

# Getting Creative with Villains & Vigilantes

**This installment**, I will delve into my thoughts on cool machines, vehicles, armor, robots, and other fascinating chunks of mechanized coolness. This article got a bit longer than I thought it would, but it's a fun topic.

## MECHA! (As American as Ramen Noodles)

Mecha is not limited to Japanese comics. Examples of mecha in V&V include the Knight armor used by C.H.E.S.S. and the excellent **Doomsday Robot** from *Deathduel with the Destroyers* by Bill Willingham.

Other examples of "Mecha" in American Comic books would be Ironman, the Sentinels from X-men, and the SHIELD Heli-Carrier (Yeah, I read Marvel...sometimes...).

### Piloted Mecha:

These mecha (the word is both singular and plural) are basically what we would call "Super-vehicles". They may have legs, or bird-like wings, or even be space ships, but they are still vehicles, and follow the basic rules for vehicles in the V&V rule book. Especially large vehicles may be broken down into sections each having its own set of Hits to Disable and Hits to Demolish. GM's can assign each of these sections special systems, or cargo, or whatever so that as each section is disabled, the vehicle loses some capabilities.

### Autonomous Mecha:

Drones, 'droids, robots, etc... These mecha are not directly controlled by a sentient character, and most often treated as non-sentient characters somewhere between animated servants and animals. They have Android or robotic bodies, and in some cases may have bionics (like a bionically-enhanced Mecha-Badger as your character's "Pet").

### Animated Servants:

Very similar to Autonomous Mecha, but they are directly controlled by a character. These are more like radio-controlled (or mind/magically-controlled) robots than independent androids or robots.

### Getting Interesting:

There is nothing in the V&V rules that states a machine cannot have "powers". In fact, there are a few vehicles out there with device-based powers, but normally these are limited to "Power Blast Device", "Force Field Device", "Flight Device" and the like. All excellent devices, but we're gamers, we can do better.

A power for a mecha that immediately comes to mind is "Transformation". This can be Power Activation or Weaker Form, that's up to the GM and player to decide. Take a Motorcycle, and add Transformation, and you get a cool bike that, at the press of a button, becomes a very nice suit of armor, with weapons and everything. Of course you can do the same for a small helicopter, airplane, car, boat, or whatever. This gives the Vigilante a convenient mode of

transportation as well as some protection and powers for battle.

Add Transformation twice, and the mecha can transform from motorcycle to battle armor, to a Helicopter (why not?) making it even more valuable.

Something to keep in mind with transforming mecha is that it does not normally get more powers or capabilities when it changes forms. Normally the mecha will give up some powers and gain new ones. A mecha, may, for instance, give up "Disintegration Ray (device)" for "Flight (device)" when it converts from battle armor to helicopter modes.

That is, of course, not the limit to mecha. Some mecha may have to transform to use its "ultimate weapon". A giant space ship may have to transform to enter hyperspace, or to land on a planet's ocean, or to just be able to enter an atmosphere.

### Magical Mecha

So far I have basically stayed with technological Mecha, but like Armor, Mecha may also be of magical origin, and that opens up even more possibilities. Of course there is the "mecha-beast" that is basically a robotic animal that the character uses as a mount (like a horse, wolf, dragon(fly), etc...). So a character could have a robotic pet dragon that he can ride as it flies him to the villain's lair. Now add transformation a character's Dragon can transform into a large suit of armor that provides the character with a different set of powers (see *Vision of Escaflowne*).

Once you go magical on mecha, the player and GM can get a little crazy (in a good way). You end up with ships made from anti-gravity wood, space craft made of stone, crystal dragon armor, and so forth. Some players may go over the top with this, but the GM should try to marshal him or her back towards a mecha that actually fits the setting for his or her campaigns. It might be a nice idea to remind the player that if he has a giant fire breathing mecha-dragon, a villain will probably show up with a similar mecha-beast.

### Interlocking Mecha

Some mecha can become an additional layer for another mecha. An example could be a suit CHESS Knight armor, that can be placed inside a larger armor suit that provides additional protection and abilities. Basically the outer armor as its own ADR. Any damage that penetrates the outer armor runs into the Knight armor, providing the character with greatly enhanced protection.

