SNOW NOIZ

What you need
Paper and writing implements, a character sheet if it is convenient, a fistful of eight-sided dice (d8s) – probably at least eight per player, a fistful of tokens to track adversary levels and the length of your adventure, imagination, a sense of humor, a light-hearted sense of conspiracy and a love of rock.

Setting history
Most agree that The Golden Age of comic books began in 1938 with the introduction of a man who was faster than a speeding bullet and could leap over tall buildings in a single bound. I am not about to dispute this statement.

What I do dispute is the assumption that these were fictional accounts. Certainly, the names were changed to protect the innocent (namely the writers and publishers), but the reality of super-human activity starting in the late 1930s is not in doubt. At least initially, the writers and artists of comic books were capturing events as they saw them and sharing them in the only medium that would accept them.

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Who are the Octopodes?
The Octopodes are the bad guys. From the point of view of the baseline setting of SNOW NOIZ, they are aliens that have been among humanity for several thousand years, slowly building their power base and effectively
establishing themselves as the ruling power on the planet. But the octopodes have learned from experience that humans are a xenophobic race. So they've learned to keep their existence a secret, and want to keep it that way. Your job? To expose them and bring them down from their position of power. Did I mention they've been doing this for thousands of years? Lucky you.
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Soon, imitators sprang up. The Octopodes initiated some of these new imitators in an effort to hide the truth in a morass of fantasy. Other publishers were simply trying to get a share of the money generated by the new medium. Still other creators were not so much imitators as reporters with perspectives not represented in traditional media.

I have seen evidence that indicates certain so-called superheroes were given different names and costumes by various publishers. In the intersection of the disparate perspectives, we can find a clearer picture of the true hero.

Obviously, such a direct revelation of the Octopodes' impact on the human world was not in their best interest, so why did they allow it? As I stated earlier, they first attempted to hide the truth among imitators, presumably under the assumption that no one would take such tales seriously. But with the tales moving from comics to radio and television, and following the near fiasco of Orson Welles' famous radio broadcast of October 1938, they were unwilling to take too many chances.

However, the ranks of Octopodes entered a civil war in the mid-1930s, delaying decisive action against comics. While humanity fought what they thought was a human conflict called World War II, the real battle was among the Octopodes. One of the eight seats of the Octopode ruling council had been forcibly vacated and several sub-factions were waging skirmishes for the right to take that seat for themselves. By the mid-1940s, the Octopode war had concluded, and humanity saw the end of World War II. However, it took another 10 years for the new faction leaders to solidify their power bases.

During this process, Octopode forces were often in transit, starting the "flying saucer" scare of the late 1940s. One of the new leaders introduced the so-called "fluoridation" process. At the same time, the Octopodes, uncomfortable with how close to the truth Wilheim Reich came with his theory of Orgone – or "universal life energy" – worked to marginalize its acceptance. The Octopodes saw the solidification era end with the McCarthy investigations and the adoption of the "Comics Code," which essentially erased comics' ability to serve as a source of factual information about Octopode and/or hyperhuman activities.

During this era of solidification, the current battle began. Rock music's rebellious reputation and its unprecedented social impact made it the perfect vehicle for a new assault on the Octopode conspiracy. This time, however, the leaders of human forces stayed more subtle. They hid messages to each other and to the populace in their titles and lyrics. The "Billboard" charts carried coded instructions, as they do to this day. The subtlety of these human forces and their choice of communication thwarted Octopode efforts to stop the assault, because any step they took only increased the popularity of the medium.

By the 1980s, the war's two camps were firmly entrenched. The Rockstars had developed new technologies, including backmasking, with which to communicate and had begun to organize more openly via globally broadcast benefit concerts. The Octopodes had political figures speaking out openly against the dangers of rock and forming commissions and centers to oppose its influence on society. In a reflection of the Comics Code, record producers agreed to put Parental Advisory Labels on their products, but this had no real impact on the Rockstars ability to operate.

That's where you come in. The Octopodes are as powerful as ever. They control big business, big media and big crime. The hyperheroes never went away. They just exchanged comic books for CDs, capes and cowls for stage gear and gaudy custom aircraft for gaudy custom tour buses.

And you? You are part of the latest generation of hyperheroes, and you are going to kick Octopode butt using your own powers and the power of rock!

Octopodes

These alien beings secretly occupy the Earth, seeking to exploit the planet and humanity for unclear goals. Some theorize that they wish to harvest the planet's Orgone, but their methods and motivations are difficult, if not impossible, for humans to discern.

At any given time, the Octopodes comprise eight factions, each with a powerful leader. Their goals are often difficult to comprehend. When setting up a campaign, the Tour Manager should work with the players to define the eight factions, their methods and their goals. Once these are determined, players can determine the relative power of each faction by distributing 16 faction points among them, with no more than four and no fewer than 0 points allocated to each faction.

Characters

Why Rockers as heroes?
- already are perceived as countercultural and rebellious
- highly mobile

- work strange hours
- wear unusual clothing
- can get away with being eccentric
- can distribute secret messages widely via mass media
- defeating an octopode conspiracy with the power of rock is just plain cool

Character generation

Characters have eight traits, called Frets, which are arranged as follows.

The first three frets refer to who the individual is independent of their rocker or hyperhuman status.

Frets three through seven refer to the character's identity as a rocker.

The last three frets refer to the character's identity as a hyperhuman.

(Yes, these definitions overlap.)

The specific frets may vary, but a suggested listing is the following:

Fret 1: Closest friend or relative. It has been said that we are defined by the company we keep. Who is the most important person in your life?

