

# ETHERSCOPE





# ETHERSCOPE: PLUNGE INTO AN ALTERNATE REALITY

*Etherscope is a new roleplaying game of cyberpunk Victoriana from Goodman Games. This special Overview will help you understand why reviewers are calling Etherscope "brilliantly original" and "one of the most unique and compelling settings to come out of the d20 craze."*

Experience a world where the past drives Victorian values into the modern age. New ether-driven technology fuels zeppelins that run through the shadows of towering buildings in enormous cities. Gentlemen in top hats and canes stride down the streets, accompanied by bodyguards with v-prop weaponry stowed in the gleaming brass of cybernaughtic arms. Revolutionary cells plot in squalid basements whilst disenfranchised youth shout their rage to punk rock crowds. And overlaying it all is Etherspace — an alien realm of mists where thought and skill craft worlds, where heroes attuned to its mysteries move with superhuman strength and speed and shatter the laws of physics.

## THE YEAR IS 1984. WELCOME TO THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

The Great Metropolis: the pinnacle city of empire. The Great Metropolis is not London, the glorious capital of the British Empire; it is the northern monster that has grown out of the industrial giants of Liverpool and Manchester. From its towering heights to its scum-ridden floor and stagnant waterways, here one hundred million inhabitants struggle for survival.

Our "glorious" British Empire dominates the world, and all its profits are paid out into the great industries of the North. The centre of this industry is the Great Metropolis, the world's largest city and the place that I call home.

You may ask how the Great Metropolis came to be. It is a good question to ask.

I suppose it all began with Herbert Spencer, a philosopher and friend of Darwin. Just as the world was finally abandoning Faraday's ether, the medium through which electromagnetism was believed to wave, Spencer developed a groundbreaking new theory. Spencer combined the Law of Entropy and Plato's concept of the five elements that compose the world: earth, air, fire, water, and ether. Spencer speculated that these concepts indicated the interchangeable states occupied by the fabric of the universe: energy, solids, gasses, and liquids. Fire represents energy, water represents liquids, air represents gases, and earth represents solid matter. If this were the case, then ether could also be qualified as the unknown quantity: entropy. Spencer's theory changed the direction of

research into the nature of ether and renewed funding at a time when the scientific community was beginning to believe that ether was an archaic figment of a Greek imagination, and Faraday a radical for suggesting a scientific explanation.

The theory was interesting, but the scientific community would still have abandoned the idea except for one key discovery. In 1874, Harold Wallace discovered Etherspace. Through clever manipulation of magnetic forces, Wallace opened a portal into an alternative dimension of reality. This was Etherspace. Great universities and institutions soon reproduced Wallace's experiments. It is fair to say that Wallace's accomplishment is the greatest discovery of our history, and its practical implementations have changed the world.

Ether is the fifth state. It has properties that would be impossible to describe to a world that is without the boon of its discovery. Etherspace allows the development of miniaturisation on a scale vastly beyond anything silicon chips can manage. It can be vented into an energy source that is both more powerful and more controllable than any other known energy. It enables the forging of new alloys that are stronger and lighter than anything created before.

## THE ETHERSCOPE

The development of the Etherscope has single-handedly revolutionised the world. A new technological era of communications and automation has dawned. Scientists developed Scope points shortly after the war, but the Etherscope has not achieved widespread use, as an elite few retain control over it.

In the 1950s the Americans developed technology to transfer human consciousness into Etherspace. Once inside Etherspace, they could form pathways and landscapes that have huge potential for recreation, information, and interactivity. Ether, we discovered, is the material of *thought itself*, and passing into the Etherscope has become a common pastime amongst the world's elite.

The Americans distributed their Scope jacks for next to nothing. Riding the Etherscope soon became the leading recreational activity. However, the British government, seeing the potential the Etherscope has to subvert and educate their lowest classes,





## EXAMPLE SKILL: SCOPE RESILIENCE

(Charisma)

Use this skill in the Scope to represent the toughness of your avatar, the strength of your connection to the Scope, and to keep that connection stable.

**Check:** When in the Scope, you use Scope Resilience checks in place of Concentration checks, including those made as a result of actions taken on your real body (if someone disrupts your concentration with a knife, for instance). Your ranks in Scope Resilience are also used to calculate your avatar's base Fortitude saving throw.

**Jack Out:** A character immersed in the Scope by way

of a Scope tab can attempt to jack out by force of will. Make a DC 25 Scope Resilience check. If successful you awake into your body immediately, but are shaken for 1d4 rounds.

