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Shadowrun (2nd Edition) is the main rulebook needed to play second edition Shadowrun, and it's essential for anyone who wants to Gamemaster it. It includes all the rules necessary to play the game, and is a good improvement over the first edition rules, including as it does most of the improvements and rules expansions published between 1989 and 1992.

Shadowrun Details

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From Reader Review Shadowrun for online ebook

Chris Van Dyke says

After Rolemaster, the game that defined my weekends as a teenager. To this day I love the premise, the world, the dark, gritty blend of fantasy and near-future sci-fi that works so much better than it seems it should. System wise, I still feel that the 2nd edition magic system is one of the best ever. Its loose, free-form, and alows the user to amplify power on a near unlimited level, at a high cost of risk and possible death. And of course the net-running rules are quick and intuitive as well. I was nearly always an Elven Decker. Combat was nothing amazing but it worked and was quick, so it lent itself to story-based games where a random ambush didn't bog down the entire evening. All you needed to play were D6 (imagine!), which lent to convenience, if at a loss of nerd-cool points; borowing mom's yatzee dice is simple, but sort of lame.

Malum says

I found out about Shadowrun through the (really good, in my opinion) Sega game. I was a huge fan of that, so when I found out that it was a tabletop RPG I had to grab it.

The setting is a mashup of cyberpunk and fantasy, and it did it pretty well.

David Winston says

Best Futuristic game on the market!

David Sarkies says

A Dark Future Where Magic has Returned
8 March 2012

This game was really cool, though unfortunately like many roleplaying games complexity is the rule. However it was unique in many ways, and it is that uniqueness that pretty much catapults this game to the top of the game ladder. In a way it surpasses Dungeons and Dragons, but with me Dungeons and Dragons always has a place in my heart. The reason I say this is because Dungeons and Dragons was designed as and has always been, a very generic fantasy roleplaying game. One can take the system and pretty much put it into any setting (though some require much more work than others). This meant that the game was not tied to a specific world.

What sets Shadowrun apart is the rules. Unlike many roleplaying games, Shadowrun only uses six-sided dice, however they are used in such a way as to create complexity in the game system. As a friend once said, 'Shadowrun uses dice in a way that I have never thought possible'. A similar system was also developed by Whitewolf initially with Vampire the Masquarade, but later with all of the World of Darkness settings.

The setting of Shadowrun was different, though it is tied directly into this setting. While one could transfer the rules to another setting much more work would be required to adapt it as such. The setting is the world, originally 60 years in the future, but now more like 40. In the intervening time magic had returned to the world, corporations have replaced governments as the rulers, and technology has advanced to the point where we can enter computers with our mind and also enhance our physical attributes with cybernetics and biotech.

While the magic aspect sets it apart, the other aspects have clearly been borrowed from Gibson's Neuromancer. In fact Neuromancer is recommended reading for Shadowrun. As such, it is difficult to say that Shadowrun is visionary with regards to how society has developed, namely because Gibson had envisioned that years before. Still, nobody could have ever imagined that computers and the internet would become such a dominant part of our lives. When I was a kid the only computers in our suburb were owned by my father and two others. However, as I entered High School the Commodore 64 suddenly hit the shelves, and pretty much dominated the home-computer scene for at least 8 years. The Commodore is now a distant memory, and game consols are now the norm (and everybody pretty much owns a computer). As for cybertechnology, unfortunately we are simply nowhere near that yet.

Jed says

Shadowrun 2nd Edition was my first introduction to the game system. I loved it! There were elements of that world, including the resurgence of magic and the reintroduction of "meta-humans" (orks, trolls, elves, dwarves) that really piqued my interest, coming from AD&D.

The system itself is very good for fast-paced action, but not that great for the parts that I really wanted it to be good at: the technology aspects like riggers (drone drivers) and deckers (future hackers). The tech problems aside, the game offered a rich environment and the system was fine for pick-up games with standard archetypical characters.

I believe SR is now in its 5th ed and there are some real overhauls that are great. This being what it was, though, is what go me into the SR world and I love it. I prefer tech + magic over simply cyberpunk (which usually does not involve magic). My boat is officially floated.

Carl Klutzke says

Amazing setting. But I hated the rules. And the inclusion of cyber space and astral space in the setting meant that some players were going to twiddle their thumbs waiting because they couldn't go there.