Fret 2: Primary Skill. If you weren't a Rockstar destined to fight the secret Octopode conspiracy, what talent would you fall back on to put food on the table?

Fret 3: BoO! Base of Origin/Base of Operations. Where are you from originally or where are you from now? Even the simple choice of deciding whether to define yourself in terms of where you grew up or where you live now says a lot about you.

Fret 4: Name of your Band. You're a Rockstar remember? Chances are that you don't travel alone. What's the name of your band? This fret also collects the relationships you have with your fellow band members.

Fret 5: Style of Rock. What style of music do you play? What type of instrument? What is it about how you rock that gives you that all-important star power?

Fret 6: Alias/Stage Name. Sure, you may have been born John Smith, but that isn't going sell albums or strike fear into your enemies. What do you call yourself now, or perhaps more importantly, what do the media call you?

Fret 7: Enemy / Rival. With great power comes a rogue's gallery. Surely you didn't think you would get to be a hyperpower Rockstar and not make a few enemies along the way. Who is your primary adversary?

Fret 8: Hyper Power. Here's the good stuff. Part of the reason you were picked for the secret war was the genetic hyperpotential locked inside you. What can you do that makes you the stuff of legend or comic books?

Assign a value between zero and four (inclusive) to each fret - this will determine how many dice you roll during various scenes and how many dice you can re-roll for free. Assign no more than 16 points to your fret board.

Frets 1, 5, and 8 are going to be pretty important to you going forward, so it is suggested you define them first and then fill in the rest.

In addition to their fret boards, PCs have access to Power Chords. When you choose the 1/5/8 chord in conflict situations, you can get a specific mechanical boost. Define your Power Chord by deciding on

the mechanical impact and describing how it looks and sounds in play. When defining your Power Chord think about your 1, 5 and 8 frets. Your Power Chord should reflect them as much as possible.

Finally, jot down a theme for your character. A theme explains why your character does what he or she does. Does your character want the fame associated with being a hyperpowered rockstar, or is he all about the chivalry of a modern day night? Does she have a deep-seated devotion to the downtrodden or is she just in it for the money? Or maybe your character just wants to kick octopode butt! It also serves as a flag to the Tour Manager and your fellow Rockers for setting scenes and defining tour stops.

Power Chord Powers*

While there are eight specific powers, by linking these to your frets, you can develop unique Power Chords for any character.

1) Syncopation: Increase value for initiative only

2) Speed Rock: Use minor chord valued dice for a second action

3) Heavy Metal: Extra dice for the purpose of doing increased damage

4) Hard Rock: Extra dice for reducing personal damage

5) Leader of the Band: Bonus dice for improving allied pools

6) Soothing Jazz: Regain discarded dice before next action in continuing conflict

7) Feedback: Extra dice can damage multiple opponents

8) Harmony: Extra dice to protect self and allies from damage

 * When you pick your Power Chord for the first time, choose which aspect (1, 5, or 8) is associated with it. This will be the (maximum) value associated with the power when you use it in conflict.

 Example Character Generation

Arthur decides he wants to create a rocker with insect-themed powers. First he defines his frets.

Fret 1: Watches out for "Auntie Mame," the caretaker of the artist's community where he hangs out

Fret 2: Freelance journalist for underground magazines

Fret 3: Originally a Midwestern boy

Fret 4: Band Name, Route 81

Fret 5: Metal-Core Rapper

Fret 6: Stage Name, Kid Roach

Fret 7: Rival, Road Kill

Fret 8: Hyperpower, insectoid strength and agility

Next he assigns values to each fret. This will determine how many dice he may roll on a free re-roll:

Fret 1: 1	Fret 2: 0	Fret 3: 3	Fret 4: 2
Fret 5: 2	Fret 6: 4	Fret 7: 4	Fret 8: 0

You can take the kid out the Midwest, but you can't take the Midwest out of the boy. His powers are pretty new, as is his freelance journalist gig. He puts most of his focus into his identity as a rocker and into his rivalry with Road Kill who came from the same small Midwestern town.

Finally, he chooses his Power Chord. He decides Heavy Metal fits his insectoid strength, and given his 5 Fret has the highest value, links the Power Chord to his Metal Core-Rapper trait. He ends up with the following Power Chord:

He Can Put His Money Where His Mouth Is (Heavy Metal – linked to Fret 5). Gains a number of dice equal to the number of 5's in his dice pool (maximum two extra dice) that can be used only to reduce other character's dice pools (does not count for initiative).

He also decides that "Be sure you can put your money where your mouth is" is one of Auntie Mame's trademarked pieces of sage advice.

Finally Arthur decides on a theme for Kid Roach. He decides that Kid Roach has always talked about "sticking it to the man" in his music. Now that he's discovered his hyperpowers and that "the man" is actually an alien Octopode, he's decided it's time to actually stick it to 'im.

Named Adversaries

These include major members of conspiracy factions, rivals and enemies (note that they may well be one-in-the-same) are created in the same way as Rockstars and generally follow the same rules as rockers in scenes. Named adversaries can use adversary pool tokens for free re-rolls in addition to any re-rolls they got in Tuning scenes (if any).

About chords

In conflict, players typically roll eight dice to attempt to form chords. A chord is a set of three nonconsecutive numbers. 1/3/5, 2/5/7 and 1/5/8 are examples of valid chords. Players then sort the dice according to the values showing. The dice that match the value of their chord are collected and the remaining dice are set aside. You typically will want to choose chords that give you as many dice as possible.

