

FANTASY HERO COMPLETE



MICHAEL SURBROOK

FANTASY HERO

Fantasy Hero Complete Writing & Design

Michael Surbrook

Indispensable Contributions

Fantasy Hero 6th Edition: Steven S. Long

HERO System 6th Edition: Steven S. Long

Fantasy Hero 4th Edition: George MacDonald, Steve Peterson, and Rob Bell

Original HERO System: George MacDonald and Steve Peterson

Layout and Graphic Design

Ruben Smith-Zempel

Development

Jason Walters

Editor

Michael Surbrook

Associate Editors

Scott Krogh and George Sedgewick

Cover Art

Sam Flegal

Interior Art

Nate Barnes, Storn Cook, Jefferson Cram, Bob Cram, Jr., Andrew Cremeans, Newt Ewell, Brian & Brendon Fraim, Derek Frost, Melissa Gay, Alex Gustafson, Mark Helwig, Nick Ingeneri, Cara Mitten, Jesse Parrotti, Chris Stevens, Tyler Walpole, Jason Williford

The Semestral Convocation

Lucius Alexander, Eldridge Brown, Jenevieve “Tasha” DeFer, Alex Fauth, Chris Goodiwin, Rick Hall, Robert Morris, Michael Reed, Matt Steen, Jarreas Underwood

SPECIAL THANKS

Glenn Cook, Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, Michael Moorcock, J.R.R. Tolkien

IN MEMORY

Aaron Allston, Dave Arneson, Gary Gygax

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Fantasy Hero Grandmaster: Dominic Lund

Fantasy Hero Adventuring Party: Matthew Ferry, Phil Herthel, Jeff Railsback, Lee Stewart, Stephen & Roberta Wright

Fantasy Hero Paladin: Robert Towell

Fantasy Hero Swashbuckler: Greg Arguello, J. Erick Christgau, Jason “JiB” Tryon, Keith Phemister, Martin Greening, Matt Rock, Michael Satran, Robert Webb, Shane Harsch

Fantasy Hero Champion: Alan Walters, Anthony Hargan, Bhelliom Demian Rahl, Bill Keyes, Carlos Castaneda, Chad, Christian Nienhaus, David Campbell, David K. Stevens, David “bluesguy” Tannen, Eugene Luster, Gregory Horrell, Jerry Hammonds, Jon Nials, Kenneth Smith, Mark Lemming, Paul Macdonald, Robert Dorf, Stephan Szabo

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Brett Slocum, Brian Ahrens, Brian Isikoff, Brian K Smith, Brian Rosenberger, Bryce “Cat Toy” Nakagawa, Bryce K. Nielsen, Capricious Games LLC, Charles Turnitsa, Chris Lozaga, Damon & Peni Griffin, Darren Sullivan, Dave Mattingly, David Stewart, Deborah Spiesz, Derek Hiemforth, Don Satow, Doug Baumeister, Doug Grimes, Eddie Sells, Eric Weaver, Fred Liner, George Sedgwick, Greg Voelker, Gregory Fyhr, Guy Thompson, Herb Nowell, Jack Gulick, James Cook, James Rouse, Jason Hobbs, Jason Paul McCartan, Jeff Troutman, Jeremy & Rachel Gollub, Jim Lowyh, John Brinegar, John Irvine, John Overath, John & Kasey Turner, Jon Petit, Jon Sprague, Jonathan T. Fay, Joshua Krage, Karl Hubbs, Karl Maurer, Karl Zahler, Karry Koehler, Kenneth “Professor” Thronberry, Kenny Quick, Kevin C. Wong, Kevin Collins, Laura Sikorski, Logan J. Crosby, Lord Khaalis (Ron Owens), Mark Arsenaault, Mark Garrison, Matt Helms, Matt Whalley, Matthew Manghi, Michael “Maikeruu” Pierno, Michael D Marcum, Michael D Opdyke, Michael Palkendo, Michael Sears, Michael Watkins, Nicholas Bergquist, Peter Gabancho, Rob Kalbach, Robert “Bret” Lewis, Robert H Hudson Jr, Robert Kim, Robert T. Sagris, Clara Harper Darbee, Scott Krogh, Shane Trapp, Sloan Summerfelt, Stephen Andre Ibarra, Steve Huntsberry, Steve Weaver, Steven Miller, Tad Kilgore, Thaddeus Ryker, Theodore Miller, Thomas Davidson, Thomas Rafalski, Timothy Mullen, Tomas J Skucas, Trip the Space Parasite, Troy Zigler, Ty Shillito, Walter F. Croft, Walter Manbeck, Warren Creighton, WD Robinson, Wesley E. Marshall, Will Rich, Will Triumph, William Zachary Adamson, Wolfgang Coe

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Fantasy Hero Supporter: Edward Culbreath, Jeffrey Barker, Jimmy Plamondon, Jonathan Gartshore-Baxter, Lee W. Dowd, Raging Cupcake Studios, Rolf Ravndal, Sigil Stone Publishing, Steven McKean, Vincent Arebalo

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INTRODUCTION

BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW...

