

TEAM STEEL

ON TRIAL



HOLY **GAME-CHEF** CITIZEN!
TEAM **STEEL** ARE FACING THE FULL
FORCE OF THE **LAW**! THIS IS GOING TO
BE AN INTENSE **TWO HOURS**.
IT'S TIME FOR OUR DAY IN COURT.
MAY JUSTICE PREVAIL...

A role-playing game for actors

*by
JJ Prince*



ON TRIAL

Contents

INTRO -----	3
PLAYERS -----	4
GAME PROCESS -----	4
ASSIGN ROLES -----	5
OUTLINE CASE -----	8
TEAMS STRATEGISE -----	8
COURT IS IN SESSION -----	11
PROSECUTION'S CASE-----	12
DEFENCE'S CASE -----	13
CLOSING STATEMENTS -----	14
SUMMING UP -----	14
DELIBERATION & VERDICT ---	14
SENTENCING-----	15
THOUGHTS ON THE GAME ----	16
INFLUENCES -----	17
BEHIND THE MASK -----	18



www.princeofdarknesssgames.com

© 2006

TEAM STEEL ON TRIAL

Team Steel On Trial - A RPG FOR ACTORS

WITH GREAT POWER...

Comes great responsibility, that's how it goes doesn't it?

But how do you decide who is using their great powers responsibly - are vigilantes ever truly responsible?

This court is convened to determine the fate of the costumed vigilante group known as Team Steel. Team Steel is accused of doing more harm than good. If found guilty then Team Steel will be publicly de-masked, disbanded and all Team Steel assets will be seized. Individual members may even face further criminal charges.

The trial is played out in real time over two hours, at the end of which the jury will deliver a verdict on Team Steel's fate.

This is deep immersion baby, if that ain't your role-play bag then you probably won't like this game (and it is a game because there are explicit goals from the outset). It's diceless and designed for performance, with the audience taking an active role. It's close to a **Live-Action-Role-Play**, but should work well as a piece of radio (or podcast) drama. It'll be fun at conventions!

TEAM STEEL

ON TRIAL

PLAYERS

1 - 3	Judges	1 recommended
1 - 5	Prosecution	2 recommended
1 - 7	Defence	4 recommended
0 - 12	Witnesses	3 recommended

Audience

The audience make up the jury, there can be any number of jurors, an odd amount is handy to break ties.

Game Process

	Approximate time
1. Roles assigned	(5 min)
2. Case outlined	(5 min)
3. Teams strategise	(30 min)
4. -Time In- Court is in session	(5 min)
5. The prosecution's case	(25 min)
6. The defence case	(25 min)
7. Closing statements	(5 min)
8. Summing up	(5 min)
9. Deliberation & verdict	(10 min)
10. Sentencing	(5 min)

=Game Ends=

1. Assign Roles

The first task in setting up the game is to determine who will play each role. There needs to be at least: one judge, one prosecutor, one defendant and one audience member to serve as a juror. Decide in some mutually agreeable way who is going to take each role.

THE JUDGE (won't budge)

Of the roles the judge is the most important. The judge facilitates the whole proceedings. The judge is also effectively the director and the **Game's Master**. As such, the judge has a lot of power but should always use his power for the good of entertainment.

The judge has been gifted by Chronos the power to freeze time and all other players must obey the judge's commands when time is frozen. The judge can also question the teams or witnesses directly, dismiss a witness, have things stricken from the record.

Additionally the judge may find any of the players 'in contempt' of the court. The player is sin-binned for three minutes (or until the judge decides), during this time they cannot speak and must wear a waste paper basket on their head.

If Pauly Wolfoman starts building to a berserker rage it's time to sin-bin him.

THE PROSECUTION

The prosecution team members have been tasked with this important landmark case - to prove that Team Steel is a menace to society and these costumed lunatics must be removed from our streets.