Another example, still using our Knight armor, is a set of wings that attaches to the armor to provide flight as well as some other capabilities. When not attached, the wings could

be autonomous and allow the controlling character to get a bird's eye view of a Villain's stronghold, or it could even transform itself into an Animated Servant.

Of course there are mecha that combine with other mecha to form really big super-mecha (almost always in the form of a really big humanoid robot), but that is a different article. See "Attack of the Really Big Thing" for my thoughts on that topic.

### **Paying For Mecha**

Mecha is a power, and can be Vehicle, Animated Servant, or Armor. With some twisting, other powers may also be used to create mecha (android body and robotic body are prime candidates for "Mecha-Pets"). As for the powers and capabilities of these mecha I simply apply the "40% chance that armor will have 1d4 extra abilities" rule for Armor B to mecha.

### **Really Big Mecha**

For giant stuff (starships, robots, mecha-monsters, etc...) grab a free copy of *Attack of the Really Big Thing* on this forum. It goes into greater detail on the use of really big stuff in V&V.

### **Mecha Powers:**

Start with the Devices table, and go from there. The very talented science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke said that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Another author (the awesome Larry Niven) said that "Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology". What these guys are saying is that your Mecha can make excellent use of either Devices or Magic!

The point here is to have some fun and get creative with your Mecha! Use some magic, or some devices, or BOTH! Mecha can use magic or amplify a character's own ability to use magic.

### **Mecha Weaknesses:**

If there is a down side to mecha it is that players and GMs can go a little overboard with it. Mecha is powerful stuff, but if created and used wisely, it can make for a lot of fun. One way to help limit the potency of some mecha is by the use of weaknesses.

A mecha that can only be used with the permission of its owner (Government, Corporation, etc...) has the weakness "Special Requirement" (like CHES Knight/Valkyrie armor). This weakness can also be used for special fuel requirements or mecha that can only be piloted by characters with [basic characteristic] at least "X". A large mecha may require a crew of several characters in order to operate. For a bit of fun, the Mecha can only be controlled by characters with "Phobia/Psychosis".

Mecha that can only operate for a short amount of time may be considered to have a Physical Handicap. Another "Physical Handicap" could be a one-way transformation. Once the mecha changes forms, it can only be changed back by a properly trained technician. Another might be the inability of a space craft to enter an atmosphere.

A mecha that reduces the pilot's field of vision may give him "Diminished Senses" while the character is using it. Some mecha may be Vulnerable to certain attacks (magnetic powers, vibratory powers, lighting control, etc...), or the pilot may become vulnerable to certain attacks when the mecha (if the pilot uses his thoughts to control the mecha, that interface may make him more vulnerable to Mind Control, Emotion Control, or Illusions).

Some magical mecha (and even a few very advanced techno-mecha) may even have the "Phobia/Psychosis" weakness. How this manifests is up to the player and GM to figure out, but one example that pops to mind is the mecha that goes berserk if the pilot is knocked unconscious or incapacitated. Certain alien mecha may be programmed to attack mecha from another race, ignoring the pilot's commands. Certain magical mecha may attempt to flee in the face of some mystical beasts (Gryphons, Dragons, Medusas, whatever ...). Even worse, a mecha with advanced A.I. may become emotionally attached to the pilot creating any number of problems.

Other, less advanced mecha, may saddle the character using it with Low Self-Control (it's hard to operate), Prejudice (the Mecha looks a lot like another mecha that wiped out New Angeles - or is even the same mecha with a different driver), or Reduced Agility (it's a clumsy or cumbersome machine). Reduced Strength or Endurance are possible with some mecha as well.

The point is that with a bit of creative massaging of the basic weaknesses, mecha can be reined in as the GM sees fit. It should also be pointed out that every weakness is a story arc waiting to happen, so enjoy the weaknesses, but don't go too crazy with them.

### **Repairing Mecha**

If you take your mecha into a fight, it is bound to get damaged, and will require some repairs (unless it has some self-repair capability). I borrow the Android Body repair rules for mecha (even mundane vehicles). It is simple and helps to keep these marvelous machines within the spirit of the V&V rules.

#### **Standard Disclaimer**

*As you all know, this is all just my opinion. I'm not telling anyone how to do anything. What I am doing is showing you what I think is possible in V&V as it is. Feel free to use, alter, or ignore any of this as you see fit.*