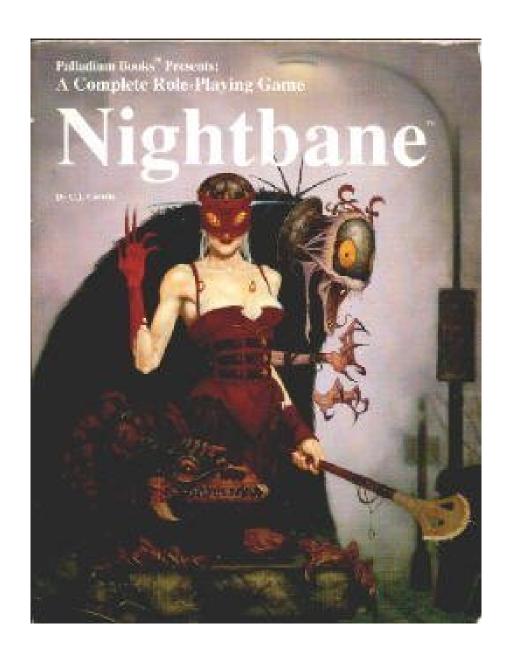


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By L. Benson

This is Nightbane form Palladium books and is a Great book for any player geting in to nightbane palladium games and is a great RPG

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

A heart in the right place

By Daniel Saults

Shapeshifting, macabre superheros in a world of decay, political corruption, lurking conspiracies, and sinister plots. The backstory of this RPG is well thought out (although sometimes smacking of personal political perspectives), with careful attention to each conceivable side, perspective, motivation, and potential logical hole. However, the writers were wise enough to leave some deliberate gaps and mysteries, to be left as tantalizing bait for the players and fodder for GMs who love to spin out a good mystery. However, the basic premise might be a turnoff for some. The Nightbane themselves are creatures of darkness fueled by desire and inner fire, able to shift from their normal, human form into a reflection of their deepest fears, wishes, or personality. But with all that diversity, it's something of a paradox that they could be classified as one species at all. The example plotlines are also something along the lines of vacuous superhero fare more reminiscent of Saturday morning cartoons than the dark, stark science fiction angle that the initial plot worked so promisingly toward.

All of this is shredded to near-unrecognizability by an absolute mess of groundwork. Rules are scattered throughout the book with almost no rhyme or reason. Classes and races are sprinkled through the text like dots on a mushroom, with very little explanation of the difference between the two (could a Nightbane simultaneously be a Spook Squad member, for example? Which would you apply, the Nightbane modifiers or the Spook Squad ones? Can one adopt multiple classes?). The rules themselves are poorly thought out, with huge gaps in explanations which leave most GMs completely up to their own devices to figure out. I still have no earthly idea how they want players to handle initiative rolls, for example. The classes (races? I guess "character types" is the best term) are for the most part fairly balanced, but still suffer from disorganized presentation. There is also a huge slant in favor of supernaturals in general, Nightbane in particular, and the priorities of power seem to be, in descending order, "Nightbane", "Other Supernatural

Creatures (vampires, guardians, etc.)", "Psychics/Mages", "Everyone Else". The S.D.C. system is an example of originality-gone-awry. The basic premise is that a character suffers superflous "Structural Damage" initially, giving way to significant and longer-lasting HP damage as it accumulates. Hence, a gunshot would probably tear through all of a normal human's SDC and go straight into HP. The question is, what's the honest difference? Wouldn't such a system be equally simulated by just using HP, with a minimal loss healing fairly quickly (due to having very few HP to recover) and representing this type of mostly pain-related damage? Some places seem to imply that certain attacks or spells might damage HP directly, but these are often left contradictory or unresolved. Lastly, though the various psychic powers are fairly well designed, the spellcasting system is an absolute catastrophe, with mildly useful powers squatting at the top levels of sorcery, devastating spells often hovering around the middle, huge numbers of extremely redundant powers (how many versions of essentially the same shapeshifting spell does one need?), and all of them with variable costs that were seemingly picked randomly.

Nightbane obviously has its black and twisted heart in the right place, and played properly, can lend itself to a macabre but intense game. But unless a GM is ready to make up enough rules to make this game halfway playable (and that's without even fixing up the balance issues with spellcasting and skills), I'd recommend just scrapping all the non-backstory material and porting it all over to a new rule system or even making up your own. I think just about any format could serve as a better plot vehicle than this.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Into the Night

By Eric E. Johnson

First off, the book's original title is 'Nightspawn'. Coming straight out of Cliver Barker's Nightbreed, there is a world fighting off an alien invasion. Problem is, no one realized it. These Nightlords send shape shifters and worse (some being drawn from the Lovecraftian) into the world to efforts to subtly take over the world. Presidents replaced, total control of the military, and everything else expected in a noire-like paranoid world. Players will mostly portray Nightspawn, twisted things able to take the form of their subconscious minds, their thoughts, their dreams, their fears; this form is referred to as the Morphus form. Nightspawn are not aligned to any certain side of this war, but their presence always remains something to be remembered.

Nightspawn's character creation system is a hot mess, which puts it on par with the other Palladium games. Most cases of combat and savings throws require a d20 roll, with rolling higher earning a better result. Skill checks however are based upon percentiles and thusly the lower the result provides a better result. And if you actually want to play a Nightbane, there is a metric ton of random charts that can be used to create the Morphus form. It literally can take upwards of an hour. But from one GM to another, the best way to circumvent the ridiculous randomness (which usually results in headaches and too many bonuses), I usually simply allow players to select a number of Morphus form sections, like say four or five characteristics, that keep in line with the character's concept. This saves some time and allows a player to create a character they will enjoy playing.

There are a few other character templates that can be used. Nightspawn harbours dopplegangers, vampires, the enigmatic Guardians (creatures of living light), human psychics and mages.

Like all of Palladium's games, the mechanics are always a logistical nightmare, but the setting and back stories are amazingly written. While it is possible to run a game strait from this core book, Palladium has since released a small number of sourcebooks, each with it's own merits and flaws. But if you are looking for a noire-horror game, there's not much that can out-and-out beat this game.

The game has since been changed to Nightbane due to some stupid legality that was not to the fault of Palladium Books. Either way, it's a solid entry into a legacy of gamer faves provided by the fine folks of

Palladium.

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