

RIFTS®



The following Design Diary by Sean Patrick Fannon reflects some details from the upcoming *Savage Rifts*®. It isn't final and some details may change before the book is finally sent to print.

MAKING RIFTS® SAVAGE—ICONIC FRAMEWORKS & MAKING MAGIC MEGA!

Hello again, folks. Since we got such a great response from the last one, here's another "design diary" entry for you to cover some other ideas that figured into how we put all this together. This time out, let's look at the creation and use of Iconic Frameworks. We'll also take a look at what we did to crank the volume to 11 for *Savage Worlds* powers to make sure sorcerers and psionics can go toe-to-toe with demon lords and giant mecha.

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ICONIC FRAMEWORKS— FRONT LOADING POWER

Possibly the hardest thing we wrangled with, right from the start, was how best to present such powerful and defining character concepts as the Glitter Boy, the Ley Line Walker, the Combat Cyborg, the Mind Melter, and so many others in a way that felt right for *Rifts*® fans. We needed to retain the essence of *Savage Worlds* for character creation and advancement, yet these were such iconic ideas in *Rifts*®, we felt we had to ensure they started with the appropriate powers, abilities, and gear at character creation.

That word, "iconic," stuck with me, and that's how the name of the solution came to be. After more than a few "how does this sound" sessions, we went with Iconic Frameworks as a designation for what they really are—a framework of special abilities and character elements that help craft an iconic starting point for a specific protagonist type.

Ultimately, we looked to the *Savage Worlds Super Powers Companion (Second Edition)*, or SPC, for the essence of the "how-to" on this. The SPC (an evolution of ideas originally crafted for Pinnacle's setting *Necessary Evil*, featuring super villains vs. alien invaders for control of the world) provides players with a set of points to buy super powers for their characters. The structure there involves building a standard *Savage Worlds* character—five Attribute points, 15 Skill points, and some Hindrances that grant added options. Then you spend your pool of specific points for super

powers and put them, essentially, on top of your otherwise standard Novice character.

This way of "front-loading" powers and special abilities onto a typical beginning player character felt like the perfect way to handle *Savage Rifts*® character building, as well.

While the foundation of the solution, the Super Powers approach only took us so far. With the very specific aspects of each Occupational Character Class (O.C.C., the class structure for Rifts®), it was important that we go in and specifically structure each one in a way that felt true to the original idea, yet had the right *Savage Worlds* mechanics. Thus, instead of an open-ended point structure, we went in and simply worked out what each type should have. We collected that set of Traits, Edges, Gear, and special abilities as a pre-set package.

For example, a Glitter Boy isn't a Glitter Boy without the eponymous armor and the Boom Gun it carries. That package had to start with both of those things. A Juicer isn't a Juicer unless she has super-soldier abilities of a fairly impressive nature (as well as something in the mechanical structure that deals with the chemicals burning through her body and mind). The package of stuff for the Ley Line Walker had to include very powerful magical ability, as well as the capacity to interact with ley lines and rifts in certain ways. And so on.

Once we started working all these out, there was a need to work out some relative values of things. In this way, we were able to determine which of these packages might be worth a bit more in terms of raw power and ability compared to others. Fiddling and tweaking addressed some of this, but ultimately, we decided to incorporate the Hero's Journey tables to help in the balancing process. This was something Shane was keen to explore, as Pinnacle had enjoyed some success and great feedback on previous iterations of "random tables of cool extra stuff for characters."

The Hero's Journey tables might be a good topic for a future entry in this series, so I'll leave it at that for now.

A fan recently remarked that Iconic Frameworks present a way to effectively do classes in what is decidedly a class-less game system. I suppose that's a fair assessment, but I hasten to point out that Iconic Frameworks don't work entirely as a typical class might in other games, especially those driven by level ascension. Once you build your character and put

the Iconic Framework "on top" of it, everything that happens from that point forward in terms of character advancement and development is up to you. The Iconic Framework doesn't "level up," your specific character does. When that happens, you choose what you wish to add or improve, and while there are specific Iconic Edges that can enhance a given Iconic Framework, they aren't required. This is probably the key factor in how Iconic Frameworks are a good bit different from the typical character class from most other class-and-level systems.

