d20 Modern
Return Expedition to the Barrier Peaks
By William Canavan

With the release of **d20 Modern**'s *Future Tech*, the temptation was too great not look back a famed introduction of "future tech" into classic dungeon crawl—namely, *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*. The following article makes heavy reference of **d20 Modern** material; however, for DMs interested in incorporating a bit of future tech into your **D&D** session, this provides a few helpful guidelines.

At 1976's Origins II convention, Gary Gygax ran a tournament module written by Jim Ward. *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* brought PCs to the site of a crashed spaceship; there they were pitted against a wide variety of sci-fi adversaries, including alien creatures, a deranged surgical android, and single-minded police robots. To help the PCs battle these foes, the spaceship was littered with alien weapons and technology, including "blasters", lasers, needlers, and a suit of power armor.
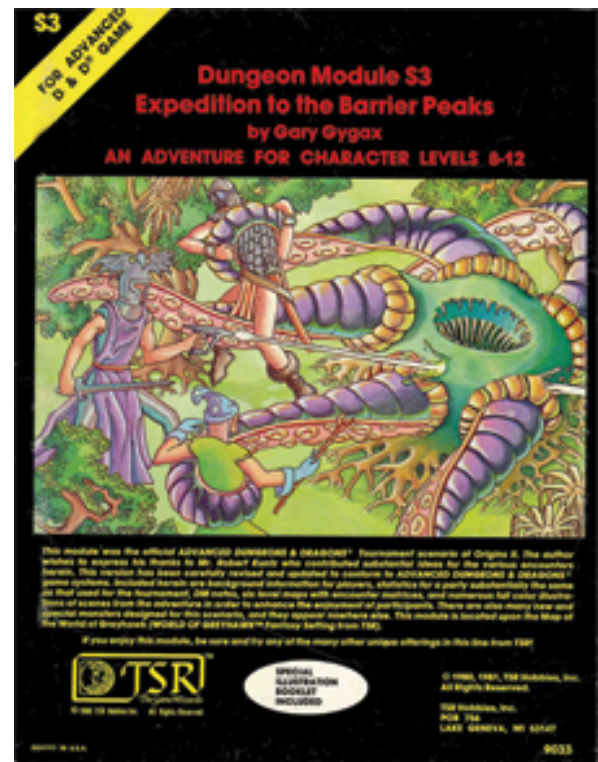
In 1980, TSR updated the module to the 1st Edition **AD&D** rules and released it to the general public. At last players everywhere could get their hands on the powerful alien devices inside the crashed ship… if they survived! Unfortunately for the Dungeon Masters running this adventure, the PCs often retained this high tech weaponry long after the adventure was over—often leading to problems later in the campaign, as the items were incredibly powerful.

With the release of *d20 Future Tech*—and in honor of its 30th anniversary—some Dungeon Masters might be tempted to convert this classic module to 3.5 edition rules. The following article is designed to help those brave DMs confront the dangers associated with introducing high-tech items into a fantasy world. Needless to say, this job is much easier today than it was thirty years ago; **D&D** 3.5 and *d20 Modern* (and thus *d20 Future Tech*) are easier to convert thanks to the inherent compatibility of the d20 system.

d20 Future Tech contains a vast array of high-tech weapons, armor and equipment, along with lots of new designs for robots, vehicles and starships. Certainly any of the items presented in that book will be useful in a *d20 Future* campaign, or even *Cyberscape*, *Apocalypse* or *Modern* campaigns; but what about importing them into your **Dungeons & Dragons** campaign? There are three basic questions a DM needs to ask before adding *Future Tech* weapons to a **D&D** setting: why, how, and what happens next?

Why?

Are your players ready (and willing) for a new twist in your campaign? If they've grown too accustomed to fantasy

trappings, throwing in a giant killer robot from outer space certainly ought to spice things up. Or maybe your players have grown jaded with their collection of wands and various magical swords. Throwing a plasma rifle into the next treasure horde definitely could make things interesting again… especially as they try to figure out how to use it without accidentally shooting themselves!

