WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #18: Robots Part 3

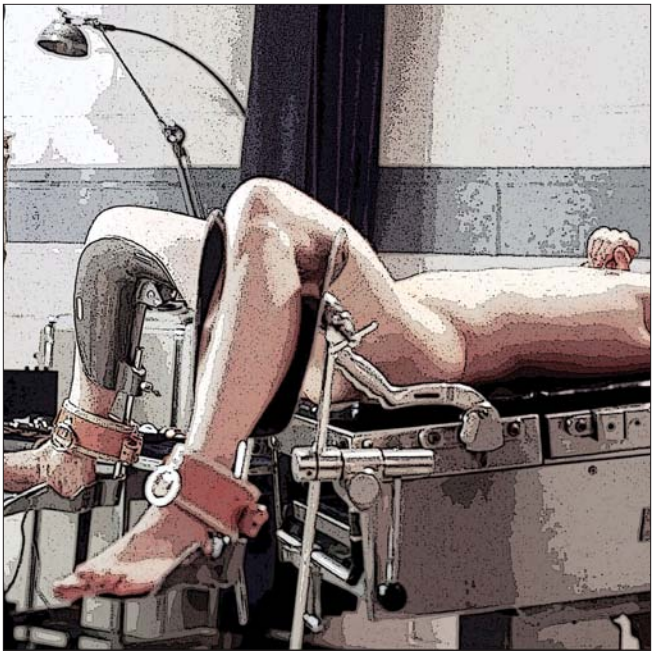
MUTANT FUTURE COMPATIBLE PRODUCT

By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Robots are just as important to *Mutant Future* as biological creatures. They can be antagonists, sources of information, or even slave labor. In this third installment of four robot-themed issues there are eight new robots, as well as several new accessories, a new weapon, and a new form of locomotion. Only a few of the machines in this article have precise dimensions; the examples here are intended as *types*, not specific models. Mutant Lords are encouraged to customize their machines, and provide fine details to fit their settings.

Pithing Unit

These robots work with slave takers to alter the human populations of machine dominated areas (see below for more information). A pithing unit most often resembles a gore-spattered medical table with several spider-like articulated limbs that perform surgery (and possibly other effects if the ML wants). They remain in central facilities — well-protected ghost towns or small fortresses — waiting for humans captives to arrive, and then make minor surgical changes to their brains, a procedure similar to lobotomization called pithing. Anyone suffering this attack must save versus death at -8 or become a robotic slave. These unfortunates act like normal humans, but any robot with a vocalizer can order them to do anything not obviously self-destructive. As pithing is physical and not genetic, newborns in machine nations undergo the process as soon as they are old enough to survive (two years). A pithing unit takes 10 minutes to process one human.



Hit Dice: 20
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: 4 Legs [120' (30')]
Manipulators: 6 Basic Hands
Armor: Reactive Armor (AC 1)
Sensors: Nerve Web
Mental Programming: Basic Programming
Accessories: Pithing Unit (new, unlisted)
Weaponry: 4 Stunners (range 50', damage stunned for d4 hours)

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This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the "Basic" system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).

Powerbot

A mobile power plant, the powerbot can produce amazing amounts of electricity by directly converting air into energy. There are many different models, but all can fly and function anywhere except underwater. They are usually spheres or boxes, with some writing on them—company logos, and likely graffiti. Each has 10 cables 1000' long to transfer the power where needed. Currently active (and bored) powerbots often use the cables as land mines, burying them just below the surface so anything stepping on them will be electrocuted (much like children pulling the wings off flies, or using a magnifying glass on ants). Anyone touching a frayed cable takes 5d10 points of damage, but a successful save versus energy attacks will reduce this to half.

