BLOCKBUSTER!

A Movie-Making RPG by Duffy Austin

BLOCKBUSTER! is a game about being a star!

Formula Pictures has fallen on hard times—No one is seeing their artsy, ground-breaking films! In desperation, they sign some of the world's hottest stars for movies without scripts or directors. It falls to these celebrities to make up the story as they go –each convinced that they are the star!

The goal of BLOCKBUSTER! is to work together to complete a three act film. Unfortunately, you are all narcissists, so you are all also competing to be the main character. The studio couldn't care less, as having major names like yourselves involved pretty much guarantees that the film will make money (especially considering what's saved on a script, directors, producers, etc.). It's entirely up to your team of self-involved shmucks to put together a story that is remotely coherent.

Blockbuster is a game-masterless, rules-lite, dice-pool based role-playing game where players take on roles in more ways than one. They don't just fill the role of a character, they fill the role of the *actor* playing a character!

HOW THE GAME WORKS

BLOCKBUSTER! takes place over three acts. The overarching plot is determined by the players as the film goes along. Each act has a goal declared by the Act Director that must be achieved for the act to be complete. The person who won the previous act becomes the new director and determines the goal for the next act, keeping in mind that everything that has already happened in the story is canon.

To win an act, a player must complete three successful scenes, earning points called **Star-power** that makes them the center of the story and allows their character to complete the act goal. To complete a scene, a player must declare what they want to do, and what Talent or Genre they are going to use to accomplish it. The player rolls the number of six-sided dice (d6) that correspond to the Talent or Genre they are using, and if any of the dice role a 4, 5, or 6, the scene is considered a success.

MAKING AN ACTOR

Begin by coming up with a name for your actor. You can base them off of an existing personality or make up a new one from scratch.

TALENTS

Players create their actor by first determining their Talents. These are the stats that help players succeed at being BLOCKBUSTER! superstars. Players have 3d6 to divide into their Talents. **NO TALENT CAN HAVE MORE THAN 3d6 PUT INTO IT.**

If a player has a successful roll with a Talent on a turn, and on their next turn/ Upstaging they roll that same Talent again, they must subtract one die from the roll.

EX: Glenn has 3d6 in Screen Presence. If he rolls Screen Presence for three consecutive turns, he can roll 3d6 on the first, 2d6 on the second, and 1d6 on the third.

Talents are:

- **PHYSICALITY**: The actor's ability to perform physically impressive acts. This Talent is used to test physical feats like gunfights or winning the big ski race to save the youth center.

- **SCREEN PRESENCE**: The actor's ability to charm those around them. This is when an actor has to interact with another actor or extra, such as when they have to give a rousing speech to Congress or convince their mistress that life is worth living, even after discovering that she has cancer.

- **METHOD**: The actor's ability to fall into a role and understand things about the film like the setting. This is used when an actor has to do something technical like navigate a mountain pass, or restore a 1957 Chevy Convertible in order to bridge a generational-gap between father and son.

When a player rolls to see if they succeed, they declare the Talent they are using and roll the number of dice attributed to that Talent. A roll of 4, 5 or 6 is a success. A scene needs only one success in order to be successful. If the player is successful, they gain one Starpower.

The player describes the scene to make the story about themselves, tying it into the Talent used for the success. They also explain how this scene moves them closer to the act's goal.

EX: Joel has to find a date to the big dance. He wants to take Clara, the prettiest girl in school. So he makes a Screen-Presence check and passes (one dice results in 4). So that means he gives a rousing confession of love to Clara makes her interested in going to the dance with him.

If the scene does not succeed, the player explains how they *tried and failed* to make the story about their actor and move the story forward. They also receive a **Studio Note.**

Talent rolls can incorporate dice from **Continuing a Scene** and **Filmography**.

The player needs three Starpower to end the act, so the third Starpower earned means the player achieved the act's goal.
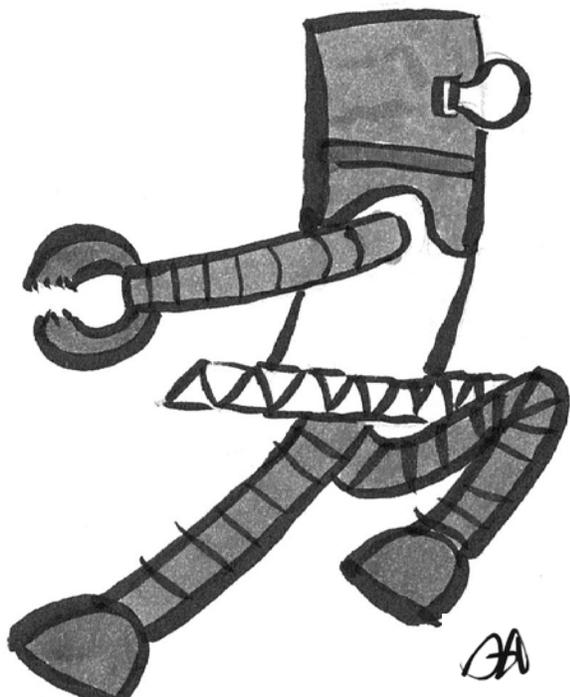
GENRES

