CARTOON ACTION HOUR

Season Two

HALLOWEEN SPECIAL

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INTRODUCTION

Halloween is more than just another holiday. It's a time of year in which ghouls and goblins roam freely amongst the newly fallen leaves of brown and orange. It's a time of year in which many people seek thrills and chills by going to "spook houses" or by watching an insane amount of horror flicks. But during the 1980s, it was also a time in which the networks showcased numerous animated Halloween Specials that kids of all ages could (and did) look forward to. In most cases, such specials were derived from a popular series of the time.

Along similar lines, it wasn't unheard of for a series to have horror elements year-round rather than just a one-off special in October. Granted, the brand of horror demonstrated by these series was a far cry from that of the horror films.

This document seeks to bring horror to your games of *Cartoon Action Hour*, whether you want to run a Halloween Special for your existing series or create a new series laden with horror trappings.

The first section of the document deals evoking the appropriate style of horror into the game, offering hints, tips and advice. The second section presents a new horror-themed series, *Creature Busters*.

HORROR IN CAH:S2

Let's get one thing straight: cartoon horror isn't really horror. It just has certain elements of the horror genre. But it's not really scary; it's scary-ish… and maybe not even quite scary-ish. You see, the cartoon companies had to cater to kids, but in such a way that wouldn't tick the parents off. If they ticked the parents off by presenting truly horrific material to children, those parents aren't going to give their kids money to purchase related merchandise. It was simply a matter of economics.

So, what good is cartoon horror, you ask?

Well, it was fun and it gave the shows an unusual feel. It provided the series with monsters, ghosts, vampires, wolfmen and other such nasties, which immediately adds a sense of awesomeness. Come on, what kid doesn't get all wide-eyed and excited about these things?

WHAT CARTOON HORROR DOESN'T HAVE!

Before we can start discussing how to run horror-themed games of CAH:S2, we have to talk a bit about the things you just didn't see in cartoon horror.

Death

We may be delving into horror territory here, but death was still a no-no. The *threat* of death was fine or even the mentioning of someone's passing was allowed ("My old Aunt passed away and left me this spooky old house."), but characters didn't die. In most horror RPGs, the threat of death is one of the aspects that keeps things frightening. Since this isn't an option in CAH:S2, we have to find other ways of keeping the spookiness alive. We'll get into this later on.

Gore

The parent groups of the '80s would have had a conniption if true gore had ever been displayed in the retro-toons. Even a trickle of blood would have been enough to trigger a bunch of jibber-jabber to the networks from such groups. This is why blood was never shown, let alone decapitation, mutilation, or any other "tion" words that dealt with the macabre.

Religion

In an effort to avoid religious groups coming down on them, the cartoon studios kept religion largely out of the shows. Notice the use of the word "largely" there? I said that because sometimes, religion kind of crept into the mix from time to time, mostly by way of a demon here or a devil there. It wasn't common, but it did happen. Often, these beings weren't called demons or devils by name, but we all knew what the heck they were.

Suspense

The horror-based cartoons had exactly the same amount of suspense that the other cartoons had. That is, the suspense came from a hero plummeting from a cliffside right before cutting to a commercial break rather than from a psycho killer stalking the characters through dense woods with a machete.

EVOKING A SENSE OF HORROR

As discussed previously, cartoon horror wasn't actually horror in the strictest sense. It was something akin to it though, which gives us stuff to work with. The idea is to have the themes of horror without being scary.

Appropriate Bad Guys

If you're planning out a horror-themed series, you'll need to assemble genre-appropriate adversaries for the PCs to have conflicts with. A horror game with regular baddies won't do at all, unless you have something really wacky planned. Here are a few ideas for horror villains:

Mad Scientists: Any time a villain can concoct something creepy from a beaker, you're onto something good. This kind of villain is versatile, as he can spawn anything from robots and mutants to critters and Frankensteinian monsters.

Wolfmen: Werewolves are great cartoon adversaries. They're tough and don't violate any of the "rules" of cartoon horror. Unlike other media though, cartoon wolfmen were often played for laughs in the retro-toons and frequently had exaggerated dog-like aspects (scratching fleas, barking, growling, etc.).

Vampires: Let's get the obvious difference out of the way. Cartoon vampires never engaged in the act of sucking blood. Not a chance! Nor was it ever mentioned that they were actually dead. As far as the cartoons were concerned, vampires were essentially just pale people with fangs and some keenly cool powers. Most of them looked and acted like Bela Lugosi.

Witches: Witches never had Wiccan connotations in the cartoons. They were basically green-skinned women with funny black hats that could cast spells. Did I mention that they almost invariably rode on broomsticks and cackled? Witches could be quite formidable foes for PCs though, so don't just discount them due to their overt silliness.

Mummies: Close your eyes and think about what a cliché mummy from the old B-movies were like. Now, open your eyes and put it on paper, because that's how mummies were in the retro-toons. They are slow, plodding and resilient to damage (except from fire, of course).

Creepy Locales

The cartoons often put creepy locales to good use in order to get across the horror vibe. Below, you'll find a list of sites that could be inserted into your horror-themed games.