For instance, a player might roll 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 8. Since there are two sevens showing, the player should pick a chord including seven. This excludes the six and eight (they are next to or consecutive to seven). Since the player can pick only one of the rolled 1 and 2 and one of the rolled 4 and 5, he chooses 1/5/7 for his chord, giving him a die pool of four dice for the conflict.

We will talk about power chords and how to re-roll dice for a better pool in later sections.

An example of conflict

Don't worry if not everything makes sense, we will explain the various pieces of the character sheets in a minute.

Let's start with two partial character sheets:

Stongrrl

Fret 1: Best friend from home, Eleanor Rigby. Value, one [Current rerolls, two]

Fret 2: Before she was a rocker, she was a lovely Meter Maid. Value, two [Current rerolls: one]

Fret 3: Birthplace, Manchester, England. Value, two [Current rerolls, none]

Fret 4: Band, Northwood. Value, two [Current rerolls, one]

Fret 5: Hip-hop Vocalist. Value, two [Current rerolls, one]

Fret 6: Stage Name, Strongrrl. Value, two [Current rerolls, none]

Fret 7: Rival, Jenni Rotten. Value, three [Current rerolls, one]

Fret 8: Hyper Power, cybernetic strength. Value, two [Current rerolls, two]

DJ Cyclone

Fret 1: Elderly uncle, David Jefferson. Value, two [Current rerolls, two]

Fret 2: Impound Driver. Value, two [Current rerolls, none]

Fret 3: Currently operating on the West Coast, baby. Value, one [Current rerolls, none]

Fret 4: Band, Northwood. Value, one [Current rerolls, two]

Fret 5: DJ/Scratcher. Value, one [Current rerolls, three]

Fret 6: Stage Name, DJ Cyclone. Value, one [Current rerolls, none]

Fret 7: Rival, DJ Lower. Value, four. [Current rerolls, none]

Fret 8: Hyper Power, moves like a cyclone. Value, four [Current rerolls, one]

Stongrrl and DJ Cyclone are leaving a nightclub where they have just finished a gig. Two thugs, who either do not recognize them or are unimpressed by their identities, accost the pair of Rockstars. These are regular thugs not tied to any particular conspiracy, so the Tour Manager. Assigns them four dice each and decides they will act as one with a die pool of 8d8.

Disappointed by the poor venue in which they just played, Strongrrl's player declares that her intent is to gain some rep by beating these thugs down. DJ Cyclone's player declares that her intent is to get a clue to where DJ Lower is going to play her next secret gig. The Tour Manager declares that the thugs are just looking to get cash so they can buy concert tickets.

Strongrrl's player rolls 1, 2, 3, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8. (Players always roll eight dice.)

DJ Cyclone's player rolls 2, 3, 3, 4, 6, 7, 7, 8.

The Tour Manager rolls 3, 5, 5, 5, 6, 7, 7, 8 for the thugs. No-names like the thugs don't get re-rolls, so the Tour Manager declares a 3/5/7 chord for the thugs. This gives him 6 dice for his intent.

Strongrrl's player doesn't like those odds, so she declares that she recognizes these thugs as Jenni Rotten's goons (the Tour Manager makes a note of this for later in the episode) and uses her free re-roll on fret 7 to re-roll 3 dice (the rating of Fret 7). She re-rolls the 2, 6 and 8, getting two 2s and a 5, giving her 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 5, 5, 7. She declares a 3/5/7 chord for 5 dice.

DJ Cyclone's player also doesn't like the odds and invokes her hyperpower (note that this is different than using a Power Chord, which we will address later) and starts to spin like a cyclone. Using her free re-roll for fret 8, she re-rolls her 2, 4, 6 and 8, getting three 3's and a 6. Now she has 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 6, 7, 7. She could re-roll again, but instead declares a 1/3/7 chord for 7 dice. Note that even though she doesn't have 1 showing, she can declare a 1/3/7 chord. DJ Cyclone's player could have just as easily chosen a 1/3/5 chord. When choosing a chord, the chord must be legal, the player doesn't necessarily need to have all the values showing on their dice.

The order of resolution is DJ Cyclone, the thugs, and Strongrrl. DJ Cyclone talks smack about West Coast style and sacrifices two dice to lower the thugs pool to four dice. She then chooses to resolve and beats down one of the thugs who drops a flier for DJ Lower's next gig.

Since the thugs are now at four dice, Strongrrl goes next, rapping in her distinctive Manchester accent. She sacrifices two dice to reduce the thugs' pool to two dice. Strongrrl still has three dice and can resolve, so a local rap scene photographer shows up just as she finishes her beat down.

The thugs have fewer than three dice, so they cannot complete their chord or resolve their intent. They creep off to lick their wounds and tell Jenni Rotten about the beat down.

DJ Cyclone and Strongrrl are both down a free re-roll this session, but they got what they wanted... for now.

Scenes in Snow Noiz

Tuning Scenes

While it is possible to start Snow Noiz in the middle of an action scene, most often a session will kick off with a tuning scene. Basically, this is an opportunity for players to state what is important to them this session and to foreshadow which of their frets they are most likely to use.

In a tuning scene, each Rockstar should determine her fingering for the scene. This has the effect of setting the scene, because by picking your fingering, you select the three frets that you highlight as the scene begins.

Example: Johnny Flame and the Grim Thang are band mates and best friends. They regularly open sessions with tuning scenes that feature Fret 1 (best friend - each one is the other's best friend), Fret 4 (their band, The Doomed Four), and Fret 8 (their powers, fire control and monstrous strength, respectively). The running gag is just where the two are playfully wrestling in the session - backstage, on the tour bus, in the middle of a shopping mall, ... ?