MAGIC AND PSIONICS—GO BIG OR GO HOME

One of the best things about *Savage Worlds* is the core powers system, which effectively and easily simulates everything from arcane spells to psionics to strange gadgets to faith-driven miracles, and pretty much everything else. However, there are some setting concepts that call for something a bit more robust and with a bit more "oomph" than the core powers present alone.

The prime example of this takes us back to the *Super Powers Companion* (and the *Necessary Evil* setting) mentioned above. While the core *Savage Worlds* powers rules handle street level and pulp style super-heroic folks wonderfully, you'd want the SPC to get into more Avengers or Justice League territory in terms of raw power and breadth of abilities.

Savage Rifts® presents a similar challenge. This is a game where very powerful mecha and powered armor carry huge, destructive guns that could cause an aircraft carrier captain some worry. The monsters coming out of the rifts, as well, are anything from demon lords to actual gods, not to mention bona-fide super-beings and maybe even a kaiju here and there.

In Rifts®, many of the wielders of magical and psionic power are expected to call upon significant powers to combat these threats, so we had the need to find a way to crank their capabilities up to the level of such challenges. However, as with Iconic Frameworks, we needed a solution that more directly addressed the feeling and flavor

of Rifts®, which straight super powers didn't quite accomplish.

At the same time, we wanted to explore an approach that meshed more directly with the existing powers system of *Savage Worlds*. In this way, not only could we make sure the core mechanics flowed from the same rules paradigm (and, thus, be much easier for folks to directly connect to and use), we could establish a framework for potential future usage in other settings where "über magic" and "super psionics" might come into play.

This is how we came up with what we're calling Mega Powers. These are direct extensions of each of the existing powers for *Savage Worlds*, but they cost more Power Points (PPE or ISP in *Savage Rifts*®) and give a much higher level of effect.

For example, the *armor* power can provide +2 Armor value to the recipient, or +4 with a raise (many things you do in *Savage Worlds* have an extra beneficial effect if your roll is higher). Casting or activating it costs the user 2 PPE or ISP. *Exalted armor*, the Mega Power version of *armor*, costs 5 PPE or ISP, but the recipient gains +5 Armor, or +10 with a raise, and that Armor is automatically considered M.D.C. (Mega Damage Capacity, discussed at length in the previous *Making Rifts*® *Savage Design Diary*).

As another example, let's look at the *bolt* power. *Bolt* lets you throw one, two, or three missiles (Lightning bolts? Fire darts? Metal shards? It's your call, and those are called Trappings) that do 2d6 damage each and cost 1 PPE/ISP each, or you can throw a single 3d6 *bolt* instead (for 2 PPE/ISP). *Onslaught*, the Mega Power version, let's you throw up to SIX of the 2d6 *bolts* (same 1 PPE/ISP cost for each) or a single 6d6 missile for 4 PPE or ISP. In either case, the *onslaught* versions automatically do Mega Damage!

How does your character get access to these wonderful Mega Powers? If your Arcane Background uses PPE—Ley Line Walkers, Mystics, Techno-Wizards, etc.—you need the Master of Magic Edge. Some Iconic Frameworks start with that automatically; others will need to work up to that and take it as an Advance. For psionics, who use ISP, you will need the Master Psionic Edge; again, some Iconic Frameworks have that from the start, while others will need to gain it later.

In either case, if you have the requisite Edge, all of your existing powers may automatically be used at the Mega Power level. Any time you take the New Power Edge, that power also comes with the Mega Power option.

As of this writing, we've just broken the \$250,000 mark on the Kickstarter. A quarter million dollars is a heck of a statement, friends, and we are all incredibly grateful for your support and enthusiasm. Rifts® is a huge, epic setting, and we have huge, epic plans for this entire product line. Please keep sharing and bringing more folks in on this. After all, the world won't rebuild and defend itself from the dangers of the Megaverse®—it's going to take all of us to do that!

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