

Champions Universe

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Champions Universe is a detailed setting for Superhero gaming. It covers the full history of Superhumans in the game world, with a focus on the present day (with 2002 as the specified start date).

Chapter One - A History Of Superhumanity. The history starts with the very first costumed adventurers in the late 1700s, the Black Mask fighting the English in a forming United States. It goes on to cover the many victorian era heroes (Van Helsing, Sherlock Holmes, etc) and their foes. None of these are Superhuman in the modern comic book sense of the word, but they lay the social foundation of society accepting costumed heroes, this is the setting laying the ground work for the idea of Costumed villains and heroes. Superhumans, those with obviously great power such as laser-beam eyes and flight, first appear in 1938. The rest of the chapters history covers the major aspects and events of the timelines background by decade. Within the text several characters have write-ups for use in games that might involve time travel or if you want to play a game in that era as an example power level to work from. The end of the chapter is a long timeline of events in the Champions Universe (actually extending backwards through the entire Hero Universe to other settings).

The history is open enough that a group can insert their own major events without too much of a problem, and provides enough detail for a group to get a solid idea of historical events they can use either as part of a Character's background or in play.

Chapter Two - Superhumanity In The 21st Century. This is a very short chapter that covers statistical aspect of Superhumans, as well as some System Level aspects. The campaign guidelines are presented, as well as the setting benchmarks for what is Superhuman level ability. The sources that Superhuman characters can take in the setting (aliens, genetic manipulation), which is completely open here. And demographics of how many Superhumans exist in the world, and where the concentrations of them are.

Chapter Three - Superhumans And Society. This chapter goes into detail of how the world works with, treats and generally interacts with Superhumanity at large. Since detailing every governments stance on Superhumans would take a book larger than this one it focuses on using the United States, which is where most of the settings superhuman activity is. Government covers the various agencies and how they have adapted to deal with Superhumans, covering Registration Laws, and agencies set up specifically because of Superhuman existence. A section of Other Governments covers many of the

worlds larger powers and how they deal with Superhumans in a much shorter form, it does not specify agencies and mostly states how they deviate from the United States. This creates the U.S. as a sort of base line from which a GM can deviate when figuring out how any given government might treat Superhumans. The last section is Superhumans And The Law which details various ways laws (real and made up for the setting) impact Superheroes and Supervillains.

Superhumans And The Media goes over major forms of entertainment from the beginning of Superhumanity to the present day and how they have each fueled each other. From advertising to radio and television shows, and internet sites. Covering both news aspects and entertainment aspects.

Superhumans And Technology goes over the various ways technological advances from Superhumans, and because of Superhumans, has affected the world and changes the dates of some major achievements due to their presence from The Real World - such as the presence of a large space station.

Superhumans And Subcultures goes over the many aspects of the world and how they interact with Superhumans. The Superhuman World is its own subculture. The section covers the Business And Financial World, Espionage, Law Enforcement, Martial World, Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World, Mystic World, and the Religious World.

The chapter has a few more character write-ups in it. The All-American, a super soldier working with the U.S. Government at large. Victory, a superhuman member of the US Air Force. Shugoshin, a Superhero Martial Artist as an example of the Martial World.

Chapter Four - Champions Universe Multiverse. A more detailed look around the world of the Superhuman presence. Going continent by continent, any country that has significant contact with the many aspects of the Superhuman world are gone over. Not in great detail, but enough to get a good picture should you wish to include them in the game. Millennium City is the settings city of the future, a great modern city that sits on the ruins of Detroit and is presented as a good place for a Campaign focus. Vibora Bay is a city with a mystic focus, should you want to run a Mystic Centric Superhero campaign (all Supermages of some kind) this is the setting to use. Haynesville Kansas, the appearance of the United States first true Superhuman (Captain Patriot, with write-up), and the governments top secret project to study Superhumans. Lost Lands And Ancient Secrets covers several Lost Civilizations you can include in a Campaign. Atlantis (the classic), Arcadia (home to an immortal race), Lemuria (ancient enemy of Atlantis), and Monster Island (exactly what it says it is).

Worlds Beyond: Alien Life is a very short section on aliens bent on conquering Earth and adding them to their vast Space Empires. Other Dimensions covers extra-dimensional threats and locations, also a very short section.

Chapter Five - Key Players And Organizations. This chapter is dedicated to looking at, briefly, the major members of the Superhuman World, mostly it focuses on the threats as the Player Characters tend to be the main focus on the side of the Heroes, but there are several good organizations looked at to balance and aid.

Significant Superhuman Threats lists the Master Villains in the campaign world, their intent and general motivations. Not all Master Villains are bent on world domination, some are just extremely powerful and not very nice, or bent on outright termination of the human race.

Organizations: The Good Guys are the groups helping the world and Superheroes contain the Supervillain threat. Three major organizations are presented that work on a world wide scale (those

that work on a local/country wide scale are mentioned where their specific countries cover this in Chapter Three). One studies Superhumans in general, and is the most neutral of the three. One is a Mystic organization and one part of the United Nations as a standard military style organization. The Bad Guys, on the other hand, are much more numerous. Seven are covered here. One technologically oriented corporation that mostly supplies the mercenary and criminal world with devices, two mystic organizations (one wanting power and money, the other much more sinister), two Supervillain Teams, an anti-mutant organization based out of the United States, and the classic VIPER, a quasi-military group bent on world domination.

Any or all of these threats can be included in the campaign, or become the focus of a campaign completely.

Chapter Six - Gaming The Champions Universe. This chapter is intended for the GM, providing more information on other parts of the book and some campaign ideas. Five different full campaign concepts begin the chapters, which explore different ways to use some or all of the information in this book. The GMs Vault is expanded information from the first five chapters, providing background information on what's true, what's false and sometimes just more information than the main text. Eight Character write-ups are included within the text of the GMs Vault for several enemies from Master Villain to Mook. As well as many plot seeds in the side bars and main text.

The last part of the chapter is Return Of The Destroyer, a short adventure that reintroduces one of the biggest threats to peace, Dr. Destroyer. The premiere Master Villains of the setting, the story is that he was thought killed when he destroyed Detroit after being nearly defeated, but good villains never stay dead and he's back, bigger than ever. This short little adventure can be used as an introduction to a Campaign as a whole, it's strait forward and easily adapted to just about any game - you can even change the Master Villain to one of your choice.

The Downside:

The only real problem with the book is that the character write-ups are scattered throughout the main text, making them harder to utilize. They should have all been included in once section, or the Good Guys at the end of Chapter Five and the Bad Guys at the back of the GMs Chapter. Putting them in the middle of the text did slightly interrupt the flow of presenting the full Setting.

The Otherside:

The book covers all the aspects of what can go into a Superhero Campaign, from history to interacting with the modern world. Even if you don't use the setting as written, or even at all, it provides a solid framework to compare to if you're creating your own Campaign Setting. For that reason alone I would recommend it to anyone looking to start a Superhero Game, using the Hero System or other System Of Choice.

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