

AGAINST THE '70S

FOCUS: OWNS THE ROAD

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Cover Image by Merritt Thomas

Are you tired of playing characters that have to get around on their own two feet? Would you like a character that can do 75mph on rubber tires? Have you ever wanted to leave skid marks on the back of your enemies? Do you like saying "vrooom"? Maybe you need a character who was literally made to cruise the mean streets at night. Maybe you need a character who ***Owns the Road***.

WELCOME TO AGAINST THE '70S!

Against the '70s is a series of supplements for the Cypher System for role-playing in a world of disco kings, paranormal researchers, corpse-stealing aliens, android bodysnatchers, and giant killer animals. Don't forget the roller skates! Inspired by such 1970s films and TV shows as *Phantasm*, *In Search Of*, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *The Six Million Dollar Man*, **Against the '70s** will feature new Foci, Creatures, Descriptors, adventures and more!

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OWNS THE ROAD

You are not an organic being. You are a vehicle, made of metal and glass and plastic, and you are capable of thoughts and feelings. You might be an artificial intelligence that's been installed into a top-of-the-line sports car, or you might be a classic hot rod possessed by the spirit of the underworld, or maybe you're something else entirely.

- Tier 1: Born This Way
- Tier 1: Vehicular Armor
- Tier 2: Car-Fu
- Tier 3: Self-Repair or Vehicular Weaponry
- Tier 4: Expanded Communication
- Tier 5: Carate
- Tier 6: Greater Vehicular Armor or Expanded Vehicular Weaponry

NEW FOCUS ABILITIES

The **Owns the Road** focus has nine new abilities to represent the inherent powers and capabilities of a sentient vehicle.

BORN THIS WAY

You are a non-flying vehicle of some sort: a car, a boat, a motorcycle or the like. You have a *vehicular body*, a *communication style*, and are subject to *vehicular movement rules* (see page 3). You are specialized in driving or piloting tasks. Your melee attacks do three points of damage instead of two. Because you are not an organic being, you can only recover your Might and Speed Pools through repair tasks, with the difficulty of the task equal to the number of points you are trying to recover (maximum 10 for any one task). This repair task will likely have to be performed by another character. You have special rules for the kinds of damage that can and can't affect you (see page 3). You are unaffected by damage that would affect organic beings, such as poison, disease, drugs, and the like. However, you can be affected by things that would affect inanimate objects, as well as abilities that disrupt machines. Because most people would find interacting with a sentient vehicle to be a strange, off-putting experience, all positive interaction tasks with organic beings are hindered by two steps. (This section incorporates some of the aspects of the **Artificially Intelligent** descriptor, which should not be used in conjunction with **Owns the Road**.)

VEHICULAR ARMOR

You gain +1 Armor and your Armor gets an additional +1 against a specific damage type of your choice (projectiles, fire, cold, electricity, sonic, etc.).

CAR-FU

All defense tasks are eased by one step. Falling damage is reduced by one point per Tier level.

SELF-REPAIR

Through nanobots, unholy magic, or some other means, you can now make repairs to yourself without the need of another character attempting a repair task. Resting now allows you to restore points to your Might Pool or Speed Pool.

VEHICULAR WEAPONRY

You have access to a medium ranged weapon that does 4 damage. This weapon is part of your body and cannot be removed without difficulty. The form the weapon takes (machine gun, flamethrower, magical energy bolts) is up to you, with the GM's blessing.

EXPANDED COMMUNICATION

Choose another communication style from the list (see page 3).

CARATE

All melee attack tasks are eased by one step. Your melee damage is increased to 6 points.

GREATER VEHICULAR ARMOR

You gain +1 Armor, and your Armor gets an additional +1 against a specific damage of your choice (projectiles, fire, cold, electricity, sonic, etc.). This ability stacks with **Vehicular Armor**. When you pick the damage type, you may select the same damage type chosen from **Vehicular Armor** (granting +2 Armor against that damage type) or select a different damage type (thus having an extra +1 Armor against two different damage types).

EXPANDED VEHICULAR WEAPONRY

You have access to a heavy ranged weapon that does 6 points of damage. If you now have two vehicular weapons, you may use your action to attack with both, but each attack is a separate task that is hindered one step. The form the weapon takes is up to you, with the GM's blessing.

ADDITIONAL NEW RULES

The section is intended to answer potential questions about a sentient vehicle character and generally codify what (I think) are the obvious ramifications of such a character. However, if this additional material weighs your game down, feel free to ignore it and wing your own answers.

VEHICULAR BODY

Your body is a metal frame with at least one wheel. You may choose, at creation, to have a passenger interior, windows, and other normal accoutrements of a vehicle.

- Unlike normal vehicles, you do not need fuel.
- Characters can drive or pilot you, if you allow them. You can take control from them at any time.
- You do not have hands, so you cannot use objects or manifest cyphers that require them. The GM may allow some manifest cyphers to be used by you while located in the passenger area, or possibly installed by a mechanic for future use.
- Your melee attacks can only be used while in motion (see **Vehicular movement**, below). Melee attacks can use either Might or Speed. Your base melee damage is 3 points. This can be increased via Effort.
- Characters in your passenger area have enough oxygen for one day. If you are submerged in water, the interior will remain dry for one day.
- PCs in your passenger area who are targeted by enemies outside your passenger area have their defense task eased by two steps. (Attacks on targeted NPCs have the attack hindered by two steps.) On a miss, you take the damage, if applicable.
- If you lose all the points in your Pools and die, any passengers are immediately subject to any elemental or atmospheric difficulties that might be present.

