

Reel Adventures

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A Giant Brain Production

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Overview

Players take on the role of heroes in a film, of any genre. They establish a trailer or synopsis to guide the game, and frame scenes involving their hero, his connections or his enemies, in order to gain **impact** to succeed in achieving their drives. Meanwhile the plot builds **momentum** and lays **threats** in their way at every turn.

What do I need to play?

Before you get started playing a game of 'Reel Adventures', you should have a read through the book from cover to cover. You will also need several six sided dice, hence referred to as d6, and make one copy of the script at the back of the book, and as many copies as there are players of the hero sheet, also found at the back of the book. Both these resources can be found on the 'Giant Brain' website as well.

Plotting the Film

Before we start playing we need to establish a couple of things. What is the basic story and who are the heroes and villains?

Synopsis

The player's write down a brief synopsis of the film. They can do this in anyway they want, either describing scenes from a trailer, or merely writing down the kind of blurb you might have on the back of a DVD case.

Plot

What is going to happen? What are the different stages, or acts, of the story going to be? These just need to be rough details so everyone is on the same page.

Nemesis

Who is the big bad in the story?

Acts

There are always 4 acts in a game of Reel adventures, and it is a good idea to lay out approximately what each act is going to be about. There is room on the script to do this.

You need a hero

In a game of 'Reel Adventures' each player is going to be telling the story of one of the **heroes** of the film. Each player needs to create one of these heroes before play begins. Worry about the big sweeps of detail, any nuances will be fleshed out during the story. A lot of the examples focus on 'Pirates of the Caribbean' as this was the film I was thinking about when I first thought about this game.

Archetypes

Write down the sort of archetype you think your hero fits into. This is something like *anti-hero*, *academic*, *love interest* or some other brief description that seems to fit the hero.

Example

Will Turner's archetype is simply 'Hero'. Captain Jack's would most definitely sit in 'anti-hero' and Elizabeth would merely be the 'love interest (Will Turner)'. The more cynical might write it as 'eye candy'.

Drive

Each player also writes down a drive for their hero, the thing that motivates him or her at the start of the story. This may change, or extra ones may be added, over the course of play, but for now it is his one and only drive.

Example

Will Turner in Pirates of the Caribbean may have the drive 'Win Elizabeth's heart'. Captain Jack's drive is obviously 'Gain back control of the Black Pearl'.

Background

A hero gets 5 points to spend on background. These are one line pieces of information about your background that are rated from level 1 – 3.

Level 1	=	A basic part of your past
Level 2	=	An important part of your past
Level 3	=	A fundamental part of your past

However you do not spend these points just now, you merely write them down in the appropriate place on your hero sheet. We will see how, and when, you can spend those points shortly.

Connections

The hero also gets 5 points to put into connections. Connections are rated from level 1 – 3.

Level 1	=	Casual connection, an acquaintance
Level 2	=	A good friend
Level 3	=	Someone you have a strong connection to, love for instance.

As with Background you create connections on the fly during scenes, and we will come to how these are created shortly.

Ability

Now we know who your hero, name and archetype, is and why they are in the story, their drive, we need to know a couple of mechanical things as well. Every hero in a 'Reel Adventure' has 3 **abilities**:

Action	:	How good is the hero in action scenes, fighting etc.
Emotion	:	How good is your hero at getting his feelings across.
Brains	:	How intelligent is your hero.

Each of these abilities is rated from 1 – 3.

Level 1	=	Incompetent
Level 2	=	Average
Level 3	=	Heroic

These 3 abilities start out at 1 for every hero. Every player can spend 2 points to increase these abilities resulting in either a 1,2,2 or 1,1,3 arrangement of abilities.

Example

Will Turner's stats may be something like

<i>Action</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Emotion</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Brains</i>	<i>1</i>

So Will is an emotional, action orientated hero who acts before he thinks.

Anchor Value

This is the total of your abilities and connections. At the start of the game this is obviously 5, as you do not yet have connections. The value will fluctuate over the course of the game, and is used to tell if you are going to be **swept away** or not. See p.xx.

Traits

A hero gets traits that are tied to their abilities. These are basically specific things the hero is good at, like a skill of some description, or a part of his hero, like the fact he is amoral. For every point a hero has in an ability above 1, they may write down a trait related to that ability.

Example

Will Turner's traits would be 'Weaponsmith' under action and 'Honourable' under emotion.