Hit Dice: 15
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: Inductor [600' (200')]
Manipulators: 4 Probes, 2 Basic Hands
Armor: Alumisteel (AC 4)
Sensors: Class III
Mental
Programming: Basic Programming
Accessories: Fire Extinguisher, Matter/Energy Converter (new), 10 Power Cables (new, unlisted)
Weaponry: None

Ranchbot

The Ancients created these machines to fill their zoos with exotic, trained animals. Giant, spider-like robots, 10' tall and 30' long, ranchbots are covered with hands, probes, and tentacles used for their work.

Although they are not designed for genetic engineering, the robots do use other forms of advanced biotechnology. Each ranchbot has an internal lab for producing creatures through hybridization, embryo fusion (chimera), cloning, and normal or surgical gamete fusion. In addition, the robots are able to do grafting and implantation, adding cyber parts for control or manipulating a creature's appearance and physical structure. Once finished, the lab scans the results and sends desirable embryos to an incubator, to grow until they can survive the outside world. The best embryos are turned into multiple clones and their genetic information is stored. Then, after the animals are mature enough, the robot trains them. In addition to the lab, a ranchbot also has a small chemical factory for producing lures needed to control its progeny, and an aging ray used to speed up the development of longer-lived species.

In the current era, there may be no more important survivor of the cataclysm, as ranchbots can be convinced to help stock new kinds of "zoos," creating livestock of both plant and animal varieties. Also, since they are able to detect recessive drawbacks before biological entities can, ranchbots have kept monsters from being born. However, because they cannot manipulate genes, some ranchbots have taken to sterilizing both livestock and people that they find undesirable for the gene pool. Or, simply age them to death.

Hit Dice: 30
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: 6 Legs [240' (80')]
Manipulators: 2 Advanced Hands, 4 basic Hands, 4 Probes, and 2 Tentacles
Armor: Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors: Nerve Web
Mental
Programming: Biological and Animal Training Programming
Accessories: Vocalizer, DNA Scanner (new), Incubator (new, unlisted), Animal Call/Lure (new), Feed Dispenser (new, unlisted)
Weaponry: 2 Stunners (range 100', damage stunned for d4 turns), Age Ray (range 100', damage determined by robot but between 1 week and 5 years) (new, unlisted)

Shatterbot

Shatterbots are military hardware the Ancients' armies used to destroy infrastructure. They are massive, spider-shaped machines made up of many smaller robots holding themselves together with magnetic fields. The large form is rarely seen and only used when speed is of the essence. It also can turn invisible, something useful for a 50' tall robot. It can attack but does so only to break up resistance before shattering into the smaller robots. Every 8 points of damage a large shatterbot suffers destroys one of the smaller component robots.

Small shatterbots look like 8' long robotic ants. They use laser cutters and claws to destroy an enemy's buildings, roads, and equipment. Unlike the large shatterbot, the small bots do not have a photon screen, as this requires more energy than an individual robot using all systems can produce. But, they do have the capacity to repair themselves and each other,

possible because the smaller bots' limbs are free to move. With enough time and the right materials, they can even make more small shatterbots. During the final wars, more than one factory was gutted to release one or more large shatterbots.

Large Shatterbot

Hit Dice: 60
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: 8 Legs [270' (90')]
Manipulators: none
Armor: Megatanium (AC -1)
Sensors: Class IV
Mental
Programming: Military Programming
Accessories: Vocalizer, Weapon Mounts, Photon Screen
Weaponry: 60 Laser Pistols (range 400'/800', damage 6d6), 40 Shock Claws (damage 3d6) (new)

Small Shatterbot

Hit Dice: 1
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: 4 Legs [90' (30')]
Manipulators: Claw (damage d6)
Armor: Megatanium (AC -1)
Sensors: Class IV
Mental
Programming: Military Programming
Accessories: Vocalizer, 1 Weapon Mount, Robot Repair Unit
Weaponry: Laser Pistol (range 400'/800', damage 6d6), Shock Claw (damage 3d6) (new)

Slave Taker

As the final wars raged, some computers decided humanity was too dangerous to be allowed freedom. The race was not to be exterminated, but humans were going to be placed under machine rule. Slave taker units are one result of this decision, wandering along the borders of machine-dominated lands and into neighboring territories looking for new slaves.