Each member of the prosecution should come up with a character identity such as *Lionel Shedd hotshot lawyer*. Each member of the team should also have a personal issue with or grudge against Team Steel or one of its members. Lets amp up the conflict! An interesting idea sees one or more of the prosecution team playing super-heroes or villains or lackeys themselves. One member of the prosecution needs to be nominated as head prosecutor.

THE DEFENCE

The best defence team would be comprised of Team Steel members, they are super-heroes after all so should be capable of defending themselves...

Each team Steel member needs to come up with:

- Their Codename
- Their real name (hopefully won't need to disclose this)
- Their super origins
- Their powers and/or weaponry/equipment
- An issue with the case

One member of the defence needs to be nominated as spokesperson, head of defence. This may or may not be Team Steel's leader.

WITNESSES

The players who take the role of witnesses actually get to play more than one character, as they take the role of witnesses for the prosecution and for the defence. Being a witness can be tremendous fun as you're not affiliated with either team, but can have a big effect on the case. The witnesses should first consult with the prosecution to get character ideas, as the prosecution

decides who they will call first to build a case against Team Steel.

JURORS

You need an active audience for this game to work. These are the good people of Steel city, who will ultimately decide the fate of the super-team. You can be quite flexible with the jury, with people coming and going. There is also potential for crossover between jurors and witnesses. The judge remains in charge of who sits on the jury.



TEAM STEEL ON TRIAL

2. Outline The Case

After roles have been assigned, the judge briefly outlines the case, this is so everyone understands what's going on. In this landmark case, as the organization is on trial, the individual heroes are allowed to defend Team Steel as their costumed personas. The civilian identities of Team Steel members will not be called into question, but will be disclosed if they lose the case.

The judge needs to convey the following:

The prosecution asserts that Team Steel should not be tolerated. The organization itself 'Team Steel' is on trial. The jury must decide whether the costumed vigilantes should be allowed to operate *OR* be forced to publicly de-mask, disband and lose all Team Steel assets.

3. Teams Strategise

The prosecution and defence teams both have a short strategy break to determine how they are going to approach the upcoming case. The judge determines how long this strategy break will be, usually about half an hour. During the strategy phase, all players need to familiarise themselves with their character, because after this phase ends the trial begins in earnest and all players will 'time-in' and play the rest of the game 'in-character'.

PROSECUTION TEAM

The witnesses should also accompany the prosecution during this strategy break. The head prosecutor should focus primarily on the witnesses. Decide who each of the witnesses will portray and what exactly their grievance is with Team Steel. Here's some ideas for grievances:

- Carrying lethal weaponry
- Causing property damage
- Being poor role-models
- Excessive force and violence
- Pollution caused by their vehicles
- They look freakish
- Intimidation of local businesses
- Suspicious death of alleged super villain
- Opened a portal into the nether realm
- Team Steel's presence encourages villains to battle them
- De-valuing house prices
- Unemployment after overlord X was arrested
- Spread a message that vigilantes are ok
- Endorse un-ethical products
- Compromise police operations
- Fights with other super-teams
- They're a danger to bystanders

TEAM STEEL ON TRIAL

DEFENCE TEAM

The defence team need to decide how they're going to play the case - they need to convince the jury that Team Steel is a noble and worthy institution. Each of the defendants will have to take the stand at some point, so the players should use this time to think about what they will say. Inspiring anecdotes and origins stories are recommended. Essentially the Team Steel members need to convince the jury that they represent justice and so should be allowed to continue.

Although the defence do not have the witness player with them during this first strategy break, the defence should still think about witnesses they may want to call to defend them. The defence head can give each of the witness players a 3x5 index card with instructions on the defence witness they will be playing.

Some witness ideas:

- Fan club members
- People saved by Team Steel
- A reformed super-villain
- Celebrity friends
- Journalists
- Other super heroes

4. - Time In - Court is in session

After the strategy period is concluded the judge should call for a time freeze and instruct everyone to take their positions. When satisfied the judge calls "Court is in session. All rise." At which point everyone stands. The judge then calls "Be seated." At which point everyone sits down in-character. The rest of the game is played out in-character.