Future Tech items are new and different and exciting. They can bring back that sense of wonder that many experienced players had when they took their first tentative steps into the world of adventuring. Placing such items within an *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*-style adventure can also generate a sense of nostalgia (and bewilderment) for this classic adventure.

How?

Of course you can't just drop *Future Tech* items into a game and expect your players to accept them. Things have to make sense to players, even in a fantasy game. Internal consistency is important. Introducing *Future Tech* items should be a lead-in to a deeper plot. Perhaps a mad wizard could be raiding alternate dimensions looking for advanced technology to help him conquer the world. Perhaps travelers from another Prime Material plane are using future technology to invade the characters' home plane. Or perhaps a band of explorers discovered a lost city and awakened some long forgotten technological threat.

What Happens Next?

However you decide to introduce *Future Tech* into your game, you need to be prepared for the aftermath. *Future Tech* items, like weapons and armor, or especially mecha and starships, are extremely powerful. In the words of Arthur C. Clarke "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Similarly, *Future Tech* items should be treated as powerful magic items, possibly even as artifacts. Fortunately, most *Future Tech* items run off of power packs or require clips of ammunition (and thus without further supplies have finite "charges"). Furthermore, most *Future Tech* items require some sort of feat (like Personal Firearms Proficiency or Armor Proficiency, Powered) or specialized skills (like Computer Use or Investigate) to use them effectively. These factors limit the power of *Future Tech* items, and thus limit their potential for unbalancing your campaign.

Getting Started

Let's use the *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* as an example. We won't convert the entire module here in this article, but we can tackle a few of the more notable features. We'll start with something easy: weapons. After that, we'll introduce the famed suit of power armor, and finally convert one of the police robots.

Weapons

The stats for the laser pistol, laser rifle, and the needle pistol are already converted for us. The first two appear in *d20 Future*, and the last one appears in *d20 Future Tech*. With that in mind, here are the conversions for the blaster pistol, blaster rifle and the paralysis pistol.

Progress Level 8 Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Dmg	Critical	Damage Type	Rng Increment	Rate of Fire	Mag	Size	Weight	Purchase DC	Restriction
Blaster pistol	Special	20	Fire	10 feet	S	6 disc	Medium	3 lb.	17	Lic (+1)
Blaster rifle	Special	20	Fire	15 feet	Single	3 disc	Large	8 lb.	19	Res (+2)
Paralysis gun	Special	—	—	—	Single	6 disc	Medium	3 lb.	16	Lic (+1)

Blaster Pistol

The blaster pistol is a one handed weapon that fires a single beam of energy. It requires a ranged touch attack to hit and deals 4d6 points of fire damage. Each shot drains one charge from the pistol's power disk.

No Aura; CL 3rd; n/a; Price 2,250 gp

Blaster Rifle

The blaster rifle is a large weapon that requires two hands to operate. It has three modes of attack: a disruptor beam, a heat beam and a flame plane. Each effect is described below.

No Aura; CL 11th; n/a; Price 17,750 gp

Disruptor Beam: You must make a successful ranged touch attack to hit. Any creature struck by the ray takes 12d6 points of damage. Any creature reduced to 0 or fewer hit points by this effect is entirely disintegrated, leaving behind only a trace of fine dust. A disintegrated creature's equipment is unaffected.

When used against an object, the ray simply disintegrates up to a 10-foot cube of nonliving matter. Thus, the blaster disintegrates only part of any very large object or structure targeted. The ray even affects objects constructed entirely of force, such as *forceful hand* or a *wall of force*, but not magical effects such as a *globe of invulnerability* or an *antimagic field*.

A creature or object that makes a successful DC 19 Fortitude save is partially affected, taking only 5d6 points of damage. If this damage reduces the creature or object to 0 or fewer hit points, it is entirely disintegrated. Only the first creature or object struck can be affected; that is, the ray affects only one target per shot.

An affected creature also suffers from heat exhaustion. It moves and attacks at a drastically slowed rate. A *slowed* creature can take only a single move action or standard action each turn, but not both (nor may it take full-round actions). Additionally, it takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls, AC, and Reflex saves. A *slowed* creature moves at half its normal speed (round down to the next 5-foot increment), which affects the creature's jumping distance as

normal for decreased speed. Multiple *slow* effects don't stack.