These massive, spider-shaped robots, each weighting 10 tons, hunt and capture humans, then transport them to a central facility to be pithed. Slave takers use high-powered stunners that overwhelm the human nervous system and, consequently, inflict moderate damage. Victims must make a save versus stun or be incapacitated. Stunned victims are lifted into a large cage in the robot's "abdomen" and carried to a processing center. Each slave taker can hold 50 adult humans.

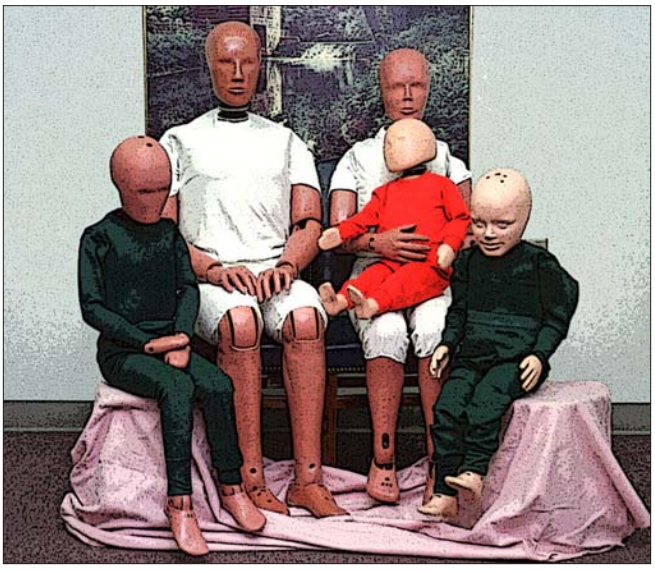
Hit Dice: 100
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: 8 Legs [300' (100')]
Manipulators: 20 Basic Hands, 20 Claws (damage 2d8)
Armor: Reactive Armor (AC 1)
Sensors: Nerve Web
Mental
Programming: AI
Accessories: Vocalizer, Weapon Mounts, Self Repair Unit
Weaponry: 10 Stunners (range 100', damage d8 plus stunned for 2d6 hours)

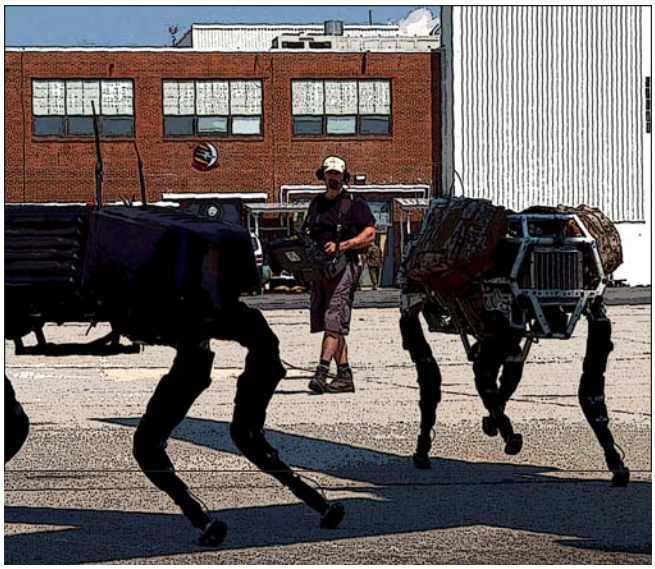
Testbot

Testbots were designed for two general missions: product testing (such as cars, military devices, and starship travel), and exploring other planes of existence. The former types tend to look human, while the latter are boxes with wheels. Those that returned from faster-than-light testing went mad, and all of them have twitches. Testbots used for planar travel have some sign of surviving another set of physical laws — weird damage, coloration, or deformation.

Product testers are among the most bored robots in existence. They are either digging through ruins looking for their company's products or testing such items until they break. Watching car testers has destroyed the hopes of many wishing for some form of powered conveyance.

