

PYRAMID[®]

Issue 3/12 October '09

TECH AND TOYS



**MORE ULTRA!
MORE TECH!**

by Demi Benson

MORE SURVIVAL AND CAMPING GEAR

by Stephen Dedman

**PSI-POWERED
IMBUEMENTS**

by Rev. Jason "P.K." Levine

THE NECTAR BOX

by J. Edward Tremlett

PAPER CELLS

by Brian Ranzoni

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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IN THIS ISSUE

With the big annual shopping period fast coming upon us, so arrives the time for browsing through pages of cool stuff. And speaking of "pages of cool stuff," this issue of *Pyramid* gives you dozens of interesting items and cool "toys" for your adventurers.

First, we offer expanded choices and advances from some of the gear in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* in *More Ultra! More Tech!* Selections range from survival gear to weapons.

Extrapolating on modern scientific developments, *Paper Cells* looks at a new kind of power source that can coexist with or replace *GURPS'* traditional power cells.

Jason "P.K." Levine, author of *GURPS Psionic Powers*, explores how you can combine that volume with *GURPS Power-Ups 1: Imbuements* to create your very own psionic super soldiers in *Psi-Powered Imbuements*.

Plug yourself into the cosmic unconsciousness with *The Nectar Box*. This generic article introduces what sounds like a perfect solution to the galaxy's ills. What could *possibly* go wrong . . .

In many space campaigns, much of the time in which you're not roaming the universe is spent trying to get a good night's sleep on a strange planet. For such expeditions, you need the right equipment. Stephen Dedman (author of *GURPS Dinosaurs*) might just have what you seek for these *GURPS* campaigns in *More Survival and Camping Gear*.

This month's *Random Thought Table* looks at how to regulate getting rid of old gear. As a hint: for folks looking to trade stuff in, it's not a *good* picture . . .

If you need a better way to keep track of the tech and toys you have, consider this issue's handout: *Tracking Cards*. With this system, you can sort your goodies – or your abilities – with relative ease.

A couple of mini-articles and *Murphy's Rules* round out the issue in *Odds and Ends*. Finally, the issue ends with an in-game option to preserve all these wonderful toys in *Reality Backup, Inc.*

Things don't end; they just accumulate.

– Russell Hoban

Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

Dark Blue: *GURPS* Features

Purple: Other Features



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FROM THE EDITOR

GADGETS AND GIZMOS AND TOYS, OH MY!

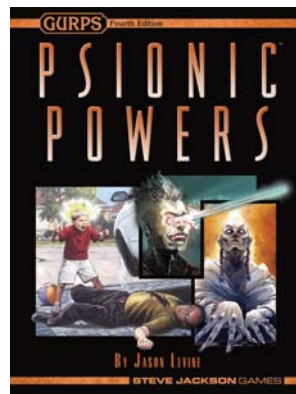
For all the *GURPS* fans we have reading these pages, we hope you like the amount of “crunchiness” in this issue. Getting “Tech and Toys” right takes a lot of extra care and elbow grease! Special thanks to Jason “P.K.” Levine – the new Assistant *GURPS Line Editor* – for his help at polishing these words into finely honed bits. Be sure to check out his contribution beginning on p. 24!



While several of the articles contain ideas that can be adapted to just about any game system, one interesting realization I had while putting this issue together is how interconnected *GURPS* books have gotten lately. *Psi-Powered Imbuements* combines ideas from two recent supplements into one piece. Several articles build off of *GURPS Ultra-Tech* (of course), as well as *GURPS High-Tech*. Even the two *Pulp Guns* volumes get a shout-out!

Tying it into the “Tech and Toys” theme, the PDF format of *GURPS Fourth Edition* books opens up many tricks and research options that were impossible when I started playing *GURPS*, nearly 20 years ago. For example, how many

instances are there of the word “toy” in *GURPS Ultra-Tech*? (Nine, including a weird one involving the UPC symbol.) I remember how many hours I spent in college sifting through my softcovers, trying to find a piece of information I knew was somewhere. Nowadays, it would be trivial. With a laptop, I could find bits of trivia in an instant; my entire *GURPS* library fits on a \$20 memory card. Having digital copies also means I can print out select pages from electronic books for notes, as needed. My diet beverage is currently sitting on a stack of pages from three different e23 releases. The future may be scary, but it’s also really fun.



WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

We love to get your feedback! Did you use the *Tracking Cards* in some neat or innovative way? Is the *Appendix Z* a waste of space? Our souls are plated with durable molybdenum armor; we can take anything you throw our way! Please feel free to let us know what works and what doesn’t.

Send comments or questions to pyramid@sjgames.com, or post online on our forums at forums.sjgames.com.

If you’d like to try your hand at writing for us, we’d love to consider you to become part of our text-manipulating family! Check out guidelines at sjgames.com/pyramid/writing.html

I really liked it. I found quite a bit of it very exciting.

– trooper6, on the Steve Jackson Games forums

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MORE ULTRA! MORE TECH!

BY DEMI BENSON

GURPS Ultra-Tech provides a plethora of possibilities when it comes to futuristic technology. Even so, human ingenuity couldn't possibly be confined to one book, and there's no reason to believe the future won't be just as innovative.