Nemesis

Every hero has a nemesis in the film. This may be a personal one, like Will turner not being able to accept his father was a pirate, or it may be an actual person, like Barbosa is

to Captain Jack. Everyone writes down their nemesis before the game begins and any information they want about that nemesis. A nemesis does not have a level like background or connections.

Shooting the Film

Once everyone has their hero we can start the game.

Acts & Scene Framing

A game of 'Reel Adventures' is split into a series of **acts** that comprise one or more **scenes**. Each act is defined by the players before the start of the story and scenes are defined by the players as the story progresses.

Acts

Each act represents a significant chunk of the story, and defining it before play begins puts each player on the same page as to what is going to happen. You do not have to define every act at the beginning of a game if you do not want to, but some settings may give an overview of the kind of acts you should have to emulate that setting.

A typical story may be laid out like this:

- Act 1:** Opening scene and set-up, which introduces the main protagonists and sets them off on their adventure.
- Act 2:** The heroes fight back, which means the heroes seem to have the upper hand before....
- Act 3:** The enemy revealed, in which the heroes take a beating and all seems lost.
- Act 4:** The final encounter, in which heroes face off against nemeses and their fate is decided.

Scenes

When the game begins each player will take it in turn to **frame**, or create, a scene that becomes part of the story. When it comes to framing a scene a player must include the following:

Location: Where is the scene taking place?

Soundtrack: What sort of music, if any, would be playing in this scene? Remember that overuse of music can be just as bad as under using it.

Cast: Who is there? At least one of the player's hero or one of his allies or enemies must be in the scene.

Focus: What is the focus of this scene? What is going to occur in the scene?

Opening Scene

The first scene in a film sets the rest of the film up. This may focus around only one hero, or it may include every hero. You can be flexible with where that scene lies in the timeline of your plot as well. The player's should decide as a group what form the opening scene will take. The opening scene does not take up any one player's scene slot for the first round, unless that scene focuses exclusively on their character.

First Impressions

The first scene a player frames for their hero is called that hero's **First Impression**. For some hero's this may also be the opening scene. In a **First Impression** scene the player should describe what their hero looks like in some way, and describe something that gives everyone else a good idea of the sort of hero he is.

How many Scenes per act?

At the start of each act the group decides how many scenes are going to be in that act. The number of scenes should be a multiple of the number of players in the game so that each player gets the same number of scenes per act.

For a game lasting 3-4 hours you probably want;

Act 1: Opening Scene + 2 scenes

Act 2: 3 scenes

Act 3: 4 scenes

Act 4: 2 scenes

(Version 0.1 note: This is total guesswork at the moment)

Keep track of how many scenes are in each act.

Playing through Scenes

So now we know how to frame scenes, what actually happens during them, who can say what and when, and how do we resolve any conflicts that will occur.

Impact

Over the course of a film, each hero will get a chance to contribute to the story. The impact pool of each hero, a number of tokens that they can spend to alter the plot, their heroes and the enemy, whoever that may be, represents this. At the start of the game each hero gets 3 **impact** to spend as they see fit. We will see how this is spent in a little while.

Momentum

Momentum builds against each hero as the game progresses. Every time a player frames a scene, whether or not that player is narrating for his hero, that player gains an amount of momentum at the start of the scene. The amount of momentum they gain is dependent on the current Act:

Act 1	=	1 momentum
Act 2	=	2 momentum
Act 3	=	3 momentum
and so on...		

Example

After the opening scene Chris, Becki and Greg both take a turn at narrating a scene for their hero. After this round of narration, each hero has 1 momentum since this is the first act of the film.

We will see how momentum comes into play in **confrontations**.

Nemesis

If your personal nemesis is the same as the plot nemesis, you gain 1 extra momentum each time you frame a scene.

Threat

Whereas momentum represents the plot going against the players, **threats** represent the specific manifestations of the plot trying to hinder the heroes. They are the reason that momentum occurs.

At any time during a scene a player may write down a threat on the script. They write this threat down in the appropriate act, and give it a level from 1 – 3.

Level 1	=	A mild annoyance
Level 2	=	A significant threat
Level 3	=	A serious and immediate threat

Most threats will sit around the 1 or 2 mark with maybe only 1 per act being in the level 3 category. Will we see how threat level is used in **confrontations**.

Lights, Camera!