Heat Beam: The blaster's heat beam blasts your enemies with a fiery ray. The ray requires a ranged touch attack to hit and deals 4d6 points of fire damage. An affected creature also suffers from heat exhaustion. It moves and attacks at a drastically slowed rate. A *slowed* creature can take only a single move action or standard action each turn, but not both (nor may it take full-round actions). Additionally, it takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls, AC, and Reflex saves. A *slowed* creature moves at half its normal speed (round down to the next 5-foot increment), which affects the creature's jumping distance as normal for decreased speed. Multiple *slow* effects don't stack.

Flame Plane: A cone of searing flame 50' long and 25' wide at the end, shoots from the blaster. Any creature in the area of the flames takes 5d4 points of fire damage. A successful DC 15 Reflex save reduces this damage to half. Flammable materials burn if the flames touch them. A character can extinguish burning items as a full-round action.

Paralysis Pistol
The paralysis pistol is a one handed weapon that fires a cone of energy 60' long and 30' wide (at the end). Any living creature in the area of effect must make a DC 15 Fortitude save.

If the creature fails this save, it becomes paralyzed for 1d4 rounds; the creature is aware and breathes normally, but cannot take any actions including speech. Each round on its turn, the subject may attempt a new saving throw to end this effect (this is a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity). Note: a flying, winged creature that becomes paralyzed cannot flap its wings and falls; a swimming creature no longer able to swim may drown.

Even on a successful save, an affected creature moves and attacks at a drastically slowed rate. A *slowed* creature can take only a single move action or standard action each turn, but not both (nor may it take full-round actions). Additionally, it takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls, AC, and Reflex saves. A *slowed* creature moves at half its normal speed (round down to the next 5-foot increment), which affects the creature's jumping distance as normal for decreased speed. Multiple *slow* effects don't stack.

Each shot drains two charges from the pistol's power disk.

No Aura; CL 4th; n/a; Price 11,250 gp

Armor

The suit of powered armor presented in the *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* (pride and joy of countless paladins gaining its possession; its original stats can be found here) is a little tougher to convert. It's sort of a cross between Boost Armor and the Myrmidon Light Mecha. Let's use the Tactical Assault Armor from *d20 Future Tech* as a base and use the gadget system to flesh it out.

Progress Level 8 Armor

Armor	Type	Equipment Bonus	Nonprof. Bonus	Max Dex Bonus	Armor Penalty	Speed	Weight	Purchase DC	Restriction

Tactical Assault Armor	Tactical	+9	+4	+1	–6	30 ft.	55 lb.	25	Mil (+3)

Tactical Assault Armor

Bridging the gap between powered armor and mecha, tactical assault armor incorporates many of the design features of mecha in a size usable by ordinary infantry. Featuring an induction engine power plant, the armor includes powerful servo motors boosting the wearer's physical strength, speed, and overall combat performance. The tactical assault armor provides the following benefits (in addition to its armor protection):

- +4 Strength;
- +10 feet base land speed;
- +1 equipment bonus on attack rolls;
- +2 equipment bonus on survival checks;
- +2 equipment bonus on computer use checks;
- Hologram recorder (see page 78 of *d20 Future*);
- Modem;
- Portable satellite telephone.

In addition to the standard features of the tactical assault armor, the suit discovered in *Expedition*'s crashed spaceship has the following pieces of integrated equipment:

- *Force Field, Personal*: Projects a defensive bubble around a single Medium-size or smaller character or item, that provides DR 10/—. The device contains a power pack that provides up to 2 hours of use.
- *Environment Seal*: Provides the wearer with breathable air and external pressure to assure comfort and survival for up to eight hours, ensuring that the armor can function in the extremes of the deep sea or deep space, along with any environment in between.
- *Hoverpack*: Allows the wearer to fly at a speed of 80 feet (perfect maneuverability) for up to 12 hours on a single fuel cell.
- *Laser Pistol*: Integrated into the right forearm of the tactical assault armor. It is like the laser pistol detailed in *d20 Future* in all other respects.