...lies a fantastical world. It is populated by barbarians with mighty thews, seductive sorceresses, and wise wizards. Enigmatic elves, doughty dwarves, and grinning goblins dwell there as well; as do fire-breathing dragons, enchanted swords, magic rings, and glittering mounds of treasure. There are also ancient ruins, towering castles, dank dungeons, deserted moors, tangled forests, vast deserts, and distant lands full of unknown wonders. There are heroes there, and villains too, not to mention old kings, evil viziers, beautiful princesses, , and cackling witches, noble knights, sly rogues, and a whole host of other personalities, all waiting for their moment to play their parts on the stages of our imagination.

When we were young, our stage was the world around us. A stick became a sword, a blanket a cloak, a trash can lid a shield. The family dog might be a mighty steed, or a fearsome dragon. Older siblings were pressed into service as ogres and giants, while parents were evil wizards and witches (who wanted us to go to bed on time).

But, as we grew up, most of us put such ideas make-believe behind us and went on to live regular 'adult' lives. Still, a few people decided they weren't done with the lands beyond the fields we know. They discovered new stages on which they could let their imagination perform: some took up live-action role-playing (a.k.a. LARPing); others joined medieval reenactment societies (such as the Society for Creative Anachronism); and many of us played tabletop roleplaying games (a.k.a. RPGs).

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR WAY

Roleplaying games, such as *Fantasy Hero Complete*, allow us to re-live the fantastical adventures of our childhood. We can be just about anything we want to be, provided the game, and the *Game Master* (or GM), allows it.

Wait? The who now?

There is one major difference between the games of "let's pretend" we played as children, and those we play as part of an RPG. When we played as children, either we made all of the decisions about how the adventure should go ourselves, or we argued with others (friends, siblings, or parents) over exactly what had happened. In other words, the classic "I got you!" "No you didn't" argument that often caused many of our parents to send us out outside. When we play an RPG, there are rules that let us determine who hit whom, as well as how much damage was done, and exactly how hurt our foes are.

That said, an RPG doesn't force us to obey a set script. Far from it. Although an RPG has a GM, and the GM normally creates the stage on which we will act (in the form of the world you will be in, the foes you will face, and the people you will meet) he doesn't create the *Player Characters* (or PCs)—you do. And while the rules of an RPG tell what happens *after* you perform an action, only *you* can decide what actions you want your PC to take.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

An RPG is very much like improvisational theater. You, and your fellow *Players*, each with their own PC, sit down to experience a story told by the GM. In addition, much like a book, movie, or play, each PC has his own story to tell as well. They also have their own personalities, backgrounds, motivations, and skills. The GM, much like the director of a film or play, can assist with creating some of these elements, either by offering advice, or by pointing out elements that won't fit with the story he has in mind. Working together, the Players and the GM can create dynamic and interesting PCs; while the Players, by working together, can create dynamic and interesting stories and participate in fantastic adventures. String enough of these stories and adventures together, and before you know it, you've created a *Campaign*.

What makes all of this work is the RPG itself. Within are rules that let us determine the outcome of combats, the casting and effect of spells, the climbing of walls, the sneaking through of deserted hallways, the picking of locks and pilfering of treasure, and any other number of actions the heroes of fantasy adventures perform. Dice are then used to determine how well we manage to perform desired actions. The GM oversees these die rolls, and tells the Players what effect they've had on the campaign world. And since this is a form of improvisational theater, we must work with what we're given—if we succeed in our efforts, all is good, but if we fail... well, now it's time to think fast and see what new actions we can imagine!

FANTASY HERO AND THE HERO SYSTEM

Fantasy Hero is an RPG used to create and play out the adventures seen in fantasy fiction, be it an animated film, comic, live-action film, *manga* (Japanese comic), novel, webcomic, or what have you. With it, you can be pretty much anything you can imagine, from a stay-at-home halfling pressed into service as a burglar, to a dimension-traveling sorcerer armed with an enchanted black sword of

dubious loyalty. It is also part of a larger rules set, known as the *HERO System*. First published in 1981 as *Champions* (an RPG for playing superheroes), the *HERO System* has gone through a number of revisions since then, with the more recent version of the game engine—known as Sixth Edition—coming out in 2009.

Since you're playing a fantasy RPG that started life as a comic book supers game, you might wonder 'what else the *HERO System* can do?' The answer is 'pretty much anything.' As mentioned, a fantasy protagonist can range from a youthful assistant pig keeper who has never seen a sword, much less lifted one, to a massively muscled barbarian warrior who regularly crushes the jeweled thrones of the world under his booted feet. And when you add superheroes into the mix, you must now deal with people with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men, as well as powered-armor heroes, soldiers with enhanced physiques, dark avengers of the night, super scientists, mutants... the list goes on and on. Fortunately, with the *HERO System*, the rules can accommodate all of these characters *and* make them work together in my stories, your stories, his stories—*anyone's* stories.