COMMUNICATION STYLE

Select the method you use to communicate with other characters. Regardless how you speak, you can hear as well as any human.

Voice: You can speak as loudly or as quietly as if you were a human or other organic creature.

Radio: You have a voice, like above, but you can only be heard through radio receivers. You can have a radio within the interior to communicate with passengers, and you can also broadcast your voice to other receivers (radios, other car

radios, televisions, etc.) within Tier level x 10 feet. If other characters have access to headsets or in-ear communicators, you can broadcast to those at whatever range those accessories allow.

Computer Screen: You can only "speak" in the form of text. You have a monitor within the interior that passengers can read. You can broadcast your text to other receivers (televisions, smart phones, electronic billboards, etc.) within Tier level x 10 feet. If other characters have access to devices designed to communicate with you, you can broadcast to those at whatever range they allow.

Telepathy: This is just like the voice option, except that it is completely silent, and only characters you choose within short range can hear you. Communicating telepathically with another organic being may inflict one more level of hindrance on positive communication, which stacks with the penalty detailed in the **Born This Way** ability.

VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

At any given moment, you are using one of three movement rates: Fast, Slow, or Stopped. It takes one turn to move from one movement rate to the next highest or lowest movement rate.

Fast: You can move a very long distance in one round. Your melee attacks and defense tasks are eased. However, you may need to take 1 or more turns to position yourself for another melee attack against the same target. Also, if you are moving Fast but need to end your movement within a short range or less, your GM may require you to make a driving task or else lose control.

Slow: You can move a long distance (or less) in one round. No modifier to melee attacks or defense tasks.

Stopped: You do not move. Your defense tasks are hindered. You may not make melee attacks.

PLAYER & GM INTRUSIONS

Here are some sample intrusions for players and GMs to use with an **Owns the Road** character.

PLAYER INTRUSIONS

- You drive across the ground, which fills the area with a cloud of dust and dirt, providing temporary cover for allies.
- You figure out a way to briefly change your primary communication style to another communication style.
- Looking for an exit, you find a narrow alley, and pop up on two wheels to drive through it at an angle.
- You speak to a stranger, and it turns out they're really into the idea of a talking vehicle. Ignore the usual penalties for positive interaction tasks.
- After a successful melee attack against a humanoid foe, they get their clothing caught on the part of the vehicle, and are dragged a long distance, taking melee damage and moved away from allies.

GM INTRUSIONS

- You fire your weapon at an enemy in front of you, and miss the enemy but hit a structure, which drops debris right in your path.
- You drive into a space (a warehouse, a junkyard, an impoundment lot) and a heavy door closes behind you, potentially trapping you there.
- You communicate via radio, but there's interference in the area. You'll have to either find a different place to broadcast from, or find the source of the interference.
- One of your tires is damaged. Until it is fixed, you can only move a Long distance when Fast, and only a Short distance when Slow.
- You lose control and flip. You land upside down, your wheels spinning in the air, possibly taking damage (GM's choice). Better hope someone's around to help you.

DESIGNER NOTES

Owns the Road was inspired by such characters as the mischievous Herbie from the various *Love Bug* movies, as well as the devilish Car from 1977's *The Car*. Other inspirations are Stephen King's *Christine* (book and movie from 1983, but the story takes place in 1978) and the television show *Knight Rider* (1982, which is *kinda* like the '70s, right?). Another more obscure inspiration is *Heat Vision and Jack* (1999), a comedic television pilot starring Jack Black and Owen Wilson that spoofed the adventure shows of the '70s and '80s. Although this focus was designed

for a '70s-centric game, I wanted it to be broad enough to work in science fiction, cyberpunk, post-apocalyptic or *Fast & Furious*-style action genres.

Having a sentient vehicle in the party will create both opportunities and problems. Having a character in the group who can literally put everyone inside them and then zoom away at top speed is likely to change how challenges are approached. At the same time, there will be situations where the party will need to be in a place where the Sentient Vehicle can't go. The sentient vehicle player should be okay with this, while at the same time, the GM should think about how an encounter or challenge could be altered to allow more participation for the sentient vehicle. (It's also possible that the sentient vehicle player will groove on hanging back as the party's "getaway driver" and, if using long-range communication, acting as overwatch.)

Although this focus can be used in a "realistic," non-fantastic game world (like, for example, in a *Knight Rider*-style game), I encourage players and GMs to go wild with it. Let the sentient vehicle attempt things that the organic bipeds can do. Drive down the stairs to the subway? Sure! Jump and drive a short distance across a wall? Why not? Go to the library? Crash on in! (There could be consequences to that.) In the movie *The Car*, the Car destroys two oncoming police cruisers by flipping itself sideways, rolling through the cruisers, blowing them up, then righting itself on four wheels, unscathed. This is absolutely ridiculous, and exactly the kind of thing sentient vehicles should be allowed to do.

Since this focus must be combined with a type, there's going to be a number of weird combinations that won't initially make any sense. Think of this as an opportunity. If a sentient vehicle character is skilled in climbing, does that mean they have some kind of grappling hook device that can pull them up a sheer surface? If you like! If a sentient vehicle character is trained in swimming, does that mean they can drive on the bottom of the ocean? Does it mean they turn into a minibus, a la *The Spy Who Loved Me*? Maybe to both! Do what's fun and makes sense for your game.

Don't do what's not fun. Sentient vehicles explicitly do not need fuel because, in my opinion, that's an uninteresting limitation that requires needless bookkeeping. However, if you and your GM think there's enjoyment to be had there, go for it! Here's an idea that uses fuel but eliminates bookkeeping: have "out of fuel" as a GM intrusion.