The judge then calls for the head prosecutor to outline the charges against Team Steel. The head prosecutor should introduce himself and then outline the charges.

The judge then calls for the defendants (Team Steel members) to rise and introduce themselves. Each Team Steel member states their codename, powers/weapons/gadgets and nature of their affiliation with Team Steel.

The judge will then ask the prosecution to proceed.



5. The Prosecution's Case

The head prosecutor now takes the lead and can call the prosecution's first witness.

When calling witnesses, the prosecutor should stand up and clearly announce to the judge & jury who the witness is. The witness then takes the stand and swears to tell the truth. One of the prosecution team then gets to interview the witness to find out what their problem is with Team Steel. After the prosecutor has finished with the witness they can announce "No further questions." A member of the defence team now has the option of cross-examining the witness. Once they are finished then they too announce "No further questions." the witness is then free to leave the stand.

This process continues until the prosecution has called each of the witness players once. Then, time permitting, the prosecution can call further witnesses with one catch - the player doesn't know who the witness is going to be. Any witness player can raise their hand if they have an idea for another witness character. The prosecution can gesture at the witness and say "I call-" -at which point the witness introduces themselves and takes the stand. If audience members have ideas for witnesses then they can either whisper the idea to a witness player or temporarily leave the jury and play a witness (judges discretion).

If a witness is proving boring then the judge should hurry things on or dismiss them.

TEAM STEEL ON TRIAL

When the head prosecutor has run out of witnesses or when the judge calls time on the prosecution then the head prosecutor announces "The prosecution rests." Hopefully by now the prosecution has provided a cast iron case against Team Steel.

6. The Defence's Case

Now it's Team Steels chance to defend itself. The head of defence now takes the lead and in turn calls each of the defendants to the stand. The defendants are interviewed about any of the incidents the prosecution is trying to build it's case around. The defendants need to use this time to explain how Team Steel stands for justice in Steel city. Individuals would do well to convince the jury of their own personal morality and sense of justice.

After the defendants have taken the stand, the defence may call other witnesses, in the same manner as the prosecution. When finished, the head of defence announces "The defence rests." Has enough been done to preserve the mighty Team Steel?

Objection!

What would the fun be in having a trial without objections? At any point, a member of the opposing team may object to something said. Any player crying "Objection!" will be asked by the judge "On what grounds?" The objector must then justify their objection, on grounds of relevancy or reliability or whatever else they think of. The judge can either *sustain* the objection and reprimand the speaker appropriately or *overrule* it and ignore the objection. Objectors must take care not to be found in contempt.

7. Closing Statements

After the defence has rested then the closing statements are made by the head of defence and the head prosecutor. These statements are the teams last chance to influence the jury, so are vitally important. The defence team makes their closing statement first, followed by the prosecution.

8. Summing Up

After closing statements the judge sums up the case to the jury, reminding them of the charges and the implications of their decision.

9. Deliberation & Verdict

The jury have only a short time to come to a decision. How exactly you want to handle this is a matter of taste, you could hold a secret ballot for the jury. A simple majority is all that is needed to win the case either way. The jury can also recommend further cases to be tried or conditions to their verdict. Whatever they come up with really. When the jury has come to a verdict, they inform the judge. The judge then calls everyone to stand to hear the verdict. A spokesperson for the jury then delivers the verdict on Team Steel - guilty or not guilty.

10. Sentencing

After hearing from the jury, the judge passes sentence on Team Steel or declares Team Steel cleared of the charges.

If Team Steel have been found guilty, then the final act of play is the de-masking of the entire team, whereby each Team Steel member reveals their real name and identity.

If Team Steel triumph then the last act is Team Steel giving a victorious press conference. The witnesses should play the journalists, photographers and media types. Except for the members of Team Steel who are journalists and photographers, they can play themselves. Ah you work it out.