Here, then, are a number of new options that expand on many possibilities presented in *GURPS Ultra-Tech*. Some of these technologies build on and extrapolate from what's in that book, while others are new.

CORE TECHNOLOGIES

While often not directly useful, revisions or alterations to underlying technology can make a big difference to other gadgets.

I didn't have everything I needed – but I did have an ace in the hole. My stealth luggage concealed a suitcase nanofac – the spy's best friend.

– Special Agent Gabrielle,
GURPS Ultra-Tech

POWER

In the modern era, gadgets have an unending number of options to keep themselves powered. It's likely this trend will continue in the future. Here are a few more options to keep the juice running freely.

For a closer look at another power option, see the *Paper Cells* article on pp. 12-15.

Backpack Power Unit (TL9^)

A solid-state portable nuclear battery unit, this device can charge an E cell in one hour and has connectors for any size power cell. It lasts one year, then should be replaced. It has DR 40, HP 15, and HT 15. Causes a radiation leak (1 rad/hour) if damaged and disabled (fails a HT check), but cannot explode. \$50,000, 50 lbs. LC2.

Solar Backups

Explorers and frontier colonists might have uncertain access to power plants. Adding small solar panels to gadgets lets them trickle-charge in daylight. It costs 20% of the cost of the power cells. Recharging could take a few days to weeks, depending on the device's surface area relative to power capacity.

PERSONAL GEAR: CLOTHING

Here is another option to add to the clothing options in *Ultra-Tech* (pp. 38-40).

Waterproof Coating (TL9)

Truly waterproof fabrics become available in TL8, although they suffer some degradation after a dozen cleanings. By TL9, water does not penetrate the weave even when completely immersed for years, and water-based paints, dyes, and chemicals sheet off instantly. It has no effect on oil-based fluids and solvents. Any garment can be bought waterproof; add 50% to cost at early TL9, 25% at TL9, 10% at TL10, free at TL11-12.

Adventure idea: Take any of the gear here and crank up its usefulness. Then get the heroes to protect the plans or prototype from competing corporations.

PAPER CELLS

BY BRIAN RANZONI

"We should have brought spares," Agent Psykes complained. His HUD display showed 2% power remaining. "C cells aren't exactly rare gems."

Agent Bane stared into the darkness of the mine. Readings indicated high levels of methane and radon. Already, the scrubbers in her helmet whizzed. She grinned. "We don't need C cells."

She stepped carefully around a gear from the blasted elevator. Somewhere up the shaft, they heard the girl shouting curses, even above the guttural chant of the cyber ninjas. Bane pulled the cover off an emergency light, and then disconnected its power deck.

"Yeah," considered Psykes, "But we can't share the same pack."

"We don't need to." Bane opened the deck to reveal a stack of black film. "Paper batteries. Just fold, spindle, and mutilate until it fits."

Her grin turned grim. "Just enough juice for the tunnel. But you know what they say. The way out is through."

At the bleeding edge of the digital age, paper once again revolutionizes the world. Campaigns set in the microtech age and beyond often use generic power cells (*Ultra-Tech* p. 18). However, alternate means of power often coexist. Whether for realism, punch, or variety, one alternative is the paper cell.

PAPER IS YOUR FRIEND

As a nanocomposite, paper cells store massive energy in minimal mass. One postage stamp slice powers a light diode for days. A sheaf of battery paper can drive an electric car. Power grains may be impregnated in muscle fibers to give them a boost, or supply artery-cleaning microbots. Biodegradable and even edible, the paper cell fits anywhere a sheet of construction paper will go. Paper cells may be portrayed as a catalyst for a TL9 society.

Sizes of Paper Cells

Paper cells fall under standard sizes, rated from AAA to F. (These sizes differ from regular power cell sizes; see p. 15 for two possible conversions.) One B paper cell provides the same power as a modern lithium AA battery. Each size category increases capacity nine times, and may be stacked or cut down accordingly (see *Jury-Rigging*, p. 14). Further stats are given in the boxed text on pp. 13 and 14. Paper cells are rechargeable.

AAA Paper Cell: Sand-grain cells stimulate body tissue and micro-medical devices.

AA Paper Cell: Rice cells power tiny devices, including: hearing aids, body implants, and insect-sized robots.

A Paper Cell: Stamp cells power common small devices, including: wrist computers, pocket lights, and hideaway guns.

B Paper Cell: Playing-card cells are the baseline unit, due to capacity and convenient handling. B cells power net phones, electronic binoculars, and various pistols.

C Paper Cell: Letter-sheet cells are the largest retail size. They are mainly used in computers and power decks (see below). C cells may be fed into any standard printer.

D Paper Cell: Newspaper sheet cells are the standard industrial unit, from which smaller cells are cut. They may be ordered factory direct or purchased in outlets. D cells are often built into the hulls of cars, small boats, aircraft, and powered armor!

E Paper Cell: Large bed-sheet cells. These are medium industrial units, used in large piles or thick sheaves. They supply anti-air lasers, and truck-mounted radars, and are built into wind turbine and solar arrays. E cells are the largest size normally available at a factory-outlet store.