 Each rocker in the scene totals up the total value of the frets chosen, to a maximum of eight, and rolls that many dice. If you don't like the result, slide a token over to the adversary pool and re-roll as many of your dice as you would like. Still don't like the result, slide _two more_ tokens over and re-roll as many of your dice as you would like. Wash, rinse, repeat, but remember to increase the number of tokens you pay by one for each additional re-roll.

Our example continues. Johnny F's player was noncommittal during character generation and assigned two points to each of his frets, so he gets to roll six dice (two from each fret). Grim T's player, on the other hand, assigned three points to his first fret (Johnny Flame - best friend), three points to the band (fret 4), and four points to his monstrous strength (fret 8). That's a total of 10, but the maximum is eight, so he rolls eight dice.

 The rockers then assign one point to each fret for each die that shows that fret's number. After the points have been assigned, double the points for each fret that was chosen for fingering. Also, if a **fingered** fret doesn't get any points, mark it as **endangered**. There is a chance that fret's value will go down at the end of the session and the Tour Manager should make a point to include the endangered fret in the session in some way.

 More example. Johnny F's player rolls six eight-sided dice: 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 2. He assigns two points to his first, second, and fourth frets. Since he fingered frets 1 & 4, he doubles the points assigned to those frets to four each. Unfortunately, he also fingered fret number 8 and didn't roll any 8's. Therefore, with a deep sign, he marks his Fire Control fret as endangered....

Before the scene closes, foreshadow the frets that got points from the roll, particularly any that were not fingered.

End of the example. Johnny F's player already highlighted the relationship with Grim T and the band,

but so far Johnny's special skill hasn't shown up. Johnny's second fret is mechanic, so the scene continues to play out with Johnny Flame and the Grim Thang wrestling until they end up in the garage. They stop tussling, laughing and panting, and the scene ends as Johnny grabs a wrench and hands Grim a shop light. "As long as we're here, help me tune up the Tour Bus, okay?"

Work around the table until all players have had a tuning scene - including the Tour Manager, who will tune up the conspiracy in a similar way, but rather than picking frets, he will identify the three faction leaders that are behind the session's happenings and note the factions that are actually active as a result. The conspiracies don't have an upper limit to the number of dice they may roll in a tuning scene.

Add a base pool of stones to the adversary pool equal to the total number of points in which the faction roll resulted. And note the adversary levels of each faction this session - equal to the number of points that faction received, but no higher than eight - an eight means the faction leader herself is involved directly. This should be a rare event indeed. On the flip side, if a faction leader gets no points for his faction on the tuning roll, the faction isn't just endangered; it will be reduced by one at the end of the session having overextended its resources.

One final note on tuning scenes. By the time you have worked all the way around the table and everyone has had a tuning scene, the Concert Promoter and players should have a pretty good sense of what the session is going to be about. If you don't, take some time, possibly over snack and drink re-fills to figure out generally what's going on. Feel free to talk to each other – this is a collaborative effort.

Conflict Scenes

I'm not a big fan of the school that says every scene needs to have a conflict. Or at least I don't believe every scene requires a conflict mechanic. Let the story guide you, and it will take you places you never knew you could go. Just make certain you don't let the engine stall.

That said, eventually, you will get to a scene where the conflict is clear and a mechanical resolution is needed. If nothing else, the opposition should target endangered frets as part of their cunning plan. Those will definitely going to lead to a conflict.

Start by having each character in the conflict declare their intent. This should be something more than "I beat the bad guys." Intent is about what happens at the end of the scene if you get your way. You may want to "get away from the robotic death cones" or you may want to "gather evidence to use against the cult leader." This is what happens if you "beat the bad guys". **Note that for the opposition, an intent of lowering an endangered trait (or two) by a point is perfectly valid - but only a lazy Tour Manager will declare that intent without a narrative explanation of what might look like.** Everyone should agree to the intents, and someone should probably write them down. Nothing is worse than getting to the end of a conflict roll and not remembering what you wanted. Intents should, as a general rule, not directly contradict one another. If at all possible, each intent should be possible if conflict can be successfully resolved (see below).

The scene should already be set based on whatever was going on when the conflict was called, so break out the dice. All Rockstars and named characters (rogues) roll eight dice each. Nameless opposition - adversaries or inanimate threats (like a breaking dam) - roll a number of dice equal to twice their rank - typically between 4 and 12. Adversaries can draw additional dice from the adversary pool, which you have so kindly been filling with your rerolls.

Each character looks at the dice they rolled and chooses the chord they are going to play this scene. (Recall that a chord consists of three nonconsecutive numbers.) If they activate their power chord (1/5/8), they also can claim the associated mechanical benefit at this time.

Rockstars and rogues can also choose to reroll dice if they wish to improve their chord. If they wish to re-roll, rockers have two options - they can choose a fret with points from their tuning scene, spend one of those points and re-roll a number of dice less than or equal to rank of the fret -or- they can put a token in the adversary pool and re-roll as many as they want. Rogues also have two options - the first is identical to rockers, the second requires them to _discard_ a token from the adversary pool but allows them to re-roll as many dice as they want. Rockstars and rogues only get one re-roll per conflict round.

If a Rockstar or a rogue chooses to re-roll based on a fret, he should narrate how that fret comes into play during the conflict.

Begin playing out the conflict, describing how the frets associated with each character's chosen chord are reflected in the scene. Then in order of the number of dice in their chord, from high to low, each character should describe how their intent plays out. Again, the frets reflected by the chord numbers should be described as part of the intent resolution.

