

HYPERREALITY

An InSpectres Mod for
Roleplaying the Future of Reality Television Gameshows

Ashcan Edition by Tim Rodriguez

This ain't your parents game show!

***HYPERREALITY** is the best and worst of the new wave of reality TV. Chaos, controversy, adrenaline, sex, violence, and even death are just par for the course. It's time to win big, so put on your game face and take this chance to get anything and everything you ever wanted. In here, you put your life on the line—on-line.*

*The internet age is over, it's time for **HYPERREALITY**.*

Before starting, you need to know that this is not a complete role-playing game. This is a set of modifications and suggestions that alters the InSpectres rules to support a new type of setting and play style. If you already own a copy of InSpectres, you're ready to go. If not, you can probably purchase a book at this con, or you can get it from Jared Sorensen's website:

<http://memento-mori.com/online-store/inspectres/>

Alternately, the free-to-download startup edition contains enough of the rules to get you started immediately. That said, there's a ton of great information packed into the full book, and I highly recommend purchasing it.

This game contains a few core modifications to the InSpectres ruleset: First, get rid of the collective resources: the gym, library, and corporate gold card. The concept of the "bank" is moved to each player's character sheet as their Hyperreality "score." Players score whenever they roll a great success (6) and narrate their awesome result. These extra dice may be used as bonus dice for any roll, or to relieve stress - players will need to balance their desire to win the show with the heinous effects of stress and the reduced dice pools it causes.

Additionally, the terminology used here to represent different roles in the **HYPERREALITY** game is a little bit different than what you might be accustomed.

Producer :: Game Master

Contestants :: Characters

THANKS...

One last note before we get started, I'd like to offer my sincerest thanks to everyone who played in the earliest versions of this crazy concept. The United Sentinels of America (my Champions playtest group), and the contestants from Seasons 1-4 of Scareboat: Nowhere to Run. Finally, extra-special thanks go to Mack Elder for masterfully cutting together confessionals from the actual game sessions into a set of awesome ScareBoat trailers. Track me down and ask to see them... I'll have them with me.

PLAYING THE GAME...

Hyperreality is a reality gameshow setting, and as such, gameplay generally consists of events and interstitial scenes that showcase the contestants drinking, bickering, fighting, engaging in drunken diplomacy and political maneuvers. The general prize is cash and/or prize packages, but may actually be anything that motivates the contestants to dick each other over constantly in an effort to win.

FORMAT

A game of Hyperreality could play out like an episode arc of one of these TV game shows, covering a few days and nights. Alternately, the setup could be that the game show is doomed to an inevitable and disastrous failure from the get-go (see the included one-shot adventure: [ScareBoat: Nowhere to Run](#) for an example), and you can cover the rise and fall of the game show in one session.

INTRODUCTIONS

Contestants on reality TV game show tend to be weird dregs of humanity, itchy for their turn in the spotlight, and the lure of easy money. The producers are more than happy to put that in the spotlight and then amplify all of their oddities and quirks for the ratings they provide - the more controversial, the better. Hosts that walk a line between first-break actor and melodrama-queen work great, or any other solid caricature.

EVENTS

A standard four-hour gaming session easily supports 2-3 events plus a twist. An event can be a game for the characters to play, a puzzle to solve, or something else to endure. Make sure it's got a snappy and evocative title, as the players will need to key off of this to successfully narrate their scenes with awesome new tricks and traps. As the GM, you need to have a sense of structure of the event, so that you can keep the pacing fast and tense. Players will usually fill in most of the details, but you still have to keep them on their toes. Use a watch, and allot yourself about 45-60 minutes for the actual play of the event. Each event should tax the Contestants dice pools and seriously stress them out. If by the end of the event they haven't made at least 3 stress rolls each, as the Producer, you're probably not doing your job correctly.

INTERSTITIAL SCENES

Interstitial are the downtimes between the events, but the artificial chaos doesn't really end with the event. This is where deals are made, alliances are formed, and stressed out hookups happen. Any reality show worth it's salt has a huge liquor budget, and Hyperreality is no exception. Get the Contestants to buy off stress by relaxing, role-playing, and using the confessionals to throw each other into weird and awkward situations. Remember, the higher the ratings, the better the payout. Encourage the players to give the producers what the audience wants to see.

TWISTS

At this point in the way television has invaded our everyday lives, Just about everyone knows how a reality gameshow works. Some number of hapless contestants enter, that number shrinks over time as the events wipe people out. In Hyperreality, you can get around this in a number of ways. Use NPCs as ablative armor to make the Contestants shine; if a player can't roll worth a damn, kill their Contestant and make them into something new and antagonistic... especially if another Contestant caused their death. The fireworks will begin in 3, 2... The point is, always screw with what the Contestants think they know. After they get to narrate a scene, turn that sense of perfect knowledge on them. Players are there to help you build the set — not the traps.