So how does a scene work. Well once a player has framed the scene, they describe what is going on in it. Depending on the type of scene, the players will be spending **impact** to do something, or trying to gain **impact**. A player may engage in a **confrontation** as part of the scene, and may either **direct the scene** giving an overview of the action, or **act the scene out**, getting other players to take part as NPCs and taking on the roles of their characters.

Control

The player whose turn it is to frame a scene has complete authority over that scene. If they invite other heroes in, or invite players to play a member of the cast, then they do not have narrative authority over that hero i.e. the player portraying that hero or cast member controls what that hero says and does.. The controlling player may outline how they perceive that cast member to be, but the player playing them gets to actually add their own touch in how they portray that cast member.

Action!

Any scene that involves **confrontation** means the player has to fight the plot's current momentum against his hero. A confrontation always involves a **threat** of one form or another. He rolls a number of dice equal to:

Relevant Ability + Level of relevant Background + Level of relevant Connections

The player rolling must describe how his connections and background are relevant to the current confrontation. Another player rolls for the **resistance** of the plot against your hero. They roll a number of dice equal to:

Level of Threat + Current level of Momentum

Each person rolling is looking for a 4+ on each dice. Each 4+ is called a success.

Did I win or lose?

If the hero gets more successes than his resistance, then he may do what he was going to do and he gets the positive results of his piece of action. If it was draw he gets both positive and negative results. If he lost he only gets the negative results. Each type of scene you can frame describes its positive and negative results. In addition a player may take some form of **consequence** from his confrontation, see p.xx.

Bringing in traits

If a player can bring in a relevant trait to a confrontation, then he needs to roll a 3+ for successes instead of a 4+.

Bringing in Drive

If a character can bring their drive into the scene, as a relevant piece of the ongoing story, they may re-roll any failures. This drive can be brought in at any point during the confrontation, even after the dice have been rolled.

Inappropriate use of drive is something the other players will have to regulate, and so it is only by a majority vote of the other players that you are allowed to bring in a drive.

Spending Impact on actions

A player can spend impact on an action before he rolls the dice. He gets one extra dice for each point of impact he spends. Impact may never be spent after rolling the dice.

When does action occur?

The types of scene you can frame are described below, and each one will tell you if you need to engage in a piece of action or not.

Damage

Bashed and bruised but still winning through is how many heroes are seen by the majority of cinema goers. As well as the negative consequences associated with losing a confrontation, a player may also take damage.

Taking Damage

If a player rolls any 1's and loses a confrontation then they have taken damage. They must assign the damage taken to their abilities, connections or backgrounds.

Damage to abilities

This represents damage to your physical self and your mind. You take damage to whatever ability seems appropriate. This can cause an ability to drop to 0.

Abilities at 0

A player may spend 1 impact to use an ability that is temporarily at 0, at his usual level.

Damage to connections

This represents allies being hurt or killed, or your relationship with a connection being damaged. Damage to a connection reduces the level of the connection by the amount of damage assigned.

Damage to Background

This represents you losing faith in your own abilities, training or strength you draw from your past. Damage to a background reduces the level of the connection by the amount of damage assigned.

Healing

Of course heroes do recover quickly.

Healing Ability Damage

When a confrontation is successfully won, a player may heal all his ability damage.

Healing Background and Connection Damage

A player must spend impact to regain his level of background or connection, see below in **Solo Scenes**.

Scenes

Now we know the basics, we can move on to the different kinds of scene each player can frame, and what happens in those scenes. Each scene has a type and underneath a brief description of the mechanics of that scene.

Solo Scenes

A 'Solo Scene' revolves around one hero in particular. This is a chance for the hero to expand his hero sheet, create or destroy connections and generally flesh out his hero. A hero scene may involve one or more of the following and may include other stuff as well.

Weaken a connection

(Reduce level of connection, increase Impact by 2 x level of connection)

A hero may narrate a scene where they betray a connection in some way or form or loosen their ties with that connection. Similarly they may frame the scene around their connection betraying them. They may reduce their connection by as many points as they want and gain twice that amount of impact

Create or strengthen a connection

(Confrontation, Create or Increase Connection or Background)

Similarly you can narrate a scene where you strengthen, or create, a connection in some way or form. You spend impact to increase the level of the connection. Again this scene can be seen from the connection or the player's point of view. A confrontation with the connection must be engaged with the **threat** being the level of connection you wish to gain. Momentum is added into this as normal.