As part of their intent resolution, a character may discard one or more of her dice to discard a like number of dice from another character's chord - assuming that character hasn't acted yet. Re-order the intent resolution. If the discard does not change the character's position in the intent resolution order, he may now describe how his intent resolves. If not, she will have a chance to resolve when her turn comes up in the new order. Power Chords can modify this set of rules.

After the first character, each additional character gets to resolve his intent. In doing so, he must follow the "yes, and" rule. That is, he cannot contradict any intent already resolved. Otherwise, he has free reign to describe the results and how they link to his chord.

If a character has fewer than three dice in her chord when it is her turn to resolve her intent, she does not get her intent.

Most conflicts should be resolvable in a single round. However, this does not necessarily mean that they will not lead immediately to another conflict. This is called the "yes, but" rule. The characters who resolved successfully do get their intents, but a new conflict may complicate their lives in a different way.

Example Conflict – Kid Roach vs. the Minions of Ekiscordi

Kid Roach (from the Character Generation chapter) finds himself beset by the Minions of Ekiscordi in the first scene of an episode. He has come to a small bookstore coffee bar looking to try out for a regular gig when three of Minions burst in. It was clearly a trap for the young hero!

During his tuning scene, Kid Roach had fingered frets 4, 5, and 6 – indicating he wanted to focus on his career as a rocker this episode. His initial roll was: 3, 3, 3, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8. Unwilling to risk any of his rocker traits this episode, he threw a token into the adversary pool to re-roll everything but the 6. His new roll was: 2, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 6 – and was added to the 6 he kept. Now nothing is at risk, and he has one free reroll on fret 2, four free rerolls each on frets 4 and 6, and six free re-rolls on fret 5. (The number of re-rolls on frets 4, 5 and 6 are doubled because those were the fingered frets.)

The Concert Promoter declares that the total threat of the three minions is level three and that they will get six dice. As Kid Roach breathes a sigh of relief – the Concert Promoter chuckles and removes the token from the adversary pool to add another die to the Minions roll.

Kid Roach declares an intent that while the audition was set-up as a trap, the store owner is unaligned to the Ekiscordi faction and will actually give him a regular gig if he wins. The minions have been instructed to bring Kid Roach back to their lair if they win.

Kid Roach rolls: 3, 3, 3, 5, 7, 7, 8, 8. The Concert Promoter rolls for the minions: 1, 1, 2, 2, 7, 8, 8.

While he would like to be able to use his Power Chord, Kid Roach realizes he can beat down the minions without a re-roll and takes a 3/5/7 chord for 6 dice. The Minions can't do better than 4 dice, so take a 1/5/8 chord. Minions do not have Power Chords, so this has no additional effect.

Kid Roach uses two dice to decrease the minions' pool to 2 dice, and with his remaining 4 dice wins his intent. After Kid Roach quickly improvises a killer rap chorus while defeating the minions, the owner of the bookstore coffee bar gives him a weekly gig on Tuesday nights, the same evening as Kid Roach's bowling league....

Continuing Conflicts

Step 1: At the end of a round of conflict, discard one die of each number still showing. (Dice from initial roll may have already been discarded from damage.)

Step 2: Choose one number from your current chord, and set aside all dice with the digit. These form the root of your next chord.

Step 3: If you have the Soothing Jazz Power Chord and activated your Power Chord last round, refill your pool now using that power.

Step 4: Reroll all remaining dice (including those not used in your previous chord) and form a new chord that includes the root set aside in Step 2.

Step 5: Resolve conflict as before.

 Continuing conflicts continue until only one side has dice remaining or until both sides feel the story point is adequately resolved.

The Continuing Example of Kid Roach

Continuing from our previous example... In the next scene, Kid Roach is on his motorcycle, trying to cross town to make a jam session at Auntie Mame's artists' community. He sees some of the Minions of Eskardi sneaking around a jewelry store and decides to investigate.

Kid Roach has all his free rerolls, and there are no named characters among the minions. The Concert Promoter declares this to be a level four threat, so the minions are going to start with eight dice.

Kid Roach declares his intent to get a clue to the whereabouts of the minions' base of operations. The minions' intent is to steal a particularly old piece of jewelry from the store. Both sides roll eight dice.

Kid Roach rolls 1, 2, 2, 5, 5, 5, 6, 8. The Minions roll 4, 6, 6, 7, 7, 7, 7, 8.

Kid Roach sees an opportunity to use his Power Chord and chooses a 1/5/8 chord. "The name is Kid Roach," he announces to the surprised minions and re-rolls the 2s and the 6 (he could reroll one more, but chooses not too). He is down to three free rerolls on his 6 fret. His re-roll gives him 2, 4 and 4. No improvement. He has five dice in his pool.

The minions choose a 3/5/7 chord. This gives them four dice and gives Kid Roach the advantage.

Continuing improvising lyrics around the song he started in the first fight, Kid Roach brings the power of his rock down hard on the minions, reducing their pool by two without suffering any reduction himself. One of them drops a matchbook, which Kid Roach snatches up with insect-like agility.

The minions don't get their intent and make a break for it.

Kid Roach's player and the Concert Promoter decide to continue the conflict.

Kid Roach's new intent is to take down the minions in time to get to the jam session, while the minions

see an opportunity to lead Kid Roach into another trap.

Kid Roach discards a 1, a 5, and an 8; sets aside his two remaining 5s and re-rolls the remaining 3 dice: 2, 3, 5 (for a total of: 2, 3, 5, 5, 5).

