fight and will prevail in the name of our God!!! • FLASHPOINT has received astonishing evidence of an incredible, new "Beast 666 Universal Human Control System." Officially called L.U.C.I.D., this grotesque system of universal slavery is - even as your read this - being implemented by federal and international intelligence and police agencies. The new Beast 666 system will mandate that every man, woman, and child on planet Earth be issued a high tech, "Smart," ID card, called a Universal Biometrics Card. The chilling system is slated to be fully in operation by the year 2000, to celebrate the dawn of the New Age Millennium. This ID card allows the New World Order's police state to track and link every man, woman, and child on planet Earth. Our activities are to be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by federal Gestapo agencies - the FBI, IRS, BATF, CIA, DIA, DEA, NSA, U.S. Treasury Service, and Department of Justice. International police agencies are linked with the Beast 666 system, to include America's Big Brother-enforcing CIA, the vicious Russian KGB, the devious and wicked British Intelligence Service, and Israel's terroristic Mossad spy organization. • a fossilized piece of crap was found on mars recently, there was also evident of a primitive pooper scooper, such as those used in the 1950's. with all this evidence i think we can safely say that Dan Rather a crossdresser. • During the past year gene tinkered crops have begun to flood the marketplace. These crops need not be labeled nor have they been tested to assure their safety both for humans and for the environment. Such production is going forward even though there is clear evidence that about one in ten tinkered genes escapes from its original crop and spreads to weedy relatives. The crops designed to resist viruses incorporate virus genes that recombine with wild viruses to create stronger (super) races of viruses. The greed of multinational companies that own most tinkered crops drives them to risk human and environmental injury from crops that are designed to grow obsolescent from spread to weedy relatives. • Would someone be so kind to email me directly to let me know if there is a place named Pine Crest in Australia? I know there is a place named Pine Creek but that is not what i want to know. That place was rumoured to be a mysterious place that only the President can enter and also the Americans are having some kind of secret plan against the world there. Really need to know for project. Many thanks. • Let's start with the facts. 1 - CBS reported that Pierre Salinger has documents indicating that Flight 800 was accidentally shot down by the US Navy. 2 - A meteor shower was predicted in the general area and time of the Flight 800 crash. [From news service reports] 3 - A Pakistani Airliner pilot reported seeing "something with lights" in the skies of Long Island near the site of the Flight 800 crash. [From news service reports] 4 - There are many safeties, arming procedures etc. for the launch of any missile. In the previous incident of the Navy accidentally downing a civilian airliner, the Surface-to-Air missile was launched on purpose. Now, here's a hypothesis for explaining why the Navy did shoot down Flight 800 by accident. 1 - There are three known affinities for alien "flying saucers": certain locations, nuclear weapons, celestial events (see Mexico City eclipse). 2 - A flying saucer decided to frequent the area of the predicted meteor shower. 3 - The US Navy identified the flying saucer as an alien craft. 4 - The Navy decided to try and shoot down the flying saucer, knowing that it would sink to the bottom of the ocean and they could recover it at their leisure. 5 - The Navy launched a radar-guided surface to air missile to down the flying saucer; the saucer evaded; within a few seconds, the missile locked onto Flight 800 and destroyed it. (too quickly for a self-destruct message from ship to missile). The problem is this. If the Navy shot down that plane, there are two possibilities: 1 - the missile was launched on purpose 2 - the missile was launched by accident. Here's the thing. Missiles don't launch by accident! If it was launched on purpose, who was it launched against? THE NAVY DOESN'T DO LIVE MISSILE TESTS IN AREAS OF HEAVY CIVILIAN TRAFFIC. There is only one "foreign nation", with flying craft worth shooting down. • In 1997-98 NASA will announce that ruins of a 'civilisation' have been discovered on Mars. These will be suspiciously like the ruins of previous 'civilisations' on Earth. Richard Dawkins and other mechanicalist cretins will act as frontmen for much of the publicity. Archaeologists (whose work, like that of most academics, is based on rubbish, vacuous arrogance, and mutual congratulation/complicity anyway, let's face it) will change their 'paradigm'. Or rather, the handful of well-connected people who run this field will change it. Did humans 'come from' Mars, or did we 'go to' Mars - this will become the principal topic of debate. Room will of course be made for everybody to take one side or the other, or to say things haven't yet been made clear, from Graham Hancock to whoever's the US President at that time. But only a fool actually believes the Big Lies of the scientific-ideological-complex, and the lie of Remnants of Martian Life Found in Antarctica is certainly very big in its implications.