MENAGERIE

A ROLEPLAYING GAME DEPICTING LIFE IN A TRAVELING CIRCUS

24-HOUR
RPG 2014

Have you ever wanted to run away & join the circus? Now's your chance!

Menagerie is a role playing game that puts you in a traveling circus during the first half of the 1900s. You'll travel from town to town performing your act and honing your skills for a never ending audience of rubes!

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OVERVIEW

The game is run by one person, known as "The Barker". In other RPG games this person might be known as the DM or the GM, but in Menagerie, they are called The Barker. One to five players, in addition to The Barker are also required. You'll also need these rules, some pen and paper, as well as a pile of six sided dice, also known as d6.

As a player you will assume the role of a circus performer. You might play the part of the Strongman, the Bearded Lady, or even the Ringmaster!

You struggle to make your way across the country, putting on shows in any town that will have you. A bigger and better show will make you famous, but life on the road is never easy. Will your circus prosper or wither away into obscurity? Play Menagerie and find out!

CHARACTER CREATION

Your character will be one of the main attractions of the show. No shoveling elephant dung for you! You'll not only be expected to perform at each and every stop, but you'll have to survive the harsh conditions of life on the road.

Choose a character from the following list. You may also create one of your own, anything that fits will work fine.

Ringmaster	**Animal Handler**
Strongman	**Human Cannonball**
Clown	**Fortune Teller**
Bearded Lady	**Trapeze Artist**

If there is less than five players the Barker should create enough NPCs to bring the performer count up to five.

****Anytime the word "performer" appears in these rules it applies to all performers, including NPCs, newly hired Performers, and animals that were not present at the start of the game.***

This means that, at the start of the game, there will always be five performers in the circus, regardless of the number of players.

Note that, if the GM and players agree to, players can play more than one character each.

Once you've chosen a character, breath some life into them by giving them a name, a physical description, and a short background story.

Next, it's time to configure your character's attributes. Each and every time you perform in front of a crowd, you must make a Perform roll. You may influence this roll by adding a Showmanship roll. Between shows, you'll rely on your Vitality and Smarts to keep you well. That gives us the four main Attributes: Performance, Showmanship, Vitality, and Smarts.

Each character starts as a Beginner, which allots you six Die Points to "spend" on those four Attributes. Once you allocate those die points, they must remain on the attribute you assigned them to initially. As you hone you skills, you'll gain more die points, which you assign to your choice of Attribute immediately upon earning them. Earn enough, and you'll make it to Pro level, and maybe even Expert level.

For example, if you were to spend 3 die points on your Performance Attribute, that would mean that each time you make a Perform roll, you would roll 3 six-sided die, also known as 3d6.

You earn additional die points by having an "Outstanding" performance. Again, each time you earn a die point, you should immediately assign it to an attribute. It cannot be changed once assigned. Here's how leveling works:

Game start – 6 die points – Beginner
Earn 2 more die points, for a total of 8 – Pro
Earn an additional 3 points, for a total of 11 – Expert

Your level determines how much Prestige you bring to the circus company that you travel with.

PRESTIGE

Every Performer adds to the overall Circus Prestige. Following is a list of the Levels and Animal Sizes, and how much Prestige each is worth.

Beginner/Small Animal – 1 Prestige
Pro/Large Animal – 2 Prestige
Expert/Huge Animal – 3 Prestige

Prestige has two functions in the game. It helps you in the Interaction Phase (see Gameplay), and it is the currency you spend to hire new performers and purchase new animals.

The grander your circus, the more likely the chance that you'll be welcomed into the next town you stop at. Adding more acts, and better attractions, will raise your Prestige, but the way you do that is by spending Prestige. The Barker will track the overall Circus Prestige throughout the game, starting at 5 to represent the five initial Beginner level Performers. Additional Prestige may be earned through good performances.

The object of the game is for the players to try and reach 20 Prestige before the game ends.

GAMEPLAY

Menagerie is played out over the course of 10 Rounds. The players must reach 20 Prestige by the end of the game or their show will shut down!

Each Round is made up of 3 Phases. They are, in order, Travel Phase, Interactive Phase, and Performance Phase. The game ends at the end of the Performance Phase in round 10.

<u>Travel Phase</u> – Make your way to the next dot on the map. The Barker makes a Travel roll. Obstacles will test the Vitality of the players.

<u>Interactive Phase</u> – Not every town is going to welcome you with open arms. The Ringmaster, or any player if there's no Ringmaster, makes a Prestige roll. Players may have to rely on their Smarts to get them out of some sticky situations!

<u>Performance Phase</u> – It's Showtime! All characters, not including NPC performers, must make a Performance roll. NPC Performers never make Performance rolls.

Good performances might add to the Prestige of your circus, but bad performances could hurt the overall Prestige of the circus.

BARKER INFO

This section is for the Barker(GM) to use, and should not be read by the players. Included is a breakdown of the phases, result charts for all rolls, and some suggestions on how to run the game.