The minions discard a seven, keep a seven, and re-roll their remaining 4 dice: 1, 2, 3, 7 (for a total of 1, 2, 3, 7, 7).

Kid Roach shifts to a 1/3/5 chord for 4 dice, while the Minions go for 1/3/7 – also for four dice. Realizing he's going to be late for Auntie Mame's jam session, Kid Roach uses his last free Fret 1 re-roll to re-roll his 2 and gets a 1. Now, Kid Roach has the advantage and plans to make quick use of it....

When does the session end?

Quite simply, when the adversary pool is empty **and** a final conflict is resolved around the major intents of the session.

Character improvement

At the end of the session, divide the number of remaining re-rolls for each fret in two (round down).

- If the resulting number is greater than the fret's current value, increase the value of the fret by one and discard all of the re-rolls. The improved fret starts at zero re-rolls before the next tuning scene.

- If the resulting number is not greater than the fret's current value, keep the resulting number of free rerolls as a kick-start for the next session. Any rerolls gained in the next tuning scene add to this pool.

Setting

Main Setting

Both hyperhumans and the Octopodes exist, but the general population considers both the stuff of crackpot conspiracy theory, if they know about them at all.

Being a rocker makes a convenient cover. No one questions an erratic concert schedule or a performer putting on an impromptu show. This makes it easy for the secret hyperheroes to pursue their mission of foiling the Octopode agenda.

The default faction heads for the game setting are as follows, the Tour Manager and players should feel free to create their own.

(1) Trismegistos
Trismegistos is the oldest of the current faction leaders. His name is as much title as personal identifier as he is the only Octopode on Earth to have obtained the coveted title of Megis three times. Trismegistos is interested in the occult, theology, philosophy and astrology. His faction tends to maintain control over the fields of medicine and alchemy.

(2) Weishauptas

Weishauptas seeks freedom and enlightenment for humanity, but not too much. He believes that given enough freedom, humankind will evolve into a more useful tool for the Octopodes. His faction tends to oppose organized religion and support (often opposing) political organizations. Weishauptas supported

the successful Octopode coup that lead to the changing of the Octopode faction guard in the 1940s and 1950s.

(3) Eotis-Starki
Eotis-Starki wants to induce inactivity in humanity. Her theory is that an inactive populace will use less Orgone, leaving more for harvest by her faction. Eotis-Starki's faction controls "Big Media" and uses communication channels such as mass-media "news" to inspire fear and apathy in the population.

(4) Ekiscordi

Ekiscordi supports creative randomness in humanity. She believes that advancements come not from ordered science, but from chaotic experimentation. Ekiscordi often opposes Trismegistos' efforts purely because of the order and stability the older Octopode represents. Her faction opposes order imposed for order's sake.

(5) Alpinas

Alpinas believes Octopode interests are best served by human power being consolidated in a small group of super-rich individuals. As such, his faction maintains control over the major banks of the world.

(6) Morrisarti (Eliza)
Morrisarti's current cover identity is that of an artificially intelligent program that lives deep in the Internet. Despite her modern face, she is the second-oldest Octopode faction leader. Morrisarti's faction has always focused on controlling the most advanced technology and currently is made up of the world's best computer programmers. It was at Morrisarti's direction that the Internet Worm of the late 1980's brought the Internet to its knees.

(7) Draculas ("The Old Man of the Mountain")

Draculas is the only legacy member of the Octopode faction leaders. Like his father before him, Draculas serves as the commander of the enforcement wing of the Octopode occupation. When "Men in Black" sightings are reported, they can typically be attributed to Draculas' faction, although he also maintains strikeforces for even more secretive (and lethal) "Black Ops".

(8) Paracelsus

Paracelsus is unduly fascinated with human reproductive rituals. His theory is that Orgone is generated through the act of human mating. As a result, Paracelsus' faction tends to support organizations and individuals that encourage such activities.

Faction goals

So, what do the various factions want and how do they intend to accomplish those goals? Consider the following possibilities, assigning one to each Faction/Fret. (The number scheme allows you to roll a d8 twice to get a suggestion.)

(1-2,1) The world will be ruled by a small number of megacorps, ultimately controlled by the faction in question.

(1-2,2) The world will be ruled by a small number of criminal overlords, ultimately controlled by the faction in question.

(1-2,3) The faction wants to eliminate one of the eight Octopode faction leaders. Roll 1d8 to determine which one (yes this means the faction can be targeting its own leader; we told you the Octopodes could be hard to figure out).

(1-2,4) The faction wants to decrease the general level of sanity in the world, preferably to a critical level. What type of insanity is desired is based on the faction leader's philosophies.

(1-2,5)   The faction wants to increase the general availability of some perceived luxury among the general populace. This may be intended to inspire complacency or increase humanity's dependence on the faction.

(1-2,6) The faction wants to destabilize the current power holders and replace them with another group of power holders more friendly to its philosophies.

(1-2,7) The faction just wants more power for itself. No complex reasons for that.

(1-2,8) The faction wants to build a groundswell of grassroots support for its philosophies.

(3-4,1) The faction wants to reduce the number of small businesses and increase the size of big business.

(3-4,2) The faction wants to increase the availability and reduce the price of a specific set of necessities.

(3-4,3) The faction wants to bring down the current political leaders.

(3-4,4) The faction wants to reduce the availability and increase the price of a specific set of fuel sources.

(3-4,5) The faction wants to turn the populace against some specific group or concept.

(3-4,6) The faction wants to disarm the populace through Gun Control.

