

DEMON: Servants Of Darkness

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

DEMON: Servants Of Darkness is a villain organization source book, the default setting is a Superheroic Game. DEMON is a mystic cult, and the most sinister villainous organization Hero Games has presented. A warning however, the entire source book is aimed at GMs, player knowledge of DEMON is found in many other source books, this is the real story.

Chapter One - A History Of DEMON. DEMON starts with a man named Luther Black finding a book, the Liber Terribilis. A book detailing the Kings Of Edom, creatures so ancient they were trapped in prisons long before the Earth even formed. Unlike Demons from the Netherworlds, these creatures want only to destroy. DEMON is set up to summon these creatures from their eternal prisons and into this world. Chapter One details how Luther Black set up and organized his cult throughout the twentieth century, from its first incarnations to its current form. Throughout the Chapter we're given comments on specific incidents in DEMON's history. But more useful to a game are the blocks detailing possible plots and uses for DEMON in various genres and subgenres. There's a section for a more pure Satanist Cult of DEMON for used with a Pulp game, and various ways to use DEMON in Golden Age, Silver Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age comic books.

The history itself can also serve as various plots and story lines that show DEMON going from laughable threat to extremely dangerous enemy.

Chapter Two - The Organization, Goals, And Structure Of DEMON. This short chapter describes how DEMON relates to the rest of the Mystic World (or doesn't rather), and other cults dedicated to EDOM. And most importantly for those Heros who capture a DEMON member which level of member knows how much. It also describes the Goal of DEMON, both the one the members at large are working towards and the higher Inner Circle are working towards. For those who want some hard numbers to work with and want to know just how big DEMON is worldwide, there's a side bar that provides just that information in this chapter.

Chapter Three - The Leadership Of DEMON. Starting from the top down, this chapter covers the upper echelon of DEMON. The top includes Luther Black and his personal cadre known as the Inverted Trinity. We also get details on Luther's plan for DEMON.

Next is the Inner Circle are the five members of DEMON that the rank and file believe control the entire organization, Luther Black is a name unknown to much of the cult. The Maleficia details the network of each member of the Inner Circle and the specific roles they play within the group and how

they relate to each other.

The group is nicely set up with two heads, giving more versatility to the organization. DEMON, as it stands, is a very sinister group and possibly much more deadly and serious for many games. If you need a more regular cult of Dark Worshipers it's set up that removing Luther Black from the group reduces them to a credible, but not world ending, threat. On the other hand, keeping Luther Black in the mix can provide something more than a simple run of the mill "take over the world" adversary.

Chapter Four - Members Of DEMON. This is goes from lowest to highest, starting with recruitment methods and what DEMON looks for in a member. Recruits belong to local cults, always under different names and generally short lived. Once they're elevated they become Brethren, the lowest member of DEMON itself, this is actual rank and file of DEMON itself. Above that are the Initiates, who take a hand in leadership roles, planning and lead the Brethren in criminal activities. The Morbanes run a Demonhome, or cell, of DEMON, some Demonhome's are run by more than one Morbane.

With each of the three levels of actual DEMON members (Brother, Initiate, and Morbane) a basic Character Write-up is provided. For the Brothers there are Types Of Brothers which provides some packages to customize the basic Brother Character for more detail and to set one apart from the other. The Initiates there are what is called Demon-Bound, the Initiates are the ones that perform almost all the actual summonings of demons, and they perform the ritual that binds a demon soul to a persons body, so this section lists the various kinds of demons they might summon and bind to a person for various reasons. The Morbane's provide the basic Morbane character as well as several packages to customize the kind of magic they specialize in.

All the variant character packages are useful if DEMON is going to be a main or recurring villain group, they'll help prevent each Demonhome from being cookie-cutter outfits. It also provides some ideas to help customize a Demonhome to face the Players, either as a tougher fight or to take advantage of weaknesses.

Chapter Five - Demonhomes. This chapter details the base of a DEMON cell itself. It starts by describing what an average Demonhome contains and might look like, and then provides two full examples of Demonhomes, one in New York and one in Hollywood. DEMON Around The World covers where the cult exists, how large holdings are and where they would like to expand. It also covers how the cult fits into each society around the world it has worked its way into.

Chapter Six - Infernal Devices And Malevolent Magic. The Profane Regalia is what DEMON calls its tools of the trade, various magic items, spells and devices it uses to even the odds with Superheroes and overcome the police. It's a short chapter but does a good job of providing a variety of magic items for DEMON to use in its fight against good.

Chapter Seven - A Gamemaster's Demonic Designs. The previous chapters outlined the organization, it's members and inner workings, devices and locations. This chapter covers using all that in a campaign. Demonic Campaign Advice discusses adjusting the threat level of DEMON from the Mooks Of The Mystic World to something much more sinister and deadly. Anatomy Of A Black Magic Plot is guidelines for a DEMON story arc. Starting with the motivation, the hook, structure of a satanic ritual, and preparing for the climax. Of all this the best advice is definitely in the Structure Of A Satanic Ritual which details how you can roleplay out the whole event from start to end, which can be a fun roleplaying experience.

The Champions Universe details how DEMON relates to specific organizations and other members of the supervillain world within the Champions Universe. Even if you don't use that setting it provides some groundwork on how to have DEMON interact with other groups.

Demon Genre By Genre is some advice on how to use DEMON in genres outside Superheroes and Pulp (the two most obvious genres to use the group with from Chapter One). It looks at adapting the cult to Dark Champions and more realistic modern action games. DEMON 3000 reintroduces the cult for use in a Galactic Champions game, as well as providing the future history of the organization through its apparent demise in 2012 in the Champions Universe (relating directly to Luther Blacks plots). Fantasy Hero and Star Hero both get taken a look at as well. Under Star Hero it looks specifically at CyberHero and Post-Apocalyptic Hero.

The Downside:

The goal of DEMON as presented may not appeal to some gamers, being one of the darker and more sinister organizations introduced for Hero. Also, it comes with a set end-date for the group to either succeed or fail in its goals. While this isn't all bad it requires some work to make DEMON either a more impending threat.

There isn't much more I could want out of this book though, it's thorough and well thought out. Either you're going to want a satanic world-ending cult or you won't in your games.

The Otherside:

DEMON is an extremely detailed and useful organization, either as is or adapted into a more traditional satanic cult. The threat level is easily turned up or down depending on where you want to place them in the world as well. The concepts, organization and ideas in the book are easily portable to any system of choice, just a small amount of work is needed to convert the few character sheets provided or provide your own cultists.

I think it's one of the best organization books out there. DEMON is versatile, adaptable and comes with a myriad of ways you can use it to confront the PCs either as a sub plot, single story arc or complete campaign focus. I definitely recommend it, if for no other reason than it provides an excellent framework for setting up a tiered and celled organization with a secret leadership.

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