OTHER TIPS AND TRICKS

- ⤴ Hyperreality is a game that feeds on chaos. Make sure it's there, and that everything is complicated. The more interpersonal drama, the better.
- ⤴ Actually using a video camera to tape the Confessionals has amazing results. It helps gives players focus to their roleplay performance, by putting them in a separate mental space.
- ⤴ Encourage players to spend their success dice to buy off stress and take bonuses to rolls that feel important. Then make those rolls important...which relates directly to the next point:
- ⤴ As the Producer, you absolutely have to know, and inform the Players of the difference between an Average success (4), a Good Success (5), and a Great Success (6). It can mean the difference between *"I find a vague undefined clue that no one is prepared to explicate"* and *"I find a complete map of the Labyrinth."*
- ⤴ The Producer's primary goal is to raise the ratings — don't play fair. Make the heroes into stars, make their enemies awesome antagonists, keep the underdogs just close enough to keep people cheering, and don't ever, ever turn your back on ratings opportunities. Sex, death, dismemberment, and public embarrassment are always the way to go.
- ⤴ InSpectres has tons of flexibility for supernatural themed gameshows, even if your setting doesn't explicitly warrant it. Just killed a Contestant? Make them into a ghost, and let them help torment the other Contestants!
- ⤴ "Cool" can be problematic in this game. The included character sheet doesn't have a space for it, but if you really want to use it in a longer game, then make sure that if a contestant has some cool, make sure they are taking much more and bigger risks to balance the effects.
- ⤴ Don't forget that a great success (rolling a 6) comes with a scoring opportunity!

SCAREBOAT: NOWHERE TO RUN

Included here is a sample adventure that has gone off in wildly different directions every time I've run it — save for that in playtesting we almost always had at least one conspiracy theorist.

BLURB

Welcome to ScareBoat, we hope you don't scare easily, because this is the Reality TV game show that offers a million dollars to only the most most durable, clever, adrenaline fueled, and fright-resistant contestant. Because when you're on the ScareBoat, there's nowhere to run.

DAY ONE

- Start with the ScareBoat introductions, like a set of opening credits and braggadocio — run this as a Confessional for each contestant, using the following specific topics (Contestant's name, where they're From, why they're going to win).

Jason Forbear welcomes the contestants to the show and introduces the show and the first challenge. **SHARK MAZE.** *“The way this challenge works is that hidden around the boat are the clues you'll need on how to complete the challenge. You're not going to find enough just by yourself, so you'll have to work together. And even if you do, at the end of the challenge, each of you will be nominating someone to go home.”*

EVENT: SHARK MAZE

Investigation specifics may largely be left up to players. Failed rolls will have them find themselves locked in a room with snakes, spiders, other cheap startle-horror tropes. The actual shark maze is a metal-cage tunnel maze out in the ocean that they have to navigate to find the Golden Key at the end and bring it back out.

Players have and will come up with all manner of ideas of how to solve the event. Some past examples include: harpoon guns; shark repellent; SCUBA gear; maps; keys; and some may just run off another direction entirely. Be prepared for anything to happen — because it will.

At the conclusion of the event, run the following brief scenes:

- Confessional Topics (Nominations)
- Official Send-off of player
- Party night - lots of drinks and dancing

INTERMISSION

- Players may spend GameShow dice to relieve stress
- Confessional Topics (Recap last challenge, feelings about eliminated player)
- Deal with “eliminated player” explain that even though he has lost, he’s still eligible for some cash prize if assists the producers with coming up with things that scare the other contestants. Just stay in this room below decks out of sight, and craft services will provide everything you need.

DAY TWO

Jason Forbear welcomes the remaining contestants back and tells them that he has bad news - they went to pick up the losing contestant last night after they finished filming to take him/her back to land, but could not find them on the ocean. ANYWAY, On to the next challenge!

EVENT: TREASURE ISLAND

Each player is issued a map of the island (Confessional / Acad Roll, players may describe what is on their map) Investigation phase will be limited here, to keep things quick. Action will find them competing on an island to find the Golden Key and get back to the boat within one hour.

At the conclusion of the event, run the following brief scenes:

- Confessional Topics (Nominations of who to kick off)
- Official Send-off of Contestant
- Party - with lots of drinks and dancing, and whatever else suits the players’ fancy.

INTERMISSION

- Players may spend Score dice to relieve stress
- Confessional Topics (Recap last challenge, feelings about eliminated player)
- Deal with second “eliminated player” explain that even though he has lost, he’s still eligible for some cash prize if assists the producers with coming up with things that scare the other contestants. Just stay in this room below decks out of sight, and craft services will provide everything you need. They will also meet up with first eliminated Contestant.

DAY THREE

Remaining contestants will wake up and make their way out to the lounge waiting for the introduction to the next episode to start, but nobody is there. When all the players arrive, they'll hear an outboard motor starting and going out to see what's going on, they will find Jason Forbear dead with a horrific facial expression; and the camera crew ditching the yacht. No lifeboats left, no ship crew left, other technical crew are also dead in a similar manner. Investigation and Action will be largely up to the players to work within the scenario.

WHAT'S ACTUALLY GOING ON

The Spectre of Lisa Jolson has murdered the staff of the show ScareBoat. She was killed during one of the challenges and swore vengeance in her dying breath. How the players deal with this is totally up to them, but a few possibilities might be they could exorcise her; placate her; avenge her; etc.

NPCs: Jason Forbear (n/a)

Concept: Ultra-Melodramatic TV Host, "spooky" accent

Jaina Ellerby (Acad 2, Athl 1, Tech 3, Cont 3)

Concept: Social Networking fiend, life-blogger

Roy Plazic (Acad 4, Athl 1, Tech 2, Cont 2)

Concept: Awkward Young Hot Librarian

Spectre of Lisa Jolson (Acad 3, Athl 0, Tech 0, Cont 2, Cool 5)

Concept: Vengeful Ghost of Previous Contestant

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