

THE WORLD OF XCRAWL

Ancient Rome meets Smash TV meets Gangster Rap? WTF?

—From an EN World Forum posting by member “jdrakeh” regarding *Xcrawl*

Xcrawl is a blend of unexpected genera elements combined to create a highly original, offbeat adventure game that combines strategic dungeon crawl action in a harsh dystopic setting of absolute authoritarianism and rigid class conflict with a quirky alternate modern history with a carnival mirror view of the strange world we live in; and a treatise on the phenomenon of fame in our celebrity-worshipping culture. It's a grand strategic challenge that forces out-of-the box thinking by presenting crawlers with improbable situations that they simply could not discover in a standard fantasy setting. Most of all, *Xcrawl* is fun – monster-slaying, sports-car-winning, crowd-pumping, face-on-the-cereal-box fun!

In short, it's not your grandma's dungeon crawl.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE XCRAWL WORLD

THE GAMES

Xcrawl is a live on pay-per-view death sport. The players take the roles of professional athlete adventurers: amazingly bad-assed Athletes, weapon-mastering Brawlers, spell-weaving Blasters, lethally sneaky Specialists, divinity-channeling Messengers, and house-rocking Jammers. They face the challenges set forth by the Dungeon Judge, or DJ, who designs a dungeon full of dangerous creatures, perilous traps, deadly obstacles, and incredible treasure.

FAME

Celebrities play a special role in the social hierarchy of the *Xcrawl* world. Adored by commoners and bored aristocrats alike, celebrities cross an otherwise impenetrable social barrier. Crawlers begin the campaign as relative unknowns, but if their careers go well they become more and more popular until they become media superstars. Fame is a stat all *Xcrawlers* have, and it represents both how recognizable they are and how “hot” their current career is in the public eye. Characters with a high Fame score get preferential treatment, bonuses to charisma-keyed skill rolls and earn more money for personal appearances. Characters earn Fame Feats that give can earn them more gold or situational advantages during a Crawl or in their daily lives. Fame, even more than personal skill or victories, is the true measure of success in The Games.

EMPIRE

The characters all hail from the North American Empire (NAE), the nation that spawned *Xcrawl*. The Empire stretches from real-world Alaska all the way to the Panama Canal. It is the most powerful Empire in the world, with a massive military force, a thriving economy, and a tightly controlled populace. Emperor Ronald I rules America with an iron fist, although it is rumored that his health is waning and only daily applications of magic keep him alive and lucid.

RELIGION

The Olympic pantheon, ruled by mighty Jupiter and all-seeing Juno, is the official religion of the NAE. All other religion is banned, with two exceptions: the ancestral deities of the various non-human races that enjoy American citizenship, and the nature deity revered by the barely-tolerated Druidic sects. The Native Americans also worship an outlawed pantheon of spirits and powers led by the great Wankan Tanka, but these so-called “barbarians” are non-citizens and the practice of their savage religion is largely ignored. Religion is a major part of the life of American citizens, who are expected to choose a patron deity at some point during their lives. Major cities are dotted with temples and shrines to the various Olympic powers. Collectively referred to as the Olympic Temples,



they wield great power and influence over the citizens of the Empire. Apollo is the official patron of Xcrawl and most Games begin with an invocation for his blessing.

HIERARCHY

Society in the North American Empire is extremely stratified. Most folks are commoners, with no title or lands of their own. Their freedom is limited. They may not travel out of the country without special permission. Commoners have no right to privacy and are subject to random search and seizures. What rights commoners do have exist at the whims of their betters. The highest tier of society is the aristocracy: the dukes, barons, lords and ladies who come from old and recognized families. The aristocracy is notoriously greedy and ruthless, and more than willing to victimize commoners and lower tiered nobility. Those few with sympathy for the lot of the commoner find their voices quelled by popular opinion.

CORRUPTION

The world of Xcrawl is largely governed by corruption, nepotism, cronyism, and graft. Bribery is such a key element of society that it is not even recognized as a social evil, much less a criminal offense. A big enough “donation” to the right individual or organization or person can pardon nearly any offense, open any door and remove pesky obstacles such as fair play and justice. Indeed, the

only incorruptible institution in the modern world is Xcrawl, which has become the last bastion of honor in a decadent world. Crawlers inevitably encounter situations that will require they grease a few palms to get what they need, but never within the Games themselves.

CITY STATES

The NAE is composed of large walled, self-sufficient cities nestled within seemingly endless expanses of unspoiled land. This arrangement is a necessity forced by the existence of dragons, who do not abide large settlements that crop up in their territories. While there is an interstate highway system linking cities and towns, the routes are dangerous, and Imperial citizens generally travel from city to city in huge caravans for protection. Outside the walled cities are Native American tribes who still live in harmony with nature as they have for thousands of years, paying no taxes and recognizing no Emperor. There are also monsters of every size and description, that tend to cluster around the territories of dragons in a state of mutual resistance against human encroachment.