

Russ Westbrook  
[russwestbrook@iowatelecom.net](mailto:russwestbrook@iowatelecom.net)

## HOUSE RULES: GAMMA WORLD V

(OR.....)

What to do if you think the alien invasion plotline sucks but  
you want to keep the balancing factor of weapon gene-locks.

The Alternity rules for Gamma World- once supplemented with Dragon Magazine and web enhancement material- serve as a solid base to build a long running campaign around. Unfortunately, the plotline running through the book of an alien invasion destroys much of the atmosphere of the original game, as it exonerates mankind from its “original sin” and lays the blame for man’s fate on the poor back of some bug-eyed monster from Tau Ceti. This can easily be scrapped, of course, but then one is left with trying to find an explanation for the gene-locks on all the best technology. This too could be scrapped in this author’s opinion without much detriment: a biohazard nuclear wasteland is hardly a proper place to find an “all races tally” kind of world. And this IS the REAL reason for the gene-locks. PSH characters finally can be as butt-kickin’ as their Mutie comrades. For games where the “role” in role-playing is primary, this is somewhat unimportant. For those who want it however the following rationale is offered:

“Gene-locks” don’t actually exist; at least not for biological creatures. Androids and robots had become an ethical political issue before the fall, with Right-to-Life groups scaring everybody to death that they might get laws passed which would set the new intelligences free from slavery, and urban legends circulating on the VR Net about supposed rebellious androids plotting overthrow of their abusive but less intelligent human masters. To allay fears, the government of United America did gene-lock much high technology so that artificial intelligences couldn’t use it (except of course for those who were given proper permits, issued to their owners). They did this however through the use of Genetic-Chronologers.

All sources agree that the Shadow Years were a time of growing social chaos and anarchy. Paradoxically such breakdowns also spawn a governmental backlash of repressiveness. This happened in the form of increased gun control laws and the passing of the Shooter Identification Act (Bill 15432-9b), which required all new weapons (and many other powerful and controlled technologies) be equipped with a gene-recorder so that law enforcement could check all such items at any time to see when and by who they were used. This law required the gene-chronologer on all sorts of weapons, right down to every new Saturday Night Special produced, but the law was rather late in coming. Only those items being newly produced in the fifteen years before the mushroom clouds received the recorders, and almost all of this was the latest tech. Some weapons were produced by black marketers of course, which lacked the addition, and some newly produced old tech did receive it, but by and large the situation is as the rulebook describes it.

The reason mutants can’t make such items work is because gene-chronologers were made to be HIGHLY tamper resistant. If the device picked up ANY anomaly which might suggest tampering, the item was blocked from functioning. Mutant DNA is scanned by the recorder and logged as suspicious; therefore it locks up the weapon. This is also of course the case of animals, plants, or even PSH wearing un-prickable gloves. This also throws an interesting wrinkle into the role-playing aspect of the game. All military and law enforcement robots would naturally be equipped with gene-chronologer readers. The next time a PSH is detained by such living metal it could scan his pistol and want to know WHY this weapon had been fired thirty-seven times in the last seventy-two hours in this “crowded civilian metropolex” (i.e. nuked out glowing ruin). The Character had better have a pretty darn plausible answer in a language the bot can understand, or he may just find himself being “hauled downtown to be interviewed”; it can be a nasty business being “interviewed”.....