F Paper Cell: Large tent cells. Intended for special and heavy operations, such as storing emergency power onboard space and sea vessels, or driving electric cargo trucks and trains. F cells are also built into the walls of collapsible structures, such as electronic tents for arctic explorers, search-and-rescue smart huts, and portable military buildings.

Power Decks

Seedy Brent stepped shivering into the light. As sensors whirred close to his body hairs, the star orcs rummaged through his luggage. "What dis?" one demanded.

"A telescope for stargazing," he said, "That's why tourists come to Saturn, chief."

"Hrgh! Why 'tourist' need pistol!" The chief orc hoisted another offending device.

"Typical Terran camera. You've probably seen a dozen like them since you, uh, took over customs."

Another orc touched a deck of cards to its enormous nostrils. For the first time Brent wasn't shivering because of the cold. The beast flicked open the pack and drew a jack.

"Enough, Morg!" the chief shoved his subordinate, "Remember last time you eat human paper!"

Brent dressed himself with relief. Later, as he attached his telescope to the camera, he considered himself lucky. "If its taste was any better than its smell," he thought, "I'd have been orc dinner." Every B cell was needed if he was going to take down the Grimy Lord. Seedy Brent wired the card deck into his covert laser carbine.

For more gadgets, check out *GURPS High-Tech* and *GURPS Bio-Tech*.

MORE SURVIVAL AND CAMPING GEAR

BY STEPHEN DEDMAN

In the future, “roughing it” may well result in a lifestyle that would make modern folks jealous, while still providing in a disconnect from many aspects of an ultra-tech life. Always of interest to exploration-minded heroes as well as colonists, here are some items useful to those away from civilization.

SHELTERPACK (TL10)

Originally designed by a retired Survey Service scout, and popular with soldiers, refugees, and recreational backpackers, the shelterpack uses memory bioplas, buzz fabric, and solar paint to compress many wilderness survival tools into the lightest possible package. It can pack itself into a box the size of an attaché case for easy storage, or unfold to form the following items.

Pack: A standard frame backpack (*Ultra-Tech*, p. B288) or hard suitcase (*Ultra-Tech*, p. B288) with five square feet of solar paint exposed.

Tent: A one-man unpressurized tent. Survival modifier +2. In Earth-normal daylight, the solar paint provides enough power to run a vapor canteen (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 76), survival foodfac (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 70), and recharge power cells. Shelterpacks can be joined together to make larger tents for more people: If 16 or more shelterpack tents are hooked up together, they constitute a solar power array providing external power (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 20).

Waterproof Poncho: A hooded black cloak that protects against wind and rain and provides some protection against both heat and cold (-20° to 120° F if worn over ordinary clothing and suitable footwear). This is often worn over an expedition suit (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 178); its solar paint helps keep the power plant charged. It's also useable as a heavy cloak in combat (p. B287) and has DR 1 and +4 to Holdout.

Boat: The shelterpack can be changed to two possible configurations: a two-person enclosed kayak (*High-Tech*, p. 232), or a flat-bottomed open coracle.

Sled: It can be used as a toboggan, a pulka, or a stretcher.

Saddle and Saddlebags: The standard setting is for an equine or gheap (p. 35) or robot equivalent, but it can be reprogrammed for other mounts.

When completely empty, the shelterpack can reconfigure itself between forms in 1d+9 seconds. Anything left inside it will be ejected downward; this causes the reconfiguring process to take (1d+4) times as long, and can be awkward for the occupant. A shelterpack incorporates a printed tiny computer (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 22) and datapad, and can respond to verbal commands; smart owners secure these with a voiceprint or other ID, to prevent pranksters turning their boats into suitcases while midstream.

Standard military-issue shelterpacks are rugged (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 15) and available only in black: \$1,500, 12 lbs, LC4. Halve the cost for a non-rugged (but possibly more colorful) civilian version.

Military shelterpacks may also incorporate infrared cloaking (+\$1,500; *Ultra-Tech*, p. 99) and/or reversible chameleon cloak lining (+\$1,000 to +\$8,000; *Ultra-Tech*, p. 99) for use in tent or poncho mode. Optional extras for both military and civilian models include upgraded computers (*Ultra-Tech*, pp. 22-23) and communicators (*Ultra-Tech*, pp. 43-45).

At TL11, shelterpacks that reconfigure into bioplas pressure Tents (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 77) become available: \$3775, 12 lbs, LC 4.

MORPH MATTOCK (TL10)

A heavier version of the morph axe (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 83), the morph mattock places a removable two-pound memory-metal head on the end of a conventional (nonmagnetic and nonconducting) telescoping handle that collapses to two feet. It serves as a shovel (*High-Tech*, p. 25), double-bitted axe (*High-Tech*, p. 25), pickaxe, pry bar, paddle, fishing rod, or just the proverbial six-foot pole – or, for the more aggressive, a long fishing spear (not balanced for throwing) or naginata.

GURPS Traveller: Far Trader offers guidelines for commerce in a futuristic setting.

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

GURPS rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

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