(3-4,7) The faction wants to increase the level of control the legal system has.

(3-4,8) The faction wants to increase the power of the military-industrial complex.

(5-6,1) The faction wants to stop all current military actions in the world, through any means necessary.

(5-6,2) The faction wants to reduce conflict by instituting the use of "politically correct language".

(5-6,3) The faction wants to institute a new political party to overthrow an existing power.

(5-6,4) The faction wants to increase its revenue through a series of complicated maneuvers and abusive tactics designed on the surface to look like a reduction in prices or taxes.

(5-6,5) The faction wants to increase its power base by appearing to support the fight against world hunger.

(5-6,6) The faction wants to start a third world war.

(5-6,7) The faction wants to introduce a new technological advance that they will then use to put one over on the human population.

(5-6,8) The faction wants to reduce technology and introduce extreme environmental tactics or legislation. A humanity forced back to a pre-industrial state will be easier to control.

(7-8,1) The faction doesn't care about the level of technology but has determined that overpopulation actually reduces the total amount of Orgone available for harvest. Therefore they want to forcibly reduce the population - now.

(7-8,2) The faction wants to break up their competition's power bloc - nominally to increase competition for the general populace.

(7-8,3) The faction wants to increase apathy.

(7-8,4) The faction has decided they have gotten all they can get from Earth and want to end the world. Or maybe they just want everyone else to think that.

(7-8,5) The faction wants to change the environment by increasing the global temperature.

(7-8,6) The faction wants to increase the amount of war, civil disturbances and other unpleasant events.

(7-8,7) The faction wants to radically reduce the amount of some specific consumable resource. Logically, their intent is to replace it with something only they supply.

(7-8,8) The faction wants to increase government regulation of a specific set of businesses.

Where is the faction and/or faction leader based?

(1-3,1) Bermuda Triangle
The Bermuda Triangle (also called "the Devil's Triangle") is the area approximately between Bermuda, Florida and the Greater Antilles, where more than 50 ships and 20 airplanes are said to have mysteriously disappeared. Reports date to the mid-nineteenth century of ships lost without distress signals, ships found abandoned without apparent cause and planes (including rescue missions) vanished without trace.

(1-3,2) Shangri-La
Also known as Shamballa and Xanadu, one story has it that the city is the source of many tunnels, some of them hundreds or thousands of miles long, that connect to the world's capitals and mystic sites.

(1-3,3) Brazil
A South American country. The genetic engineers display a curious obsession with the Amazon basin. Frequently in the news because of the alarming rate of commercial deforestation. A number of German Nazis fled to South America after WWII. Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal captured Eichmann and Mengele in the country. Although many were found and brought to Nuremberg or prosecuted later in Israel, others vanished completely.

(1-3,4) Hollywood
The home of many major movie studios. Located in southern California, and a major contributor to that state's reputation for oddity. The area has excellent weather (at least 300 shooting days a year). Supposedly, the location was also chosen to facilitate quick escape into Mexico in case of legal trouble and for its great distance from the New York literary agencies back in the days when it was difficult to prosecute people for copyright infringement from 3,000 miles away.

(1-3,5) Canada
The "peaceful" reputation stems primarily from Canada's commitment to United Nations peace-keeping operations: Multinational peacekeeping was originally championed in the 1950s by Canadian Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson. He won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts, and Canadian forces have participated in every peace-keeping mission since.

(1-3,6) China
Where better to start a program of world domination than with the most populous (about 1.2 billion) country on earth?

(1-3,7) England
Still an important player in global conspiracy. Linked to a secret British-Canadian organization, "Permindex", Conrad Black of Big Media and the nefarious World Wildlife Fund.
MI-5 is the British domestic counterintelligence organization. The initials stand for "military intelligence"; MI-6 is the foreign intelligence service. (MI-1 through MI-13 were created in World War II. Afterwards, most departments were closed; only MI-5, MI-6 and possibly one other still exist.)

(1-3,8) Finland
Northern European country between Scandinavia and Russia; home of the sauna. One of the few places in the world where the biathlon makes sense as a sporting event.

(4-6,1) France
Anyone else think the Eiffel Tower is suspiciously pyramidal?

(4-6,2) Germany
Central European country, partitioned after World War Two but recently reunited as one result of the collapse of the Soviet empire.

(4-6,3) The Great Pyramid
Built at Giza (now a suburb of Cairo) as a tomb for the fourth Dynasty Pharoh Khufu (or Cheops) who ruled from 2551 to 2528 BCE. It is the only surviving one of the ancient Seven Wonders and is on the same site as the Sphinx.

(4-6,4) Hawaii
Volcanic American State. Surf's up, dude.

(4-6,5) Israel
Israel figures prominently in conspiracy theory. In part, this is due to political complications resulting from Israel's interesting geopolitical situation, surrounded by a sea of large, hostile nations that command considerable wealth and influence due to their control of large oil supplies (see also OPEC). Mossad is the Israeli foreign spy organization. It has a reputation for assassination (somewhat damaged by a botched attempt on a leader of the Hamas terrorist group in September 1997).

(4-6,6) Vatican City
The sovereign papal state and "capital" of the Catholic Church, located within the borders of Rome and including the papal palace (the Vatican proper) and St. Peter's Church, established June 10, 1929; 108.7 acres; population about 1,000.
The Vatican is reputed to contain the most extensive library of forbidden tomes in existence. Conspiracy theories (of varying degrees of credibility) have associated the Vatican with various conspiratorial organizations, including the Knights of Malta, P2, Opus Dei and the Priory of Sion.