Hit Dice: 15
Frame: Biomorph or Armature
Locomotion: 2 Legs [120' (30')] or 4 Wheels [180' (60')]
Manipulators: 2 Basic Hands or 2 Claws (damage d6)
Armor: Reactive Armor (AC 1)
Sensors: Class VI and Environmental Analyzer
Mental
Programming: AI
Accessories: Vocalizer, Self Repair Unit, Self Analyzer (new), Environmental Analyzer (new)
Weaponry: 1 Stunner (only on the planar exploration model, range 50', damage stunned for d6 rounds)





Training Robot

Before the final wars, training robots existed to keep people in shape as well as teach them survival skills, various sports, and other activities (ahem). Of all the different models, those specializing in survival and weapons training are the most popular in the current era. They instruct militia, law enforcement, hunters, and soldiers. Facing a weapons trainer is risky because they have a tendency to cause real damage. Faulty wiring, buggy programming, and such mean any training robot may lead its students to disaster.

Hit Dice: 8
Frame: Biomorph
Locomotion: 2 Legs [150' (50')]
Manipulators: 2 Advanced Hands
Armor: Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors: Nerve Web
Mental
Programming: Exercise, Weapon Training, or Survival Programming
Accessories: Vocalizer, Medical Scanner (new), d4 tools relating to its field
Weaponry: those relating to its field

Transporter

These machines are able to convert people and material to energy, store them, transport them where needed, and then restore the people and material to matter. They were vital to the war effort of several nations before the fall, though too expensive for civilian use. All those still active wander the wastes transporting those they see as allies from place to place.

Transporters are 45' diameter flying discs with 10 landing legs. A typical model can hold 50 people or 8 tons of equipment, with its matter/energy converter having a range of 1,000' and the ability to convert objects and people within a 50' diameter sphere. When the robot rematerializes its contents, it can select the end location of every item or person, and select its facing. Those not wanting to be transported must save versus stun (at various penalties selected by the ML). MLs should be aware that transporters with faulty wiring or bad software may mutate or otherwise alter the people and objects they store.

A variant of the transporter was used to collect people for the lunar prisons. Some of this model convert people and fly away; most are never seen again. Also see the *Thief* robot below for another variant application of this technology.

Hit Dice: 25
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: 10 Legs [120' (40')] and Thruster [fly 300' (100')]
Manipulators: None
Armor: Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors: Class IV
Mental
Programming: AI
Accessories: Vocalizer, Matter/Energy Converter (range 1,000', area of effect 50' diameter) (new)
Weaponry: none

Thief

The thief robots are 2' diameter spheres meant to transport individuals or objects. Before and during the final wars, they were usually sent to collect/kidnap vital personnel or steal objects. The range for their matter/energy converter is 100', but they do have a photon screen that allows them to hide in plain sight. A typical thief can hold two people or 800 pounds of gear.

Hit Dice: 5
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: Thruster [fly 600' (200')]
Manipulators: none
Armor: Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors: Class V
Mental
Programming: AI
Accessories: Vocalizer, Matter/Energy Converter (new), Photon Screen
Weaponry: None

Unreality Robot

One of the Ancients' last great inventions was a series of machines that could alter the laws of physics. To keep the effects from damaging the Earth, the unreality robots were developed. These machines function by activating special force fields that change with the altered physics to contain the effects (which could be just about anything from talking sofas to one-eyed one-horned flying purple people-eaters).

With its matter/energy converter, an unreality robot can activate the force field for 10 minutes per day. The field envelopes an area 30' in diameter and anything within it is either destroyed or changed. A save versus energy attacks means the target escapes from the field.