Positive Outcome: Increase Connection level by amount of impact you spent.

Negative Outcome: Lose Impact, and the level of your connection is reduced by one.

Create or strengthen a background

(Flashback scenes)

A hero may also create or strengthen a background. A lot of the time in films this is done through a flashback scene, though it may also be done through conversation with a connection, NPC or one of the other heroes.

A background cannot be weakened or destroyed in anyway as it has already happened.

Confrontations

A player may confront one of the threats on the script as part of a hero scene.

Positive Outcome: Remove threat from script, reduce personal momentum by level of threat.

Negative Outcome: Increase level of threat by 1 up to a maximum of 3, check for **damage**.

Group Scene

This is a scene that involves two or more heroes. When a player frames a group scene, he may only invite, not demand, that other heroes are in that scene. It is up to the player who controls that hero to decide whether or not he wants to be in the scene. A player may invite every hero in the game into his scene if he so wishes.

Combining Forces

When in a group scene the heroes may combine their forces to overcome a threat. Each player must describe how their hero is overcoming their own little problem to help with the overall effort. These are not written down as threats and are merely colour to add to the story. In order to do this each individual player rolls their dice and the number of successes amongst all players are added up. The level of resistance is the total of all the player's current momentum + any threats.

If successful, the level of momentum is reduced by the number of heroes plus the threat overcome for each player. This represents a significant impact against the momentum of the plot and as such encourages combining forces to take down a more powerful enemy.

Nemesis Scenes

These are scenes that focus on a hero's personal nemesis or the plot nemesis and can introduce **threat** for later on in the film. Note these are different from **confrontations** where you tackle a nemesis in one way or form.

Personal Nemesis

This is a scene where you reveal something about your personal nemesis. A player may add background details relating to their nemesis, by spending impact as normal. They may also frame a scene where they confront their personal nemesis and try to overcome it. They roll their **emotion** for this **confrontation** against their current level of **momentum**. There is no threat associated with this confrontation.

Positive Outcome: the hero may change their personal nemesis to something else and add their personal nemesis as a piece of background at level 3. No one is ever without a personal nemesis.

Plot Nemesis

This is a scene where you reveal something about the plot nemesis. A player must add a **threat** to the plot sheet, at a level from 1 – 3. These threats can then be used later on in a **confrontation**.

Finale Scene

This will be the last scene in the game, and represents the final confrontation between the heroes and the plot nemesis. This should wrap up the majority of any dangling plot threads that the players have created and provide a satisfying ending for everyone involved.

In the final scene the players will be confronting the Nemesis and defeating him. When the finale scene starts, the first player to narrate describes all the usual details of the scene. After he has described what his hero is doing, as normal, other heroes may chip in with ideas. This is still done in turn but we are now looking for small pieces of action and pieces of dialogue, keeping the pace going to a dramatic conclusion!

Threat

The threats present in the final scene are all the threats still to be fought from the script. However there is a larger threat from the nemesis himself. The nemesis always has a threat value of 5 in the final scene.

The conclusion

So when does the film end. As we have it at the moment, the finale scene could go on for ever and ever. The total momentum of all players must drop to be equal to or less than the total number of scenes that have been played out. Once this happens the final reel plays out and all the players decide what happens in the end.

Slowing Momentum

As the momentum builds against the players they will need to resist, or risk being **swept away**.

Swept Away!

If at the end of one of a scene he has framed, a player's total momentum is ever greater than the combined value of all his abilities + connections, referred to as their **anchor** value, he has been overcome by the plot, his abilities and friends rendered impotent by the nemesis all the heroes face.

When a hero becomes **Swept Away** they lose control of their own destiny. A swept away hero's next scene must be a **nemesis scene**. This scene must detail how the nemesis defeats, however temporary that may be, the player's hero in a confrontation. The hero takes **damage** equal to the difference between his momentum and anchor value.

Example: Will Turner confronts Barbosa on the Pearl late on in the film. For a while will is 'Swept away' by the plot as Barbosa captures him and takes him to the Isle de Meurta. Will takes damage but then wins a confrontation early on in the finale allowing him to fight alongside Jack.

Once a player has described a **swept away** scene their momentum is halved. If their momentum is still greater than their anchor then their next scene will also be a **swept away** scene.