Learning Future Tech

The original method for learning to use *Expedition*'s technology involved complex flow charts. PCs rolled a d10 and following the chart to its conclusion, modifying their rolls as follows:

- Intelligence less than 10: +1
- Intelligence over 15: -1
- like or similar object observed in operational procedures: -1
- previous explanation of operation of item by one familiar with it: -2
- operated a similar item previously: -2

A sample flow chart, for learning to use the power armor or blaster rifle, can be found here.

Any *Future Tech* weapons require the personal firearms proficiency in order to be used effectively. However in a **D&D** setting, each weapon would require a separate exotic weapons proficiency feat to offset the -4 penalty for being non-proficient. Additionally, such characters must also attempt to figure out how to operate these items without harming themselves in the process.

To figure out how to use a *Future Tech* item, a character must make a successful DC 20 Intelligence check. If the character fails by 11 or more, the item simply does not activate. If failing by 10 or less, the item activates but it automatically hits the character making the check. If failing by 5 or less, the item activates, but affects a random target within the item's range or area of effect. If the check succeeds, the item works as intended. A character may make an Intelligence check once per round as a standard action. Once a character has made a successful Intelligence check, he can use the item in question without future checks and can also instruct others in how to use the item safely.

Robots

Now that we've converted the weapons found in the ruins of the ship, let's shift our focus to the robots most likely guarding them. There are several varieties of robots located in the wreckage of the ship: repair robots, police robots and half a dozen models of androids. Let's concentrate on the police robot, as it is the most likely to be involved in combat with the characters. The police robot from *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* is essentially a modified APE robot from *d20 Future* with the following modifications:

- Replace the robot's legs with multiple tentacles (2).
- Replace the OICW Assault Rifle with a paralysis pistol.
- Replace the magnetic feet with integrated equipment: hoverpack.
- Add integrated equipment: force field, personal; DR5/—.

Police Robot
The police robot resembles a floating, armored pillar with two arms, two metallic tentacles and no legs. The robot's hands can be used for grappling or carrying items. It usually carries a paralysis pistol. In addition, it has a mini-grenade launcher (with compartment for

concussion grenades) mounted in its left forearm, and a laser pistol mounted in its right forearm. The police robot cannot use its mounted weapons if it is grappling.

Police Robot CR 5
N Large Construct
Init -1; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +13; darkvision 60 ft.
Languages Alien

AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17
hp 55 (6d10+20 HD); DR 5/--
Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3
Immune mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, necromancy effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless. They are not subject to non-lethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, energy drain, or the effects of massive damage. They cannot be raised from the dead.
Resist n/a

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); climb 10 ft.; fly 80 ft.
Melee hands +8 (1d4+5 subdual) or
Melee tentacle +8 (1d6+5) or
Ranged paralysis pistol +3 (special) or
Ranged laser pistol +3 (2d8) or
Ranged grenade launcher with concussion grenade +3 (4d6 subdual)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +14 (+18 with tentacle)
Atk Options constrict 1d6+9, improved grab, wound rot (+13 melee)
Special Actions none

Abilities Str 20, Dex 11, Con —, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 5
SQ construct traits, critical systems
Feats Exotic Firearms Proficiency (grenade launchers), Personal Firearms Proficiency
Skills: Climb +9, Hide –4, Search +4
Equipment: paralysis pistol with 4 power discs, laser pistol (mounted), mini-grenade launcher (mounted) with 8 concussion grenades. The police robot has the following systems and accessories:
Frame: biodroid
Locomotion: tentacles
Manipulators: hands (2)
Armor: duralloy armor
Sensors: class V sensor system (with ladar*)
Skill Software: Climb skill progit (4 ranks), Listen skill progit (8 ranks), Search skill progit (4 ranks), Spot skill progit (8 ranks)
Feat Software: Exotic Firearms Proficiency (grenade launchers) progit, Personal Firearms Proficiency progit
Ability Upgrades: Dexterity upgrade (+2), Wisdom upgrade (+2)
Accessories: integrated equipment: hoverpack, integrated equipment: personal force field: DR5/--, weapon mounts (2)
* Ladar is an acronym for LAser Detection And Ranging
Purchase DC: 34
Restriction: Military (+3)