**Alter Avatar:** You can alter the appearance of your avatar above and beyond the effects of the Disguise skill. As a full-round action, you can make a Scope Resilience check at the DC listed on the table below.

You can achieve multiple changes simultaneously (with the same full-round action) with a DC equal to the most difficult level of change you attempt, +5 per additional change. For example, a Scope rider wishes to change his avatar's gender and hair colour, and display a broken nose. He needs to make a DC 30 Scope Resilience check: base DC 20 for a moderate change, +5 for the two other minor changes. (If you do not need to

make all the changes simultaneously, you can make individual checks for each change at the base DC.)

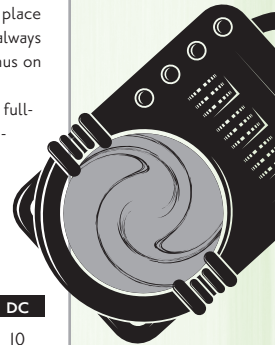
**Try Again:** Using Scope Resilience to emulate a skill with your Scope avatar has the same restrictions as the check you are attempting. The jack out and alter avatar skill uses can be attempted as many times as you like.

**Special:** Scope Resilience is used only in the Scope. You do not have a choice as to whether you use it in place of the Concentration skill when in the Scope; you always do. The Spirited feat provides you with a +2 bonus on Scope Resilience checks.

**Time:** Jacking out and alter avatar each take a full-round action. Other skill checks (like Concentration) take the same time as the skill use they replace.

### SCOPE RESILIENCE ALTER AVATAR DCS

Change to Appearance (Examples)	DC
Minor (alter facial structure, type and colour of clothing, eye colour, hair length)	10
Moderate (alter gender, alter size by one category, change ethnicity, create fantastical garments, create visual effects such as glowing eyes)	20
Major (alter species, create additional appendages, create fantastical form such as winged or centaur form)	30



outlawed personal Scope jacks, instead providing licenses to establishments that could vendor time in the Scope to those whom they considered responsible. However, the counterculture always finds a way, and soon Scope tabs appeared: drugs that temporarily transfer the user's consciousness into Etherspace. These are, as you can imagine, highly illegal, popular, and tinged with the usual dangers of recreational drugs.



## NEW DANGERS

As you see me before you, speaking in plain English, tinged by my Mancunian accent, you think me human. You see the pale tone of my skin and think it is because of my poor health from living in the downs of the Great Metropolis. You see the strange colour of my eyes and think it caused by pollution and smog. However, I should tell you that I am not human — not as you know it. I am of an older species. Ours is the lost civilisation of Lemuria, which our hubris destroyed long ago, and now you have discovered the same force that brought about our downfall. The realm that you call Etherspace is Hell. It holds horrors that have lain dormant for years. You use their rage to fuel your zeppelins and your dreadnaughts; you forge your landscapes from their flesh and torture them with your strange devices and technologies. They will not sleep for long, and when they awake they will tear down the world once more. We are the fey, the lost children of Lemuria, and we know that our ancestors sealed the realm you know as Etherspace and sank our civilisation to the bottom of the ocean for a reason: that the secrets might never be discovered again.

## ENTER ETHERSCOPE

**Etherscope** allows you to explore a world where conspiracy, horror, and heroism await. It is a roleplaying game of imperialism, intrigue, and industry in an alternative version of our own world. It is a world where the strange, even demonic dimension of Etherspace dominates the technology; it has altered the nature of society and the course of history. In **Etherscope**, you have the chance to become one of the intrepid individuals who faces Etherspace's dark secrets. You and your friends are the heroes. The world of **Etherscope** is a dangerous place to be. The mysteries of the Etherscope, the demonic forces that lurk within it, and the corruption of imperialist societies are yours to unravel.

As in many roleplaying games, in **Etherscope** you play the part of a team, whether soldiers fighting for empire, explorers

searching for lost Lemurian artefacts, or Scope riders fighting for survival on the mean streets of the Great Metropolis whilst combating the evil industrialists in the Scope. Some of you have special skills at uncovering clues or hacking into the Scope's industrial domains. Others risk life and limb to defend your team from your enemies — demons, System agents, and rival nations — utilising personal arsenals of weaponry. Yet others secretly tap the powers of Lemuria's occult mysteries or are skilled at crafting the illegal Scope tabs your team needs to get into the Etherscope.



## THE WORLD OF ETHERSCOPE

**Etherscope** combines elements of cyberpunk, Victoriana, and horror genres to create a unique gaming experience. Etherscope transports you to a new and detailed world where empire and industry control the world, and poverty and rebellion seek haven in the Etherscope's shadows. The heroes you play will encounter the imperialism and dark horror of the **Etherscope** world.