Hit Dice: 50
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: Inductor [600' (200')]
Manipulators: 4 Advanced Hands
Armor: Improved Megatanium (AC -4)
Sensors: Nerve Web
Mental Programming: AI
Accessories: Vocalizer, Matter/Energy Converter (new), Environmental Analyzer (range 100') (new)
Weaponry: Force Field (range 100') (new)

Vacationing Home

In the decades before the fall, people took to the sky in flying houses of many different models, sizes, and appearances. As communication and taxes became entirely electronic, whole populations gave up their ties to specific plots of land. The robotic homes let people go anywhere (some models even allowed underwater travel) and see almost anything they wished — from the safety of their living rooms. Though named vacationers or vacationing homes, these robots became the primary residences for billions who could not afford to own the terrestrial dream. Only the wealthy (who could buy land) and very poor (who were homeless) were exceptions.

Unfortunately, when the cataclysm struck, the sky was full of falling, burning homes and most were turned to scrap when they smashed into the ground. These days, dead, but not destroyed, robots litter those places that suffered least in the war and provide artifacts for looters. Most of those vacationers still functioning continue trying to make their inhabitants happy, using the wireless communications system to keep them occupied. But, a few have become tombs for looters — having altered themselves to kill any who enter them, using their arms to strip weapons and accessories from other robots. As a note, it is possible to 'resurrect' dead vacationers, if they are not terribly damaged, and the correct kind of power cell can be found.

A variation of the vacationer is the diplomatic home. It was used for aliens that visited Earth, and there were different models for the different species. Each surviving diplomatic home can be a death trap because of the alien atmosphere, but can also contain many unique artifacts.

Hit Dice: 30
Frame: Armature
Locomotion: Inductor [300' (100')]
Manipulators: 6 Advanced Hands (exact number and placement — internal/external — depend on model and owners' whim)
Armor: Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors: Nerve Web
Mental Programming: Domestic Programming
Accessories: AV Recorder/Transmitter, Vocalizer, Fire Extinguisher, Variable (depending on owners' tastes)
Weaponry: None

NEW ACCESSORIES

Animal Call/Lure
A robot with this device can summon creatures. Some are restricted to specific species and other can replicate any call or lure they analyze for one minute. This can affect mutant animals, and requires a save versus stun to resist.

DNA Scanner
This device allows a robot to use beam scans and blood samples to identify an organism's mutations and traits. This usually takes 1 round per creature, using a blood sample; it takes a little longer with the beam technology, as this has to cut out background "noise"—microbes in the air.

Environmental Analyzer
Found almost exclusively in testbots and unreality robots, environmental analyzers allow the robot to study different laws of physics. This accessory protects a robot from most planar effects that cause insanity. On the MF plane, variants of this accessory are used to study air, food, and water quality, as well as biological specimens and geological features.

Matter/Energy Converter
This device takes matter or energy and converts it to the other, with most uses related to producing energy—but some are used to store objects and people. The device range and amount of matter/energy stored varies depending on the robot.

Medical Scanner
Medbots use these devices to determine the health of their patients. A person must be in contact with the robot for 1 minute for a complete scan.

Self Analyzer
Found almost exclusively in testbots, this accessory allows a robot to determine environmental effects upon itself with an accuracy far beyond a nerve web. Because it helps rapidly identify damage (to prevent catastrophic failure due to reality changes), this accessory helps a robot repair itself at twice the normal speed.

NEW WEAPONS

Force Field
Force fields are indestructible but very energy intensive. The robot (and anything else within the field) is completely protected from all forms of damage. A typical robot can raise its force fields for 5 round per day. Anything running into a field, such as a vehicle, takes falling/impact damage.

Shock Claw
Shock claws are vibration weapons. They grab a target and shake so hard that part of the target is ripped off. Damage is usually two to five times that of a normal claw.

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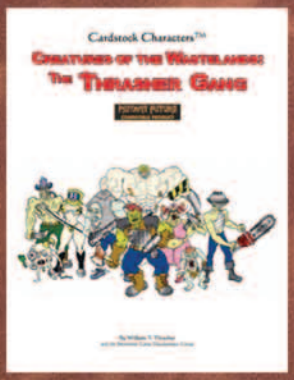

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