NightAuditMan says

I haven't checked out 4th Ed yet but I still like this version.

Noah says

One of the Ur-examples of a game that has 5000 different ways of saying whether or not you 'succeed' at a task when one would do. Way too complicated, character creation takes forever, and the whole game feels haphazard. I like the setting, but when has setting ever been enough for me to put up with bloated rules?

Chris Van Dyke says

Why must every new edition of an RPG utterly gut the aspects of the game I most loved? 3rd ed. evicerated the intuitive, maliable magic-system I loved, and got rid of the quick, punishing HP damage as well. Read the rules, never bothered to play it.

Paul Perry says

Ah, one of my all time favourite RPGs. It is in the second half of the 21st century. Magic has returned to the world, large sections of the population have mutated into new sub-species of humanity (which become named dwarves, elves, orcs, trolls, etc, for their resemblance to figures of myth), mega corporations hold more power than nations, a new information structure that replaced the World Wide Web allows true immersive cyber reality, nations have fractured and monsters can be found in the dark back alleys.

in concept, it always sounded to me very much like some old-fashioned, sword&sorcery, Tolkien fanatic Middle Earth Roleplaying gamers had the following conversation:

Larry: dud, did you read Neuromancer yet?

Curly: man, that was so awesome! and i'm just reading a book called Snow Crash, where this hacker is REALLY a hacker because he's like awesome with a katana!

Moe: wow! that sound's awesome! i thought some more katanas would have made Neuromancer even better. you now what else would have made it truly awesome?

Larry and Curly: What man?

Moe: some like orcs and trolls and elves and wizards...

all: wooooooooow

and, to be honest, the first edition was a bit like that, with a horribly clunky system, but by third edition not only had the system evolved into something more workable (and a few tweaks of my own improved further, like making dice rolls open-ended and allowing multiple successes) the authors had begun to use the ideas of fracturing society (and humanity) to point a mirror at some real-world issues. the most obvious is racism. when skin colour is no longer the most obvious physical attribute, and the blueprint of what is human has to be suddenly expanded to include shapes so far from the baseline this obviously causes problems (as Terry

Pratchett once said "black and white live in perfect harmony - and gang up on green").

Three examples. One adventure involved the characters encountering the ghost of a young orc boy in a hospital and their investigations uncovering that a leading politician isn't who he had seemed. In the early days of 'goblinisation' (as the process 'mutation' was called) a wealthy couple swapped their suddenly deformed young son with an foundling, who grew up to be the politician. The city of San Fransisco is now a protectorate of Japan (in the desettlement that resulted in the break up of the USA Japan moved into to 'Frisco to protect Japanese interests and stayed) the changed human subtypes are not granted citizenship and are forced to live outside the city, crossing checkpoints early in the morning to work at menial jobs - a clear analogy to the Palestinian territories today. In earlier editions, the descriptions of the orc and troll subspecies (or meta humans, as they are called) described them as having a higher physical strength but low intelligence, and being largely nocturnal. In third edition, these sociological reports are referred to, but the question of whether the intelligence discrepancy is down to educational discrimination and the so-called nocturnalism down to not wanting to mix more than necessary with other people when you're treated like a mutant.

Throw in lots of action, gunplay, car chases, cyber crime, political shenanigan and gunplay (i know i mentioned it twice, the players like their big guns) and you have an entertaining, involved background in which to grow interesting characters and have some stonking adventures.

Holistr says

Cyberpunk variation on AD&D. This opened a completely new world for me and my pals.
Turn on your smartlink Chumer,

and remember....

Never trust a Dragon!

Devin says

Despite my fears that mixing fantasy with cyberpunk would create a mess, I found that I liked this game more than R. Talsorian's original Cyberpunk RPG. The thought and consistent details put into the setting really worked well to create a vibrant and evocative world. I was never really able to get a handle on the setting, though, which always seemed overly complex to me.

IrgendwasmitFaber says

duplikat

Alessandra says

Oh my, I remember the cyber-future of 1992. It was all dark and cynical. The Japanese were going to rule the world. All the computers and the people were going to be connected with *physical wires*. The worldwide network of computers was called the Matrix; you fought virtually in the Grid. Not to mention the big, big hair.

Well, I enjoyed playing it, anyhow.