Actors also have specialties in Genres. These are types of films where the actor thrives. The player has 4d6 to put into Genres. NO GENRE CAN HAVE MORE THAN 3d6 PUT INTO IT.

The different Genres are:

- **ACTION**: Libyan terrorists robbing a bank? Have to race your rival while defusing a bomb on the underside of your car? The world is on the brink of disaster and only one person can make it right!

- **COMEDY**: Nothing is taken seriously. Whether it's a pie to the face, fancy wordplay, or something that takes a humanities degree to understand, things are going to get silly.

- **DRAMA**: Let's get serious for a moment.

- **HORROR**: You'd be on the edge of your seat if you weren't afraid of the fall.

The dice put into Genre are the number of dice rolled to see if a scene succeeds. The requirements for success are the same as Talents: at least one dice must land on a 4, 5 or 6.

If the scene succeeds, the player gets one Starpower and describes how they utilized Genre tropes to make the story about themselves and work their way to achieving the act's goal.

EX: A successful Action roll results in an epic gunfight that moves a player closer to winning a spelling bee; a successful Drama roll results in someone revealing they're pregnant, motivating them to win the same spelling bee.

A player can only roll for the current Genre unless they are attempting to Change the Genre.

If the scene is not a success, they explain how they *tried* to make the story about their actor and move the story forward, and failed. They also receive a **Studio Note**.

Genre rolls can incorporate dice from **Continuing a Scene** and **Filmography**.

The player needs three Starpower to end the act, so the third Starpower achieved means the player achieved the act's goal.

MECHANICS

FILMOGRAPHY

The Filmography is filled with previous films that the player can tap into to aid them in a scene. Every player has five for their actor when they start out. Part of the fun is coming up with a film that the actor has been in and tying in experiences from them into the current situation.

The Three ways players can use a film are to:

- Add 1d6 to any roll.

- Change the Genre

- **Upstage** another player.

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The player may expend these over the course of the three acts.

CHANGING THE GENRE

Sometimes the Genre the story currently takes place in is not one in which a player is strong. If that's the case, the player can try to forcefully change the Genre on their turn. To do this, they sacrifice a film from their **Filmography** and roll the number of dice they have in the desired Genre as normal, factoring in dice from **Continuing the Scene** and the **Filmography** as appropriate. The requirements for success are the same as normal, one of the dice must land on a 4, 5 or 6.

If the scene succeeds, the player describes how they utilized Genre tropes to make the story about themselves and work their way to achieving the act's goal.

EX: The film is currently an Action movie where aliens are invading the planet. Paul isn't skilled in Action but has 3d6 in Drama. He declares that he is trying to change the Genre, sacrifices one of the films from his Filmography, and rolls 3d6. One of the dice lands on a 4, so the scene succeeds. This gets him Starpower. He then explains how he was able to make contact with the aliens through the universal language of music.

If the scene failed, treat as a normal failure.

UPSTAGING

One thing a player may do on another player's turn is try to Upstage them. Thematically, this means that they are trying to take the opposing actor down a peg. This can be butting in on their lines or doing something distracting in the background that endears the audience to one character over another. You can only Upstage someone on their turn.

Mechanically, the player is stealing another player's Starpower for themselves. This is an opposed roll. **The current player declares the Talent or Genre they are going to roll and the person who wants to Upstage them must sacrifice a film from their Filmography.**

Both players roll the number of dice they have attributed to the Talent or Genre being tested, including any dice gained from Continuing the Scene and films from their Filmography.

The player with the most successes Upstages the other. If both players get the same number of successes, they take the successful dice and reroll them until one player has more. For every tie, only reroll successful dice until one player is victorious.

The winning player gets one Starpower. The loser gets a **Studio Note.**

Multiple players can try to Upstage the current player at the same time. The person with the most successes wins.

Studio Notes drawn during Upstaging do not change the Genre.

STUDIO NOTES

Before the game starts, each player writes Studio Notes on five index cards. Studio Notes are changes to character or their motivation that takes effect once the card is received. Cards are put in a pile face down in the center of the group and shuffled.