- Graveyard
- Murky Swamp
- Ancient Castle
- Haunted House
- Abandoned Farm
- Cavern
- Museum (after it closes, naturally)
- Pyramid
- Closed-Down Factory
- Fog-Shrouded River Docks
- Uncharted Island
- Creaky Old Bridge
- Used-Up Mine
- Junkyard
- Old Shack
- Dungeon
- Ghost Ship
- Weird Dimension
- Plantation
- Lost City

CREATURE BUSTERS

"Monsters, Critters and Ghoulies Beware"

PC Creation Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to all PCs for the *Creature Busters* series.

Proof of Purchase Points: PCs are created using 25 PoPPs.
Maximum Trait Ratings (Regular Traits): 4
Maximum Trait Ratings (Action Features): 7
Miscellaneous:
- The characters must be members of Creature Busters Inc.
- The characters must be normal (albeit highly trained) individuals.
- The characters must have some Traits that would be helpful in hunting down monsters.
- All characters begin the game with the following Trait, free of charge: Neutralizer 4 [Enhancer +2, Accessory, Disadvantage (Only works against supernatural targets), Oomph-Powered]. The gadget

whittles away the monster's substance. When a monster is Defeated by this, it is sent to another dimension). It is used in conjunction with an aim-based Trait.

Backstory
It was 1984 and a certain comedic movie was taking the world by storm, as was the catchy theme song. Given the film's popularity, it was no wonder that just about everyone was scrambling to jump on the gravy train, so to speak. People thought they could cash in on the craze… almost all of them failed.

One such failure actually produced a really fun cartoon called *Creature Busters*. While no points could be given for originality, plenty could be given for entertainment value. The episodes were mostly well written and the characters displayed unique personalities. Animatuxx, the production company responsible for the show, clearly put a great deal of effort into it, but viewership was low right from the start.

It lasted only one season, after which it disappeared into the "canceled cartoon" void.

The Genre
Creature Busters was a horror cartoon set in modern times (i.e., 1984).

The Series
The series revolved around a small group of monster hunters called Creature Busters Inc. These highly trained individuals sought out all manner of supernatural foes in an attempt to rid the world of them. Each member carries a device called the Neutralizer. The device emits a beam of energy that sucks creatures into an alternate dimension. Little did they know that upon using these gadgets, they let loose an inter-dimensional being known as the Monster King. This vile being slipped into our world and can now travel between the various realities. He has decided that he wants to conquer our dimension and uses to uncanny ability to control monsters in order to obtain his goals.

The Player Characters
This series revolves around a very small group (between 3 and 5 is about right). As such, there's no need to stat out pre-existing heroes. This allows the characters created by the players to form the entirety of the group.

The Adversaries
Most, but not all, of the series' villainy was caused by the Monster King. He usually brought different creatures into our world from other realities and attempted to take over the world. Monster King was the series' only central villain. Each week, he would bring forth a different critter to sic on the world.

Below, you will find the Monster King's game stats, as well as stats for a handful of the creatures that he used over the course of the show's 40 episodes.

The Monster King
"Inter-Dimensional Conqueror"

Quick Bio: The Monster King was trapped in the dimension of Y'lar for centuries, until the Creature Busters' Neutralizers accidentally freed him. Once released from his imprisonment, he became obsessed with conquering our reality by bringing monsters from various dimensions, realities and time periods through gates and letting them loose on the world at large.

Appearance: The Monster King is a tall, slender humanoid with pale blue skin and two knobby horns on his brow. He wears a black bodysuit with a matching cloak over it. He has a "devil" goatee and long fingernails. His hair is jet black and kept in a ponytail.

Factoids: "Takes joy in conquering dimensions", "Often lets loose with an evil laugh whenever things start to go his way", "Loses his temper easily"
Subplots: Vow (To conquer our reality), Stigma (He looks evil)
Traits: Open Dimensional gates 6, Dimensional Travel 6, Time Travel 4, Command Monsters 6, Strong Mind 5, Cunning 6, Strike Creepy Pose 3, Force Field 6, Dark Magic 4 [*Clusters (Attack/Defend, Movement, Manipulation)*]
Stats: Threshold 12, Battle Rating 6

Lizard Beast
"Giant Iguana-Like Creature"

Quick Bio: Was an iguana, which was mutated by French nuclear tests. Now he just wants to find an island to hang out on a lay some eggs. He now has to deal with annoying humans who infest his island. A really oversized t-rex with a few Godzilla features added in.

Factoids: "Big Monster", "Just wants to be left along", "Likes fish", "Has a big litter on the way"
Subplots: Mental Hang-up (Hates being called bad American rip-off)
Traits: Giant Monster 5 (Enhancer +3), Monster Body 8, Agility 9, Run Fast 10, Monster Fu 8, Climbing 4, Digging 5, Willpower 3, Being Made fun of 1X, Long term planning 1X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 8

Wolf Man
"Part Man, Part Wolf. Grrrr!"

