

RPG Blog Carnival: Gamemaster's Cut

by loottheroom - Thursday, March 15, 2018

<http://loottheroom.uk/rpg-blog-carnival-gamemasters-cut/>



Once again the RPG Blog Carnival has rolled into town. If you missed my last entries in this monthly themed blog-a-thon, you can find them [here](#) and [here](#).

This month the theme was set by [Codex Anathema](#), and it's almost like it was designed specifically for me. Alongside D&D and music, film is my big passion. (My better half practically refuses to be in the room with my best friend and I, since listening to us talk is like having somebody read IMDB to you for a few hours.) This month's theme is all about looking at what movies can bring to the gaming table, and I can't wait to get going on it.

Ready? Good.

It's no real secret that I make heavy (some might say egregious) use of film references in my work. [Adventure Seeds: The Wheelhouse](#) was an homage to prison break films, and is littered with nearly every prison movie reference I could think of; every single adventure hook offered in that title takes the name of a prison movie and its basic plot, and the book features NPCs like Warden Norton Gunton (named for Bob Gunton, who played Warden Samuel Norton in *The Shawshank Redemption*), Warden

Bohnen Barnes (named for Warden Barnes from 1947's *Brute Force*), and a gnollish inmate called Sureshank. [Bulette Storm](#) was very obviously JAWS in a field; it centers around a land shark terrorising a community called Concord ('concord' is sort of a synonym for 'amity') on the eve of their harvest festival, and features a stubborn Mayor named McMahan (an Irish version of the surname Vaughn) and a grizzled old adventurer named Gwint (do I really need to spell this one out to you?).

I'm not going to keep going on about all the movie references I've stuffed into my products, lest I out myself as a complete hack, but trust me when I say that they can also be found in my other releases. I'm a film geek, and I can sometimes be a lazy writer. Sue me.

So, what's the point of all this? The point is that I personally think basing adventures around the plots of films is a really useful tool. Movies - especially action movies - can provide a good narrative framework to hang an adventure around, and their basic three act structure lends itself quite well to a one shot. You don't need to juggle plot points around in your mind, because you're presumably going to pick a film you know quite well to draw from. And, when you players inevitably figure out what you're doing, they're going to enjoy having figured out the adventure. (Then, of course, you spring a nasty surprise on them at the end, a twist to the formula that they didn't see coming because they were so set on their conviction that you were lazy enough to simply steal a story whole-cloth. Don't do that.)

Obviously I'm not the first person to borrow heavily from films. Off the top of my head I can think of a clutch of titles that do just this: Will Doyle and James Introcaso's [Hunter](#) is an homage to *Predator*; [Raiders of the Lost Tomb](#) - while not an adventure in itself - is heavily informed by characters and tropes from cinema, from Jeremy Forbing's homage to Indiana Jones and Tomb Raider in his 'Tomb Robber' to Alex Clippinger's Rambo-esque 'Legendary Guerilla', and everything in between; Alan Tucker's [Elves in Pink](#) is an obvious parody of *Men In Black*.

What I'd like to do today is offer some suggestions for films that I think would make for fun adventures - whether you're just running a game for your group, or writing something for publication. We'll do this in the form of a list, because who doesn't love a good list?

Alien/Aliens

I don't need to tell you the plot of the first two films in the Aliens franchise, do I? Good. I ran a session for my group that was essentially *Alien*, but utilising *slaad* and their tadpoles. They had infested a bathhouse that was situated above some natural hot springs; a series of ventilation shafts ran throughout the building, delivering heat and brutal, gruesome death to the guests. The adventure ended with the party deciding it would be better to simply burn the place to the ground. It's always a lot of fun to have something actively hunt your party, and an unusual environment made this a very memorable session. (I won't lie - I've been planning to write up this adventure properly and publish it for around 18 months now, and still haven't got around to it).

If I were to do this again, I'd probably stat up something similar but *legally distinct from* a Xenomorph, and build myself some nasty little facehuggers to go with them. It's amazing how much chaos you can cause when you throw fast, stealthy enemies at a group and have them aim to do nothing but infect people, even at the expense of their own lives.

Snakes On A Plane

If you read my monthly [DMs Guild](#) roundups you'll have noticed that there has been a resurgence in popularity of airships over at the DMs Guild recently. I really like airships, since they allow you to introduce some fun aerial combat to lower level groups who are otherwise incapable of flight. They're also fun because they drop parties into an environment that they can't easily escape. Throw some snakes into the mix - or, you know, literally any other enemy that can be smuggled aboard the ship and appear seemingly from nowhere - and watch what happens.

Attack On Titan

I don't know about your group, but mine *really* love enemies that they can climb on. And I really love enemies that can pick up bits of buildings, trees, or other characters and throw them at the players. Really I could have picked any kaiju film for this, but there's something about giant humanoid creatures smashing down the city walls and punching through roofing that I really enjoy - and horror is always more effective when the monster looks like you.

Seven Samurai/The Magnificent Seven

I feel like most of us have probably drawn on one of these films at some point in our games, but if you haven't then you should do it immediately. The basic premise of *Seven Samurai* works really nicely as an early campaign adventure - or even Session 1 - where the characters are still getting to know one another and learning how to work together. The basic premise is simple - raiders have been attacking the town, and the locals know exactly when the next attack is going to come. Nobody seems to be able to do anything about it, and the populace are crying out for a group of heroes to save the day. All you need is a location and a cast of characters, and you can let the rest of the drama play out at the table with a minimum of preparation.

Honestly I could go on and on for days, because there are just so many films that make for good adventures. Instead I'll leave it at these four. If you've shamelessly stolen from films in your games, though, I want to hear about it. Drop a story in the comments and tell us about your session!



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