A Studio Note is a suggestion from the studio for how to change a character to make the film more appealing. For a certain audience or a certain person, it's up to the person writing the note. The player also writes down a Genre they want the story to change to. When the player who failed their Genre roll receives this card, they read it aloud and inform the rest of the players of the story's new Genre.

EX: Daniel fails a roll and gets a Studio Note. Now he acts like a chicken for the rest of the movie and it is now a Comedy until it is changed by a player or via a Studio Note. He reads the card aloud to the rest of the group and they move on to the next player's turn.

A player receives a Studio Note if they fail a scene. Every following scene that player is in they must incorporate as many Studio Notes as possible into them or forfeit getting Starpower. Players are encouraged to keep track of each other's Studio Notes and call out when they are not being used. The player keeps their Studio Notes through the end of the game.

Studio Notes are worth half a point of Starpower at the end of the film when determining the main character. They do not count towards completing a goal during any of the acts.

CONTINUING A SCENE

A player may choose to continue the scene put forward by the player who went before them, building upon the story established and involving other characters in the scenario. If they choose to do this, they can add 1d6 to their dice roll. **Players can Continue a Scene once per Act.**

EX: Glenn just finished his turn, establishing that there was a serial killer in the hotel with the rest of the beautiful rich kids and the power just went out. Karen's turn is next. She continues the scene, claiming that her character heard a sound coming from the attic, and rolls her Screen Presence to convince the others that they will survive the night. Since she is continuing the scene, she adds 1d6 to her 2d6 in Screen Presence roll for a total of 3d6.

PLAYING THE GAME

The First Act

The film takes place across three acts. If this is the first time the group is played as a group, the First Act Director (FAD) is the player with the birthday closest to the day on which the game is played. Subsequent films begin with a FAD who is the player who won the Third Act of the previous film.

The story begins in whatever Genre the FAD chooses. They provide setup for the story and the goal of the Act that must be met for the story to continue. The FAD writes individual roles for characters onto note cards or slips of paper and passes them to the players. **For extra fun, mix up the roles and pass them out randomly.**

Players begin by going around the table and introducing their actors, using their stats in Talents and Genres to build an image of them and using their Filmography to explain the kind of films for which they are known. After they have done that, they reveal the character they will be playing for the film.

Next, going around the table starting with the person on the FAD's left, each player takes one scene to try to achieve the goal set out by the FAD. The FAD goes last in the circuit. This is done until someone gets three Starpower and describes how they achieve the act goal. **Regardless of who wins an act or who upstages who, the order of players always remains the same.**

WINNING THE ACT

To win the act, the Player must gain three Starpower which allows them to complete the act goal. To represent Starpower, use poker chips or other tokens that are easy to pass around.

By winning the act, they become the next Act Director. They determine the goal and Genre of the next act. **This means that they can completely throw out the understanding of the plot so far to add new wrinkles. They must always respect the previous scenes as canon, though, so they still happened. They just might have different meaning now**.

EX: Clair becomes the Second Act Director. She determines that the story is now a Drama where the goal is to save an ancestral family home from being bought out by the bank. She now reasons that the ninjas she fought earlier in the first act, which was an Action movie, were sent by the bank to get her to sign some papers.

The second act is played the same as the first: going around the table, each player tries to earn three Starpower that lets them complete the Act Goal.

The player who wins the Second Act becomes the Third Act Director.

WINNING THE GAME

The Third Act is the last in the story and the player who is first to earn three Starpower determines the fate of the other characters in the story.

At the end of the film, players total up their Starpower from every act. Every Studio Note a player received is equal to half a point of Starpower. The player with the highest value at the end is determined to be the star of the film and is highlighted on all marketing materials!

This player gets to title the film. All players can add this film to their Filmography for future games.

ADVANCEMENT

At the beginning of the next film, players may permanently sacrifice three films from their Filmography to permanently give them a dice that they can put into a Talent or a Genre.

BLOCKBUSTER!

ACTOR:

TALENTS

PHYSICALITY: ☐ ☐ ☐

SCREEN PRESENCE: ☐ ☐ ☐

METHOD: ☐ ☐ ☐

GENRES

ACTION: ☐ ☐ ☐

COMEDY: ☐ ☐ ☐

DRAMA: ☐ ☐ ☐

HORROR: ☐ ☐ ☐

Filmography

BLOCKBUSTER!

ACTOR:

TALENTS

PHYSICALITY: ☐ ☐ ☐

SCREEN PRESENCE: ☐ ☐ ☐

METHOD: ☐ ☐ ☐

GENRES

ACTION: ☐ ☐ ☐

COMEDY: ☐ ☐ ☐

DRAMA: ☐ ☐ ☐

HORROR: ☐ ☐ ☐

Filmography