Getting Creative with Villains & Vigilantes

Okay, a quick topic this time. Not that the topic is not important, but rather because it's not all that hard to put into text.

TRAPS

Super-Villains LOVE to set traps. Unfortunately, the rule book for V&V does not provide much information about them. Fortunately, the *DNAgents Sourcebook* does actually address some traps rather specifically. Since the book was written by Jack Herman, I think it would be safe to assume that the material is "In the Spirit" of the game rules.

Basically, *DNAgents Sourcebook* (a book I know you have ALL read) treats traps a lot like "Animated Servants" or "nonsentients", which they basically of are. This means that the traps always attack as if they were level 4. Pets and animated servants also attack as level 4, regardless of the level of the controlling character, so it makes sense that a trap would always attack as level 4 regardless of the level of the character who created or set the trap.

Of course, traps get the advantage of "Surprise" if the characters do not make a successful roll to detect hidden. How well the trap is hidden may depend upon the character doing the hiding, and may involve illusions, magical spells, trap doors, or a pile of debris. In these instances the GM should decide how hard the trap is to find, and adjust any character's Detect Hidden roll target value. There is really no way for an Adventure Writer to think of every possible manner by which a trap may be located. Cosmic Awareness might help. A power that allows a character to sense objects created by evil characters would certainly prove beneficial. Vibratory powers combined with heightened senses might allow two characters to work together and set up a harmonic vibration that will be detectable by the heightened senses (kinda like an Ultra-sound or Eddy Current). And of course there is good old X-ray vision.

How many attacks the trap gets to make is dependent upon the nature of the trap itself. A trap that drops a weight from the ceiling or fills an area with gas may only get one attack, while an automated laser turret may be able to attack indefinitely (or at least as long as it has power). If the trap does not involve an animate entity with and agility rating, a roll of 1d10 is sufficient for initiative (once the trap has been identified).

Of course there is also the trap door, and other similar traps. A character who springs a trap that basically causes him to fall, should be allowed a save vs Agility to "catch himself", or by some other means prevent himself from falling. Failing that, the game rules state that if the distance fallen in inches is equal to or less than the Character's Agility score, he should be allowed to make an Agility Save to reduce the damage taken from the fall (see section 8.2).

Note: I plan on another brief article on how I normally handle saves for characters with Basic Characteristics greater than 20.

Not all traps get to make their attacks. Some are found and avoided, while others are disarmed. For the most part a save versus Agility or Intelligence works fine for disarming traps, but if the GM really wants to get into details, he can modify the target of the save to make the attempt more or less difficult. This may, however, be completely unnecessary since the game does deal with super-powered heroes. It is quite possible that a character will simply obliterate the trap with a power blast or vibratory attack, teleport it to another dimension, crush it with his telekinetic or magnetic powers, or even transmute it into a fluffy bunny rather than go to the trouble of disarming it. Even crazier, the Vigilantes could just find a way around the trap altogether. How characters use (or don't use) their powers is an important part of the role play that happens in V&V.

Employing Traps in V&V:
V&V is not a game about dungeons (although they do appear, and a villain's lair could be considered by some to be a dungeon of sorts), so the traps serve a different purpose. In dungeon-oriented games, the object of a trap is to prevent the adventurer from achieving a goal by injuring or killing him. In V&V death is supposed to be exceedingly rare. Vigilantes don't go around killing bad guys (and they don't get any experience points if they do), and if the Villains kill the vigilantes, you have to create a new character. So, as in comic books, a V&V trap will often capture the character rather than kill him. He may be rendered unconscious, lose his powers, be incapacitated, or get transported to another location, but probably not poisoned or smashed by a huge weight. Besides, with the kinds of characters created in V&V poison may have no effect anyway, and there may not be a weight huge enough to smash a super-strong character.

It turns out that for V&V, a trap that is lethal for one party of characters may have no effect on another. It's also questionable as to whether a lethal trap should even be used in a V&V adventure as it is not "in character" for most comic books. A good example of traps in current comics can be found in the lair of Mister Sinister in "Wolverines"™. These "traps" served to alert Sinister to the presence of the heroes,

break up their party, confuse them, wear them out, etc... but not kill them. Sinister is powerful and intelligent, so making a trap that teleported all of the heroes into the Earth's molten core would not be really hard, and yet, even in an era of post-CCA, "hard-edged" comics that did not happen. This begs the question, "Why kill characters in V&V"? After all, V&V is comic book super-hero role play.

Disclaimers:
Due to the infinite combinations and variations on powers and the amazing creativity of RPG gamers and GM's, it's simply not possible for a writer to anticipate every contingency, and the GM should find the method that works best for him and his players.

Again, this is just how I do it, I'm not telling anyone else how to run their game.