

GENERATING COMBINER PILOTS

household items might Combine into garbage!

AVAILABILITY OF MECHA

How prevalent are mecha in the SRS? Could it be that only the players have mecha or does everyone have one? Roll on this chart to decide.

Roll 1D6	Availability
1	Only the PCs have mecha
2	Mecha are starting to be prevalent or once were
3	The military/government controls most mecha
4	The military/government controls most mecha, but some private citizens have them
5	Everyone has mecha, but the PCs are more powerful/experimental
6	Everyone has mecha. The PCs are no more powerful (except that they Combine)

FACTIONS

Mecha Overdrive Edition will have more charts for determining factions (sides in the conflict.) However, this is a quick and dirty version for determining factions in a Combiners setting.

First, roll 1D6+1 (because there have to be more than 1) to determine how many factions there are. Then roll 2D6 for each faction. This will give you an overview of the faction that you can flesh out.

Roll 1D6	Faction Nature
1	Government
2	Small Private Army
3	Military
4	Intelligence Agency
5	Citizen's Group
6	Meritocracy (Union of skilled geeks, powerful psions, etc.)

Roll 1D6	Faction Attitude
1	Paranoid
2	Hostile
3	Pacifist
4	Expansionist
5	Altruistic
6	Neutral

There is no definite time period for brainstorming. It should last as long as the group has enthusiasm for adding details. Use the charts above as needed to keep ideas flowing.

This stage will have a natural ebb and flow that is largely driven by the frequency (and forcefulness) of participation. Of course, in a group of more than 1, not all players are going to just shout things out, so the GM should be sure that everyone has had a chance to speak before moving on to the next step.

Once everyone has had their say, move to Step 3.

GENERATING COMBINER PILOTS

STEP 3: THE CHECKLIST

Once brainstorming has died down, the group should have a pretty good idea of what the SRS will be about. Still, there are some things that are almost required in a Mecha SRS. The GM should take a minute and run through the following checklist just to make sure everyone has agreed on all of the critical SRS details. It is important that everyone involved in the SRS creation agree on these since those decisions will form the backbone of the setting.

The checklist:

1. Time period
2. Overall technology
3. The Nature of Mecha
4. Availability of Mecha
5. Number of Mecha Models
6. Types of Archetypes
7. History of the World
8. Who is trying to kill who?
9. Theme
10. Mooks (what form--tanks, infantry, helicopters, Elementals in power armor, heavy lifters)

(As an aside, the checklist is basically taken directly from the Setting Creation in Mecha with some of the less interesting parts removed.)

Going back to Ronin Fusion Superblade, let's answer all of the questions from the checklist.

Time period. Ronin Fusion Superblade is set in about the same period as James Clavell's novel *Shogun*, roughly Japan in 1550s, before Western technology made the firearm prevalent in combat. The Japanese people of Ronin Fusion Superblade have been shown there is a world outside their borders.

Still, the Japanese people are not as concerned about the rest of the world because of what is happening at home.

Still, there are some big differences between historical Japan and the world of Ronin Fusion Superblade. The first is the presence of Mecha and the second is that the land is far more desolate, due to the Dishonorable Lord Prefect and the Greater Kami.

Overall technology for this SRS, technology is about what you would find in 16th century Japan. One difference that loosely fits under "technology", is due to the presence of the Greater Kami and Lesser Kami, these Japanese are far more skilled at interacting with the kami spirits that inhabit the SRS. (Which, incidentally, is how there are mecha in the setting.)

This segues nicely into the nature of mecha. Mecha are pieces of powerful kami that inhabit bodies of wood and stone to create mecha. They are not generally available, in fact the only mecha in the setting belong to the five Ronin and the evil Kami. This means there are exactly 5 models of mecha (one for each piece of Superblade) and 1 Archetype: Ronin.

History of the world and who is trying to kill who are covered in the write up of the SRS in the pages that follow. Suffice it to say, a full back story concerning the defeat of Lord Yoshitsune and the injustices that caused the Ronin to fight back will be covered, as are the factions.