The dominating factor of the **Etherscope** world is the Etherscope. This parallel dimension allows a person to fling his consciousness into artificially constructed cities and domains built for entertainment. The military and industry also use the Etherscope to store and manage vast quantities of information in dark and oppressive processing domains. The Etherscope is a tool and plaything for the rich and powerful. Outside of the upper class elite, only clerks are provided limited Scope access, so that they may perform their duties. The true power of the information age





is reserved for the wealthy.

**Etherscope** includes a detailed political world, with three great superpowers — Britain, the United States, and the German-led New Reich — attempting to undermine each other's influence. This leads to a dramatic social struggle, where upper and middle classes live comfortable lives in sheltered houses and mansions, whilst the workers prop up the vast industrial machine on slave wages, struggling to eat from one day to the next. This class struggle leads to a rise in rebellious thoughts, with republican, nationalist, and socialist revolutionaries never hard to find. Nowhere is this rebellious tension better felt than in the Etherscope. The downtrodden have discovered Scope tabs, and a drug-based counterculture of Scope riders has sprung up, looking to hack into military and industrialist domains and crash the aristocracy's parties.

However, much more of the **Etherscope** world is there for players to explore outside of the great cities and the Scope. Many wild, uncharted regions remain, and characters with the time and inclination can find plenty of excuses for adventure. In the **Etherscope** world the legacy of Lemuria provides forgotten technologies and artefacts — treasures waiting to

be found by those with the spirit and resources to hunt them. The lands of South America are as wild as America's Old West and have their own legendary gunslingers, many augmented by cybernaughtic targeting systems and modern weaponry.

Underlying all of this, **Etherscope** is a game of horror. The truth is that Etherspace is a hell dimension, inhabited by many powerful demons that have lain dormant for millennia. As mankind blunders through the Scope, it can only be so long before the demons awake and wreak havoc upon the world. Many dark, occult secrets wait to be uncovered, and many demons and mystical enemies will challenge your characters in the process.

## PLAYING THE GAME

As a player in **Etherscope**, you take on the role of one of the brave few who seek, or are drawn into, adventure. Depending upon the style of game you wish to play,

characters can be soldiers or officers of a military unit, explorers searching the wilds, street scallies striking at the cruelty of greedy industrialists and a careless government, or Scope riders lurking in the bowels of the cities and living their heroic lives in the Etherscope. They could be gunslingers of the Savage South, occult investigators tracking down demonic influences, or powerful industrialists out to make their own names through their skills and ingenuity. **Etherscope** is a rich game world with many different avenues for adventure and many mysteries to uncover.

## WHAT'S NEW IN ETHERSCOPE

**Etherscope** is based on the Open Game License, which uses a popular die called a d20. Many other games out there also use d20s (and most say so on the cover somewhere), so you might be familiar with the system. If you are familiar with fantasy role-playing games that use d20s (such as those involving dragons), you already know a lot about the system.

### New Elements in Etherscope

The following aspects are unique to **Etherscope**. Whether or not you are familiar with other modern-era games, these are new.

**Values and Allegiances:** **Etherscope** does not use traditional alignments. Instead it uses the combination of values and allegiance to determine a person's moral code.

**Values:** Choose one virtue and one vice. The virtues and vices come from the same list of Victorian values, but taking a value as a virtue or a vice means something differ-

ent. The list includes: bravery, detachment, enthusiasm, honesty, loyalty, patriotism, progress, and tenacity.

**AL (Allegiances):** Choose one major allegiance. You may also choose one minor allegiance. Allegiances include, but are not limited to, a person or group, an organization, a nation, or a belief system. You choose the particulars of an allegiance. The DM may grant you a +2 circumstance bonus on Charisma-based checks when dealing with someone who has the same allegiance, but the main purpose of allegiances is as tools for roleplaying. Where do your character's loyalties lie?

**Excellence Points:** You can spend an excellence point to re-roll a single die roll, "max out" a roll (automatically get the highest possible number) before the roll is made, or activate an ability that requires an excellence point. Most characters gain 3 excellence points at 1st level and an additional point every odd level, and you can use each point once per adventure. These points represent the amazing powers of the human spirit and only player characters and special GM characters get them.

**Social Template:** Your social template represents your background and social standing.

**Wealth:** Purchasing items does not lower your wealth unless you take 20. In the **Etherscope** setting it is difficult to raise or lower your wealth. There is little room for climbing the social ladder.



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**The Great Metropolis**  
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