

Hero System Vehicle Sourcebook

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

The Hero System Vehicle Sourcebook contains on hundred and forty-nine vehicle write-ups, plus options for variants giving you literally hundreds of vehicles for your game. The book is divided into four chapters: Ground Vehicles, Air Vehicles, Sea Vehicles, and Fantasy And Supehero Vehicles.

Chapter One - Ground Vehicles. It's divided into two sections, Civilian and Military ground vehicles. It starts out with Pulp Era cars, giving us four cars produced before World War 2. Next we get eleven modern cars, most of these write-ups are very generic. Given that in game terms most cars are pretty much the same (one four door family sedan is pretty much like another) this isn't an issue. We get enough variants to recreate any modern car, from compacts up to a fire truck. Muscle and Sports Cars come next, nine cars are presented, not in generic terms like the modern cars, but nine specific high performance cars. Motorcycles are covered after that, with two Pulp Era motorcycles and four Modern Era motorcycles. Moving on to trains we get four, from the powerful steam engines of the 1800s to the maglev trains coming in the near future, including a subway car. The Civilian section ends with four miscellaneous vehicles: a bulldozer, sled, snowmobile and a scooter. Military vehicles starts out with tanks, giving us five from World War 2 to the Modern Era. The last section is Other Military Vehicles, with six write-ups for various vehicles, the jeeps, humvee, and others. The chapter contains a totla of fifty-one ground vehicles, and with variants that comes to well over a hundred different cars, trucks and tanks to use in a game. And a little creativty can give you hundreds more. Given you could focus an entire book on a few sections this chapter does a good job of giving us a variety of vehicles to use.

Chapter Two - Air Vehicles. Fifty three air-vehicles are contained in this chapter. It starts out with Civilian Aircraft, divided into Pulp Era and Modern Era. There are four Pulp Era aircraft and six Modern Era eaircraft. From the autogyro to the Moller Skycar we get a good cross section of civilian aircraft. The Military Planes section is divided into three parts. Pre-World War 2, with five planes from various countries. World War 2 aircraft contains six more fighters and bombers. Last comes Post-World War 2 planes, with seventeen fighters and bombers written up, including the still in development Micro Air Vehicle as an example of reaslistic near future aircraft. The next section goes over Helicopters. First are four civilian helicopters, three post-World War 2 and one from that era. Second are eight military craft, all U.S. developed helicopters except for the Russian Hind. The last section of the chapter is Miscelaneous vehicles, which contains only two write-ups, a hot air baloon and the space shuttle. Unlike the first chapter on ground vehicles this chapter doesn't have completely generic write-ups, though it does give plenty of options to alter a vehicle to fit your needs. Considering the sheer number of aircraft in the world this chapter does an excellent job of giving us a wide enough variety

to fit the needs on hand.

Chapter Three - Water Vehicles. This is a relatively short chapter with on thirty-one vehicle write-ups. The first part is sailing ships, giving a wide range of mostly trading vessels from the eleventh through nineteenth centuries, and a modern sailing yacht. It does give notes on how the military converted these ships to warships when needed. There are thirteen ships in all. Next are engine driven surface craft, seven vessels are detailed including a personal water craft, cargo ship, two speed boats, two luxury yachts and a Mississippi Riverboat. The third section of the chapter contains six modern U.S. warships, four of them developed or deployed in the 1990s. The last section is write-ups for five submarines, all of which are military vessels. Again the numerous options and notes on each vehicle to convert to various other kinds of water vessels allows for a large number of different craft to be built.

Chapter Four - Fantasy And Superhero Vehicles. The first part is Fantasy Vehicles, where we get four magical vessels. An enchanted sled, a flying galleon, an iron horse (built not as a vehicle but an automaton), and a witches broomstick. The Superhero Vehicles section contains ten vehicles suitable for a superheroic game, or even a science-fiction game, including a super-bike and the ever-useful rocket sled. Particularly nifty is the mole-machine, whose description is an advertisement.

This book is a good solid collection of a wide variety of vehicles. Given that any one chapter could be turned into a complete sourcebook on it's own I would say this does a more than admirable job of supplying examples. And it's not just write-ups with technical descriptions, we also get a brief history of many vehicles such as when and how they were developed, why, when they came into use and went the way of the dodo.

The Downside:

There are some vehicles I would have liked to have seen, such as more personal watercraft like day sailers, racing yachts, and a personal or research submarine. Or possibly more fighter jets from around that world as the U.S. seemed disproportionately represented.

Also missing are any kind of Spaceship (beyond the Shuttle), but Star Hero contains a whole bunch of those already and that would be a better choice for someone looking for that kind of resource anyway.

Were I to want to add anything it would be a section of Mech's in Chapter 4 as there aren't too many examples of those in other supplements.

The Otherside:

Aside from the short histories of each vehicle or other interesting bits, there isn't a lot in this book for the Non-Hero gamer. Unless you like to convert from one system to another, then this book is all for you. Essentially this is a Character Book for Vehicles.

Overall, I have to say this is a good resource for vehicles. It acts best as a supplement to The Ultimate Vehicle (which covers expanded rules for building and playing with vehicles), but makes a good solid resource for any game needing transportation on it's own. Mostly the book is useful for Modern and Pulp era campaigns, with a few early sailing vessels for Fantasy games needing ships. Is it worth the price tag? If you need vehicles, absolutely.

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