You can start to see how this works and how each of the questions combines to form a complete picture of the SRS and the world the characters will inhabit. Once the world is fleshed out

GENERATING COMBINER PILOTS

to this level can the players and the GM have a shared sense of this new world they are about to go make better/sow chaos/destroy.

STEP 4: WHO IS TRYING TO KILL WHO?

Step 4 should be covered in Step 3, but if not, give factions all the TLC they deserve.

Next to the Idea in Step 1, factions and why they are trying to kill each other are the most important parts of the SRS. As far as I am concerned, Mecha has to have a minimum of two sides that are opposed to each other or the game falls flat. Now, just because I advocate two sides, please don't hear that as a vote for black-vs.-white, us=good and them=bad storylines. There has to be depth and complexity. The best stories are when all sides think they are doing right, it's just that their "right" puts them at odds with each other.

The thing is in Mecha there has to be a reason to fight and a clear group to fight. (This is due, in no small part, to fact that GMs are mandated by the rules to pick a fight with players once an episode.) Having factions opposed to each other helps drive that.

You can have games without clear factions,

but it's harder to drive the story. In the name of pure honesty, I hate running Special Research School games because there is no defined enemy. In SRS games, during character creation, the group picks an enemy group (usually football jocks) to hate. But given the open nature of the setting, that falls away because there is no pressure for the group to work together and, in fact, they often don't. This means that characters get pulled into fights for no reason (or the school geek learns to throw a tight spiral on the mecha football field.) In *Godblind*, on the other hand, the bad guys are a group of 8 feet tall "gods" who will kill you on sight. That's conflict.



GENERATING COMBINER PILOTS

To put it differently, if you leave Step 4 and the SRS doesn't automatically suggest a clear conflict, I strongly recommend you go back and add a few.

In Ronin Fusion Superblade, the conflict is clear. The Ronin, who once served Lord Yoshitsune are out to avenge his death at the hands of the Dishonorable Lord Perfect. Along the way, the pieces of Superblade are used to fight with since they, too, want to defeat the Dishonorable Lord Prefect. That, too, is conflict.

Oh, as a side note. During Step 3 and 4, it's not uncommon for a player to decide he really likes a faction. This is good because he will take ownership of the faction and oftentimes ends up spending far more time adding depth to it than someone who doesn't feel the same passion. On the other hand, don't let the player who likes a faction dominate the conversation or try to only get the best stuff for her side.

Also, when fleshing out factions, don't just include descriptions. Factions need NPCs. The GM may have to flesh out the NPCs, but the group should get the chance to decide who the major figures are in each faction.

STEP 5: THE RULES

Once the story elements are locked down, it's time to get mechanical. At this stage, a number of things should happen (and in this approximate order.)

- Determine damage types (this is largely for flavor, but good to have)
- Disallow Configurations (do any not make sense?)

- Determine any special rules (Combiners? New skills? Anything else needed?)
- Offer to assign the task of creating Models to the group (In a group of more than 1, players may wish to create mecha models to use in the game.)
- Offer to assign creation of Archetypes to the group (Again, if there is more than 1 person in the group, let players create Archetypes.)
- Offer to assign non-mecha units (let players design mooks and sturdy, non-mecha units like tanks.)
- Offer to assign NPCs (This is at the GM's discretion, but players may want to generate a few famous enemy aces. That level of ownership makes the enemies that much more fun to crush on the battlefield.)

In terms of Ronin Fusion Superblade, most of these decisions were easy. The damage types include: Melee, Impact, and Spirit. After careful consideration, none of the Configurations were disallowed. There was some thought to disallow Transformer, but in an SRS with mecha are formed from trapped spirits, the sky really should be the limit.

As far as special rules, the Combiner rules need to be there (duh...) However, there is also something special about being Ronin, especially when you consider romanticized ideas of Japanese honor. Because of this, an Honor mechanic was added which helps govern role play and makes it interesting.

All of the 5 Models, the single Ar-