(4-6,7) Japan
Preferred means of world conquest: bankruptcy auctions.

(4-6,8) Las Vegas
American city, home of the casinos.

(7-8,1) Moon base
Some UFO conspiracy theorists claim that there is a moon base in current operation, as part of a long-standing secret space program. Others claim that there are alien bases on the moon, presumably to support their UFO operations on Earth.

(7-8,2) New York
American state in the northeastern part of the country. A reference to "New York" without further explanation is often interpreted to mean New York City, the great metropolis on the Atlantic coast of New York state. Madison Avenue is the home to the advertising industry in New York City.

(7-8,3) Pentagon
The building in Arlington, Va., that houses the Department of Defense headquarters — frequently used as shorthand for the entire U.S. military.

(7-8,4) Russia

Russia was re-established as an independent nation with the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Since then, it has been undergoing painful economic and political transitions as its old communist political and economic systems give way to pluralism and privatization. As a result, some Russians yearn for a strong leader to solve their problems.

(7-8,5) Stonehenge
Ring of standing stones, some linked by stone caps, in England; dates from the Neolithic age. It was once believed that the stone circles were used by the ancient Druids as ceremonial sites; however, the circles predate the Druids by at least a thousand years. However, the people who did build them may well have used them for religious ceremonies, as well as for astronomical observations to set the calendar (many of the circles have astronomical alignments related to dates such as the summer solstice).
One interesting thing about Stonehenge is that some of its stones come from Wales, about two hundred miles away. Perhaps the builders of Stonehenge had moved to the area from there, bringing the stones with them, or perhaps they took another group's standing stones as trophies after defeating them in war.

(7-8,6) Switzerland
Just what is hidden in those mountain passes?
Switzerland has been in the news lately (early 1997) in response to accusations that the behavior of the Swiss government and Swiss bankers vis-a-vis Nazi Germany was not as pure as previously believed. In particular, Swiss bankers are said to have aided loot-laundering by Nazi officials and obstructed efforts by Holocaust victims and their heirs to recover money deposited in Switzerland in an effort to protect it from Nazi confiscation. More on this as evidence surfaces….
It is no longer possibly to obtain an anonymous bank account in Switzerland (for that, you need to go to Austria or Turkey — see Offshore Banks), but depositors are nonetheless protected by one of the strongest banking-secrecy laws in the world. These days, Swiss bankers are permitted to inform the authorities of suspicious deposits, but are not required to — and in practice most would rather keep their customers. Switzerland thus remains the haven of choice for foreigners with money to hide — the most notorious recent example was ex-President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. (Two Swiss banks are currently fighting a Philippine lawsuit over half a billion dollars alleged to have been looted from the islands during Marcos' dictatorship.) Furthermore, Swiss law regards as "dirty" only the proceeds of activities that are crimes in Switzerland, and the Swiss define income tax evasion as a civil matter.
Swiss prosecutors are currently waging a campaign to reform the banking laws, but the tradition of privacy is deeply entrenched, and many ordinary Swiss are proud of their country's iconoclastic history —the secrecy laws were originally passed in the 1930s to help persecuted Jews protect their savings.

(7-8,7) Texas
Large U.S. state in the south-central part of the country. The traditional image of Texas is a place where things are very big and the people don't take any guff.
Site of the infamous assassination of John F. Kennedy.

(7,8) The Big Prawn
The Big Prawn is an actual tourist attraction in Ballina, New South Wales. There are large animal and plant statues all over Australia, especially in NSW and Queensland (including the Big Merino at Goulbourn and the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour). They are very weird.

(8,8) Station L-4 / Station L-5 / Orbit One
The "L-5 Society" is a pro-space lobby group. The "L-4" and "L-5" points are particularly stable regions in the moon's orbit (one trailing the moon by 60 degrees, one ahead of the moon by 60 degrees) which were proposed as sites for space cities by the late Dr. Gerard K. O'Neill. (The "L" stands for "Lagrange", the mathematician who first noted this phenomenon as one solution to the three-body

problem of orbital mechanics.)

The L-5 Society has merged with the National Space Institute to form the National Space Society.

See Also:

Weather Satellite - This term is generally used for satellites that just report the weather.

Killer Satellite - A satellite designed to destroy or disable enemy satellites (such as a hostile Spy Satellite). An outgrowth of the US Strategic Defense Initiative (aka "Star Wars") program of the 1980s.

Power Satellite - Refers to proposals to build large (several square kilometers) solar collectors in orbit. Power would be beamed down to Earth via microwave, providing a 24-hour stream of solar energy.

Spy Satellite - A staple of modern military intelligence. Modern spysats are capable of ….

<Transmission Interrupted>

Alternate settings

The 1970s Cartoon Setting

Not a lot of concern about continuity or consistency. The characters just happen to be musicians who just happen to have hyperpowers that just happen to stumble into Octopode plots week after week.

One variation has the heroes specifically foiling the plots of one particular individual or organization, perhaps O.C.T.O.P.U.S. ??

The Four-Color Setting

The rockers are fully recognized hyperhumans as well as media stars. Their exploits are well-documented in the tabloids and entertainment rags. The Octopode conspiracy is downplayed either because there is no conspiracy or because the conspiracy uses the fame of the hyperhumans as a smokescreen. Strongly consider Octopode-sponsored hypervillains that feel like the stuff of comic books.

In other words, rather than using comic books to discredit the idea of hyperheroes and hyperhumans, the Octopodes used the media to shift the focus to the same and away from the existence of the Octopodes themselves.