That's the end of the game.



THOUGHTS ON THE GAME

LARP IT UP

This game is not a Live Action Role-Play. It can be played perfectly well as a tabletop game as there is very little actual physical action during the game, it's set in a courtroom after all. However, the LARP potential of this game is huge and if you can get serious enthusiastic players with costumes - well then you'll probably be in for a really special treat.

WINGING IT

The game works best if the players are comfortable making stuff up on the spur of the moment. Hopefully, the structure will make ad libbing easier for all players, since they've had the strategy period to prepare. And you've always got someone to work with, your team, a witness or the judge.

GENRE

There is a fair bit of scope for playing about with different superhero genres within this game. Moving into comedy is perhaps the easiest as improvisation lends itself to humour well. If you go this way you can draw from sources like 60s TV Batman, The Tick and The Powerpuff Girls.

However, the game also asks important questions about responsibility, personal morality and justice. You can do the challenging Frank Miller and Alan Moore stuff too.

The judge will be the lead on the genre and remains the game's authority but should try to keep people interested and not block creativity.

TEAM STEEL

ON TRIAL

Influences

RPGs: *The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen* - James Wallis
Bestial Acts - Greg Costikyan

Drama: *Impro for Storytellers* - Keith Johnstone
Games For Actors and Non-Actors - Augusto Boal
Truth in Comedy - Halpern, Close & Johnson

Supers: *X-Men, Fantastic Four, Spiderman, Punisher*
- Marvel Comics
Batman - DC Comics
The Incredibles - Pixar/Disney
Watchmen - Alan Moore

BEHIND THE MASK: RPG Design

Well, I'm pleased with my Game Chef entry, think I made the smart choice going for the shortest time frame!

As part of Game Chef is reviewing other people's games I thought I should explain how I'm going to approach it and subject my own effort to the same procedure.

I'm going to analyse game design in terms of the FUNnel model
www.princeofdarknessgames.com/theory.htm

And the Four Things of game design
www.princeofdarknessgames.com/theory/L4T.htm

1. The First thing - where's the fun?

A. Immersion mainly, it's all about getting into role.

There is a degree of competition and tactics (you play lawyers) so there is a gaming element. Getting one over on the other team should feel pretty good.

There is very little exploration in this RPG, this is intentional, partly to aid improvisation and immersion and partly due to the focus of the situation.

The narrative appeal is difficult to judge, there are no mechanics which help players get a satisfying story, but the whole focus is on questions of morality, and the nature of good, evil and justice. There is good narrative potential but players have to work for it from an immersed perspective.

Hopefully the game should engender unity both within the opposing teams and within the group as a whole but I really can't judge this.

2. What's the Core?

A. This came totally from the tasty game chef ingredients. Thanks Andy! What if 'Team Steel' a masked vigilante super group had to justify itself in court?

I think this is a pretty good core, it asks an interesting question and draws on a wealth of popular culture. For fans of super-heroes at least, I believe there's a delight in premise in this core.

3. How good's the Fluff?

A. As good as the players. Fluff gets in the way of improv so I've gone minimal, I want the players to start from the idea of super-heroes and see where it takes them without any pre-conceptions. That's why there's nothing mentioned about Steel City - essentially it doesn't matter for the game, all that matters is what is said in court. The small amount of fluff that does exist for this game is purely to frame the situation.

4. Ok - It's Crunch time!

A. The crunch is interesting, I've no mathematical factors so all narrative power is controlled by skill factors (role-playing as a skill) and group factors (the judge). Going for immersion, I think the crunch works well, and helps emphasise the core. Essentially, the only important decision of the game is taken by the jury, who should be swayed by each teams' approach to the core questions of morality, responsibility and justice.

The debate continues!

www.game-chef.com

www.princeofdarknessgames.com

Special thanks to Marie for keeping me going throughout the project. Couldn't have done it without ya monkey!



Happy gaming everyone
- JoE

joe@princeofdarknessgames.com