What this means in the long run is that *Fantasy Hero* and the *HERO System* are all parts of a "universal RPG." You can use the rules found in this book to create and run adventures in any number of fictional worlds, not just those beyond the fields we know. See *Playing Other Genres* (page 250), or other books published for use with *Fantasy Hero*/the *HERO System* for further suggestions.

OTHER PRODUCTS AND RESOURCES

Although *Fantasy Hero Complete* is a self-contained RPG (meaning everything you need to run a fantasy game can be found in this book), there are other *HERO System* books that you might find of use in creating characters and monsters, and in designing adventures. Rather than present a list of specific products (which will be out of date almost as soon as this book is published), I recommend you venture forth to the central resource for All Things *Fantasy Hero*: the Hero Games web site at <http://www.herogames.com>. It features:

An Online Store where you can purchase other books compatible with *Fantasy Hero Complete*, such as a bestiary, a compendium of spells, a collection of equipment, a martial arts reference, campaign settings, and other volumes that expand the scope of the system.

Hero Designer software, which turns character creation into a matter of a few keystrokes and mouse clicks (available in the Online Store).

A Free Stuff section with supplemental materials you can download.

The Hero Games Message Board: one of the friendliest, most enthusiastic fan communities in gaming—with a board dedicated *just* to *Fantasy Hero*.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO FANTASY HERO COMPLETE

I first encountered the *HERO System* in the form of *Champions* Third Edition in the summer of 1985. I was asked to be part of a nascent superhero campaign, and fittingly enough (considering the volume you now hold) my first superheroic PC was a super sorcerer. I soon found that *Champions* and the *HERO System* was the system I had been looking for. With it, I could create anything, and proceeded to do just that, adapting numerous characters, creatures, vehicles, and gadgets from popular media into the game engine, and then sharing the results with the *HERO System* community.

In due time, my contributions brought me to the notice of Hero Games, and my first *HERO System* product, *Kazei 5*, was published in 1999. I then went on to be one of the "Magnificent Seven," who assisted Steven S. Long with the development of *HERO System* Fifth Edition, and followed that up by writing the Fifth Edition version of *Ninja Hero* (2002). I then wrote the two-volume *Asian Bestiary* (2006) and worked with Steve Long on *HERO System Martial Arts* (2010). On top of *that*, I've written several third-party *HERO System* books (which you can find at the Hero Games Online Store).

Whew, sounds like a lot doesn't it? In truth, my contributions to the *HERO System* are easily overshadowed by the work done by such people as Ray Greer, Bruce Harlick, George MacDonald, and Steve Peterson, who *created Champions* (and thus the *HERO System*) in 1981. Aaron Allston, who wrote the first *Ninja Hero*, penned the phenomenal campaign setting book *Strike Force*, and helped create *Justice, Inc.* which did for the pulp-era what *Champions* did for comics. And then there's Steven S. Long, whose *HERO System* output is the stuff of legend (I'm fairly sure he could write in a month what would take me a year to produce!). With well over a hundred *HERO System* products to his name, Steve has probably written more books for *HERO* than everyone else combined.

However, to be honest, the one person who has contributed more to *Fantasy Hero Complete* than anyone else is Derek Hiemforth. You see, he wrote *Champions Complete*, and thus paved the way for me. Derek did all the heavy lifting, he chopped down all the trees, crossed all of the rivers, and put up all the sign posts. All I need to do is follow in his footsteps, and hopefully, if he lets me, stand on his shoulders for a bit.

Michael Surbrook
June 2014

FANTASY YOUR WAY

Unsheathe your glowing swords, loose your mighty spells, and ride into glory with **Fantasy Hero Complete!** All the legendary flexibility and power of the renowned **HERO System** rules plus spells, monsters, and magic items, in addition to all of the Skills, Powers, and Complications needed to complete epic quests, delve the deepest dungeons, and thwart the devious machinations of evil gods.

Fantasy Hero Complete includes everything fantasy gamers need to play. New players will love the unmatched freedom of **Fantasy Hero** to create and play exactly the hero they imagine. Longtime fans will appreciate the tight, concise new approach, presenting the full game system in a convenient format. So grab your battleaxe, don your Elven mail, and prepare to battle evil with **Fantasy Hero Complete!**

- ⊗ Create and play exactly the hero you want.
- ⊗ An excellent purchase for first time players and handy companion for long time players.
- ⊗ The HERO System, in a condensed and easy-to-use format.
- ⊗ Includes everything a gamemaster needs to create and run anything from a single session to an extended campaign for 1-6 players.
- ⊗ Comes bundled with a downloadable electronic package that contains ready to play characters, a complete setting, an adventure, and so much more!

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