

The Ultimate Energy Projector

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Ultimate Energy Projector focuses on characters who utilize energy in some form, from the Superhero Blaster, the Fantasy Mage, Sci-Fi Energy Being, and the like.

Chapter One - Energy Projector Characters. The book opens, like others of its kind, with a discussion on the background of an Energy Projector. Providing guidelines for Backgrounds (how they acquired their abilities), Personalities, and Archetypes.

Moving into Hero System mechanics the book starts with Skills. Skills provides a Ranged Energy Projection Martial Art and some notes on using Science Skills in conjunction with Energy Projection. Talents has some good ideas for Environmental Movement as well.

Powers introduces a lot of new and interesting elements to the game. Starting with a much needed expanded discussion on the idea of Point Of Origin for Powers. For Defense Powers a few very interesting new concepts are introduced. First is an expanded look at the Only Versus Limited Type Limitation. And second is the idea of a Unified Defense Power, which must be defined to work against a specific Special Effect rather than Hero's normal Physical/Energy Defense. Games that feature a lot of different energy types could do well to introduce both. Energy Blast has an option for greater granularity, and an Advantage that can increase the STUN Damage it does. Flash has two options to expand its utility, one is an extended Flash using an Advantage and the other is an alternative rule to how Flash works. Force Field has an optional Advantage called Adjustable that makes it much more versatile. Killing Attacks also get an option for granularity. Probably the best alternate rule introduced is for Missile Deflection And Reflection that removes the built in Special Effects structure. Telekineses has a bunch of goodness it goes over including affecting gases and energy, using it for puppeteering. Transfer has a new Advantage "Transfer To Other."

For Power Advantages Area Of Effect gets the most space, covering a series of new options for creating different kinds of Areas such as Cages, Fixed Shape, Small Explosion and some rules for Autofire. A completely new Advantage is Multiple Special effect, for when combining more than one special effect is needed.

Disadvantages provides one really useful feature, a really big list of Vulnerabilities and their frequency. With an option that expands the Disadvantage to have a Rare option, giving one more step to choose from. Even if you don't use the table as is, having the most often seen special effects in one big list can help a GM alter it to fit their campaign.

Chapter Two - The Energy Spectrum. This chapter does two things. First is it provides a new Option Rule for Special Effect Interaction. In most Hero Games the Special Effect is relegated mostly to flavor text to spice up the game. Using this option is becomes an integral part of the game. The basic idea is that each Special Effect interacts with other Special Effects - a lot of the time nothing to dramatic happens, but sometimes one Special Effect is extraordinarily effective or ineffective against another, and so bonuses and minuses may appear. The rule takes each Effect, measures it against all other effects, determines the overall effect (a positive or negative number) and assigns an Adder/Advantage or Limitation Value to that Effect.

The second part analyzes each Special Effect in detail, all thirty two of the most commonly seen effects (with notes on variations). Each Effect has a description, a discussion of possible secondary effects (most notably for measurable real world effects like Fire), and then compares it to every other Effect with notes on how they interact. Sometimes the interaction is a bonus to dice, a loss of defense on one part or similar. And sometimes it's an unpredictable effect that goes into even more detail, like the interaction between Gravity Manipulation and Dimensional Manipulation. At the end of each section of small grouping of Power Builds is provided as examples.

The rule regarding Effects Interaction can be a very useful tool for games wanting to bring Special Effects more to the foreground of the action. However, I would suggest a GM take a good look at exactly how things will impact their game, especially if a Special Effect cause an Advantage to be placed on Powers where that Advantage may not come into play all the time, or even some of the time. As presented they don't always appear to add up, I would suggest anyone who uses the rules strait out of the book be prepared to reevaluate just how things are working in the game after some playing, and change things if needed.

On the other hand, if a GM is looking to set up Special Effect Interactions in their game then these rules are extremely helpful and can go a long way to adding depth and flavor to the game.

Chapter Three - Energy Projectors Genre By Genre. This is a collection of NPCs for the Champions, Dark Champions, Fantasy Hero, Pulp Hero, and Star Hero genre. Four Champions NPCs, Aura (a Lifeorce based Superheroine), EMP (Electromagnetic based supervillain), Howler (a rework of the classic Sonic based villainess), and Pulson (a low powered Pulson based supervillain). Dark Champions has Voltaic, a electricity based villain in a taser suit. Fantasy Hero has mages; Arkosh Stoneflame (a mage focusing on the four elements) and Galvandrian Twelvefires (a minor mage who uses wands instead of spells). Pulp Hero has The Element-Master, a villain who can adjust temperature, good for Pulp games with a mystic bent. Star Hero has Boss Saturn, an energy based being who runs a crime syndicate.

Howler is rebuilt using the optional rules from Chapter two to provide an example of using them. The rest of the characters are built using the standard Hero Rules.

Chapter Four - Adventuring With Energy Projectors. This short chapter focuses on Energy Projectors interacting with the rest of the game. For the most part this is a basic Archetype and rarely causes balance issues. So the chapter focuses on different ways that energy projection can be used in a game. Some interesting rules for Radio Interference are presented. Coordinated Attacks is a new combat maneuver that allows energy projectors to combine their attacks for great effect, relying on the Special Effect or Active Points to determine just how they combine. Interference provides rules to use one Special Effect to counteract another's attack. Sustained Attack provides some rules to create a temporary Continuous Attack. Contests Of Power are optional rules for the classic two energy beams meet in the middle effect. Nova Blasts are some suggestions on how to create the effect of the super blast used as a last ditch effort. All the optional combat maneuvers are good additions to games

involving Energy Blasters. especially multiple energy blasters.

One other concept introduced and referenced in the first two chapters is the concept of an Originating Special Effect and a Manifest Special Effect. Sometimes they aren't the same, the most common example is Magic as an Origin and Fire (such as a fireball spell) as the Manifest Special Effect. Creating this distinction can have some interesting effects on the game and how certain Effects work for or against each other, especially with the idea of Negative Adjustment Powers.

The Downside:

There very little discussion of actually setting up Energy Blasters outside the obvious Superhero genre, even though this archetype is one of the few that really lends itself to being in every genre.

The Otherside:

This is mostly a set of rules for the Hero System and using Special Effects in Hero to interact with each other in more detail.

Overall this is a pretty good book, especially if you're looking to do more with Special Effects in the Hero System beyond the standard Mechanics interaction. This could be used to create a very interesting Magic System for a Fantasy Hero game for instance, or add a new dimension to a Champions game.

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