Quick Bio: He was just some poor guy who was walking in woods one day and was bit by a wolf. Now on the night of the full moon he turns into a really hairy guy with teeth and claws and looks for an easy snack. His bestial nature makes him an easy target for the Monster King's manipulation.

Factoids: "Completely bestial", "Perfect night vision", "Easily Distracted"

Subplots: Mental Hang-Up (Dislikes being a monster), Weakness (Silver)
Traits: Normal Joe 1, Run Away 2, Fight 1, Willpower 1, Wolfman 24 [*Transform, Disadvantage (No control in wolf man form), Disadvantage (transforms on night of full moon, no control over transformation)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5
Wolfman Form: Howl at Moon 3, Big Claws 5, Monster Toughness 5, Smell Next Meal 6, Monster Strength 5, Run 3, Fighting 5

Count Dracula
"The Most Famous Vampire Ever!"

Quick Bio: An old count who became a vampire centuries ago. He is now looking to expand his power outside Transylvania. He is also looking for a lovely new bride and a quick bit. The Monster King struck a bargain with him that enabled him to look for a bride in our reality.

Factoids: "Has a penetrating stare", "Is a vampire", "Speaks with Romanian accent", "Is suave and classy… at least he seems that way", "Not a big fan of garlic"
Subplots: Weakness (Silver), Susceptible (Sunlight, Stake Through Heart)
Traits: Highly Cultured 4, Good at Parties 3, Mind Control 5, Vampire Strength 5, Vampire Body 6, Fangs 5, Fighting 4, Willpower 6, Resist Smell of Garlic 1X, Resist a Cross 2X, Bat Form 3 [*Transform, Retained Traits (Vampire Body, Fangs)*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6
Bat Form: Fly 4, Hide 3, Bat Sonar 4, Vampire Body 6, Fangs 5

Frankenstein's Monster
"Big Green Monstrosity"

Quick Bio: He was once just a few body parts hanging around (or buried) until Dr. Frankenstein came and dug up the pieces and sewed them together. Using a secret method that needed electricity the monster was brought back to life. Now the monster just wants to be left alone with good food. But the villagers always try to kill him and they have bad fire. FIRE IS BAD!! When the Monster Master promised to grant him peace in return for doing his bidding, he eagerly accepted. This deal was made without Dr. Frankenstein knowing about it.

Factoids: "Made from many body parts", "Animated by Electricity", "Hates fire and hates Igor", "Has issues with his parent/creator"
Subplots: Stigma (Smelly Monster), Mental Hang-up (Hates Fire, FIRE BAD!)
Traits: Monstrous Strength 6, Monstrous Body 6, Intimidate 5, Fighting 2, Immunity to Electricity 8 [*Trait Boost (Self, +1 to Monstrous Strength, +1 to Monstrous Body)*] Agility 1X, Talk to People 2X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 6

The Mummy
"All Wrapped Up With No Place To Go!"

Quick Bio: He was an ancient Egyptian cursed by Pharaoh for doing something naughty. The Monster Master used an ancient artifact to gain control of his mind (or what's left of it) and tried to cause more chaos.

Factoids: "From ancient Egypt", "Wears bandages", "Cursed to protect his tomb", "Misses his Girl"
Subplots: Weakness (Fire), Vow (Protect tomb), Mental Hang-Up (Kids with their loud music… in other words, everyone playing music who is under 1000 years old)
Traits: Intimidate 6, Ancient Egyptian Magic Rituals 4, Monster Strength 5, Monster Body 5, Knowledge of Ancient Egypt 2, Mummy Fighting 3, Move 1X, Agility 1X, Talking 2X
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Slimy Ghost
"Creepy But Funny Ghost"

Quick Bio: Not a traditional-looking ghost, this little fellow looks more like a flying creature of some sort. Nobody knows his origins, but he's plenty capable of causing trouble for the Creature Busters. In fact, he appeared in four different episodes of the series.

Factoids: "Has a funny voice", "Loves causing mischief", "Not a mean-natured ghost", "Drips slime wherever he goes"
Subplots: Stigma (He's a ghost!), Weakness (Electrical Damage; doubles the Setback Tokens he gains from this damage source)
Traits: Pass Through Objects 4, Throw Slime Globs 5 [*Trait Zap (-2 to agility-based Traits), Has a Duration*], Flt Spookily 6, Spot Movement 4, Willpower 4, Dodge 3
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 5

Goblin Master
"Leader of the Goblins"

Quick Bio: The Goblin Master rules all the world's goblins and has recently been convinced (by the Monster Master, no less) that now is the time to take over the world and overrun it with their kind.

Factoids: "Greenish-Brown Skin", "Stands four feet tall – a giant amongst goblins", "Hot-Tempered", "Overly ambitious"
Subplots: Stigma (He's a darn goblin)
Traits: Gobbo-Leaping 6, Fit in Small Spaces 5, Flee 3, Obnoxious Gibbering 3, Command Goblins 4, Agile 4, Weakling 2X, Mesmerizing Stare 4 [*Snare, Disadvantage (Requires direct eye contact), has a duration*]
Stats: Threshold 10, Battle Rating 4