You'll notice that the result charts are very basic in description. As the Barker it falls on you to bring the scene to life by painting a picture with words. Rather than just reading the result of a roll, use your own imagination to describe what happened, within the constraints of the listed result.

For instance, say the circus runs into the town Sheriff. Give him a name. Describe the sheriff. What does he say to the characters? How do the characters respond?

Reward the players for their responses. How do they handle the situations they face? During the Interactive Phase, the characters could meet a variety of NPCs. Depending on how they interact with these people, you might decide to give them a bonus to the Smarts roll that will follow. Consider giving them a 1-5 point bonus, to be added to their roll, before checking for the result.

Note that this means adding to the total number rolled, not adding to the number of die to be rolled. Anytime the player will receive an extra die, the chart will say so, specifically. Extra die are only used for the next appropriate roll.

PHASES AND CHARTS

Travel Phase

The Barker rolls a Travel roll and checks the result on the chart below.

A Travel roll is always 3d6 plus the current total Prestige of the circus.

Roll	Result
0-10	Out of Food! All players must make a Vitality roll. Subtract 2 from the total of the next Prestige roll made.
11-16	Dust Storm! All players must make a Vitality roll. Subtract 1 from the total of the next Prestige roll made.
17-20	Lost! Subtract 1 from the total of the next Prestige roll made.
21+	Smooth Sailing! Add 1 to the total of the next Prestige roll made.

Vitality Roll Chart

Roll	Result
0-3	You don't look so good. –1 die to your next Performance.
4-6	No Affect
7+	Never Better! +1 die to next Performance.

Interactive Phase

The Ringmaster makes a Prestige Roll. The current overall Prestige determines the number of d6 rolled. Results from the Travel Phase may influence the total of this roll.

Roll	Result
0-5	You're not welcome here. The turn ends. Overall Prestige drops by 2.
6-10	Hard Boiled Sheriff. One player must make a Smarts roll.
11-15	Tough Crowd. One player must roll one less die on their next Performance roll.
16-20	Eager Crowd. One player may roll an extra die on their next Performance roll.
21-25	Others want to join! One player makes a Smarts roll. The Circus may hire one Beginner or purchase a small animal.
26-30	Rubes Galore! +1 overall Prestige.
31-35	The Right Connections. One player makes a Smarts roll. The Circus may hire one Pro or purchase a large animal.
36-40	The Greatest Show! One player makes a Smarts roll. The Circus may hire one Expert or purchase a huge animal.
41+	Encore! +1 overall Prestige. Do two Performance phases during this turn only.

Smarts Roll Chart

Roll	Result
0-3	Huh? Overall Prestige drops 2, or Pay 2 extra if spending.
4-6	No Affect.
7+	Oh! I see! Overall Prestige up by 1, or Pay 1 less if spending.

All hiring and purchases are made at the end of the Interactive Phase.

Hire/Purchase	Cost in Prestige
Beginner/Small Animal	2 Points (adds +1)
Pro/Large Animal	4 Points (adds +2)
Expert/Huge Animal	5 Points (adds +3)

If a Smart roll results in a lower price, the minimum price is always 1.

Performance Phase

All characters, not including NPC performers, must make a Performance roll. NPC Performers never make Performance rolls.

Roll	Result
0-3	Injured! Cannot use Showmanship this turn. –2 overall Prestige.
4-6	Fail. If you make a Showmanship roll this turn do so with 1 less die.
7-9	Awkward. If you make a Showmanship roll this turn, subtract 2 from total rolled.
10-12	Seen it before. No affect.
13-15	Well done! +1 Overall Preestige.
16+	Outstanding! +1 Overall Prestige. Earn 1 Die Point.

After a player makes a Performance roll, but BEFORE the result is revealed, they may choose to make a Showmanship roll to try and garner a better result on there Performance. This cannot be done if the player rolled 0-3 on their Performance roll. When doing this, remember your original Performance roll, and then adjust as prescribed by the Showmanship result.

Showmanship Roll Chart

Roll	Result
0-3	That's worse! Subtract 2 from Performance roll total.
4-5	No affect.
6-7	That's different. And good! Add 2 to Performance roll total.
8+	Brilliant! Add 5 to Performance roll total.

The turn now ends. The game lasts for ten turns. If the players have reached 20 Prestige by the end of the game they are Big Top worthy!

It's now 2 AM, so I've forgotten most of the thoughts I wanted to add here.

I would liked to have had time to make the different characters have a variety of affects on the game. For instance, I had envisioned the Ringmaster and Clowns as having the ability to sway the crowds opinion, resulting in better Performance bonuses.

I would also have liked to introduce a Morale element to the game, which would test the loyalty of hired performers.

All in all, this is my favorite submission out of the games I've designed for these contests.

All art is Microsoft Word Clip Art

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