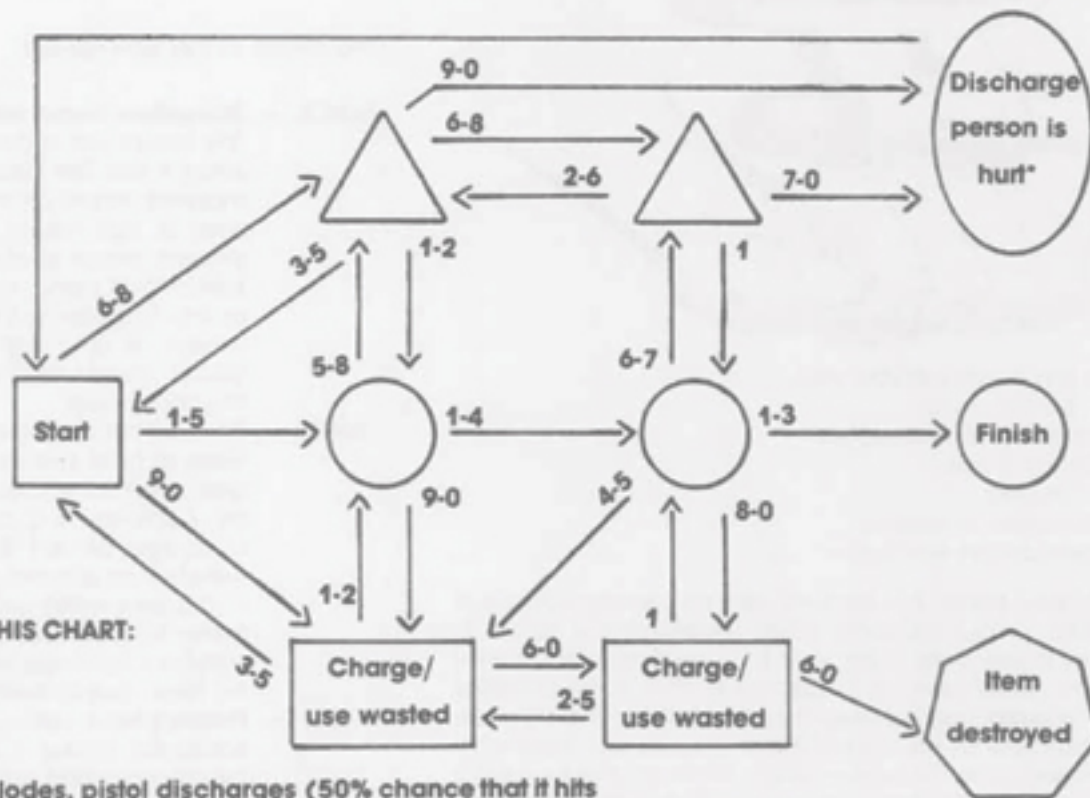**Hook** "Drop your weapons. You have six seconds to comply."

Conclusion

Armor, weapons, and equipment from *d20 Future* and *d20 Future Tech* are fairly easy to import into a **D&D** campaign setting; especially if you follow the simple guidelines above and use a bit of common sense. Most importantly, you should be sure to familiarize yourself with the rules for any piece of equipment you are thinking of importing before actually doing so. If your players enjoy the mix of science fiction with swords & sorcery found in *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*, you might want to try your hand at converting the 2nd edition boxed set *Tale of the Comet.*

About the Author

Bill Canavan has been gaming for more than twenty-five years. During that time, he has written and run adventures for the **Dungeons & Dragons, d20 Modern,** and **Star Wars** d20 games. *Reality Check* is his first published work, and he is grateful for the opportunity to write for Wizards of the Coast. Bill currently lives in New Hampshire with his wife and two cats.

Chart IV: Complex Lethal Items

ITEMS USING THIS CHART:
Power armor
Blaster rifle

*Grenade explodes, pistol discharges (50% chance that it hits
handler, 50% for any creature within range at random, if
applicable), etc.

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