

RollPlay Swan Song - Week 1 Part 1

JP: Hello and welcome to the premiere of Roll Play Swan Song, the latest show in the Roll Play franchise, I guess you could say. I'm JP McDaniel, one of the cast members here. You're going to recognise pretty much everyone on the show, except for the guy right down in the centre, under the logo, and that is of course Adam Koebel. You've probably seen him around, at least in these parts, for Dungeon World. He's done a couple of things with Misscliks as well, but Adam, why don't you start off and first off tell us a little about who you are, what you do and why you're here?

Adam: Alrighty. I am Adam Koebel. I am the co-creator of Dungeon World, but today I am the Space Master of Space. What I do? I master space, right now, for the next few hours. Yeah, that's all I'm about right now.

JP: What about not right now? What else do you do aside from that? You DM – how many other campaigns do you DM actively?

Adam: This is campaign number three. For me, I've got two live campaigns that I'm running right now. I'm playing a game of Burning Wheel that just got started, and I'm playing a game called Night Witches, which is about-

JP: I've heard a lot about that.

Adam: Soviet bomber pilots in World War 2, which is also pretty cool.

JP: That's like a table-top RPG as well?

Adam: Yeah, it's pretty bad-ass.

Geoff: Do you guys get into the accent?

Adam: I do, for sure. Accents are key. For everybody else, it varies.

Steven: Damn straight.

JP: Nice, we'll have to-

Geoff: If you're going to do a Soviet D&D thing, you've gotta be-, everyone's gotta be-,

JP: You've gotta be into it.

Geoff: Comrade.

Adam: Yeah.

Wheat: Listen to me. Let's go bowling.

JP: That's all Wheat knows. That's his entire repertoire of Russian-,

Geoff: Bowling for Nazis.

JP: Exactly.

Geoff: Oh shit, is everyone wearing glasses but me?

JP: Er, yeah.

Steven: Get with it, Geoff.

JP: Also, Wheat shaved his beard. We were gonna have a fully-bearded cast, but Wheat fucked it up.

Steven: Wheat.

JP: What are you lookin' back at the-,

Steven: He's got the soul patch.

JP: I see, like, this, but then I look at Adam and I'm just like, well shit Wheat-,

Wheat: I had to reset.

JP: You had to reset. Let's intro everyone else on the show. Again, you probably recognised them before as they are all already on other Roll Play shows, but Wheat, why don't we start with you? Who are you and what do you do?

Wheat: Yo, I'm djWheat. You might have seen me in other Roll Play shows, such as R&D and Cross the Good Life and other things, and I'm excited for this one, here. Let's do it. I stream and I do some shows with JP. I do some shows with Geoff, and I just want to go on the record, I'm glad you let me go first because, yeah, I'm excited obviously because we have Adam as our Space Master, but I am fucking thrilled that I get to play with the one and only Steven Lumpkin, so boo yeah, let's do it!

JP: We'll use that as a segue. Steven, it's your first Roll Play show as a player character.

Steven: It's true.

JP: No longer are you pulling the strings. Well, maybe you are but-,

Steven: Ah, that's what you all think.

Geoff: You're going to have your hands full, Adam. This guy...I DMed this sonofabitch.

Adam: I'm not scared of Steven. I'm not afraid.

Geoff: I believe he was rolling around in poop. I think he tried to set Neal on fire and kill him.

Adam: I particularly remember you guys butchering my game. That was great. Thank you for that.

Steven: No, I had a lot of fun rolling around in poop, in Dungeon World.

JP: Nice. For those just joining from the front page, Steven's the weird one. He's the odd guy. Just go with it.

Steven: Hi guys. So, I run some other roleplaying shows on Role Play, including R&D and maybe there was another one, I don't know, and I work in the video games industry. I'm currently working on a game called Warhammer 40,000: Eternal Crusade. It's going to be awesome, and I think that's about it for what I do online.

JP: Wheat, I'm just going to give you the platform. People are wanting a close-up of the shirt. I saw you going like this, trying to get it in there.

Wheat: Let's go.

JP: Is that a One Piece shirt?

Wheat: It is, and who's the best One Piece character, do you think?

JP: I don't watch the anime or anything.

Wheat: That's alright. The correct answer is 'Nico Robin,' just so you know.

JP: Oh that's right. You've lectured me before about Nico Robin.

Wheat: She's the best.

JP: Yeah, it's a female character that-, I forget. Wheat, just tell us.

Wheat: She grows hands out of her body.

Adam: Yeah, I do that too, look.

Wheat: No, like, multiple. She's the best.

Geoff: Do they stay on her after she grows them?

Wheat: If you want them to stay on her, they can, but they're not permanent.

Geoff: Oh my god, Wheat.

Wheat: Look at chat. They're agreeing, so...

JP: Chat's lovin' it.

Geoff: That's good, right? Chat agreeing with you? Yeah?

Wheat: Yeah, actually it is. It's pretty good.

JP: That 'once in a lifetime', when the stars align, chat agrees with someone on the stream. That's what happens. Geoff, what's going on with you? Who are you and what do you do on the Internets, or in life?

Geoff: What's up everybody. In case you're just now joining us, I'm a former, full-time, professional Starcraft 2 player for Evil Geniuses. Now I'm more of a commentator, host, personality kind of thing. I still play. I'm still competing. I'll be at Red Bull Atlanta Battlegrounds this coming weekend where Wheat will be joining us, I believe, right, Wheat?

Wheat: Negative.

Geoff: Goddamn it. I just assumed. I apologise.

Wheat: Hey, you know, I'm bummed. I was supposed to be there. I think I actually said it already, but yeah. I wish I was going.

Geoff: He sometimes shows up there. I've been doing shows with JP, which is actually kind of weird to think about, for-,

JP: Two and half years now?

Geoff: Is it only two and a half?

JP: No, State of the Game was-, maybe three years.

Geoff: Three or four now, I think. Gettin' old, that's what we're doin'.

JP: Yeah, we're gettin' pretty old.

Geoff: I've been with the McDaniels for a while now, doing shows. We've been doing some role play. I'm on Solum. Before that it was just called 'Roll Play,' I guess, the original one.

JP: Yeah, it was the flagship show. Still is.

Wheat: You sound salty about that, Geoff.

Geoff: Not salty about that at all, man. Those were good times. Are you fuckin' kiddin' me?

Wheat: Asshole!

Geoff: Check out those five. They're on JP's thing. His Youtube. And then, for me, I'm also a Warhammer fanatic. So, Steve and I have bonded over that. He's creating a Warhammer computer game. I play the vanilla, the original Warhammer 40,000. Terrans for life. The Great Devourer. Other than that, you can just, you know, find me on the Internet. We'll see a lot of each other if you check out the show, so thank you.

JP: Yeah, I think Geoff is probably a part of-, I think we're in the 400s, now. 400 hours or so of content, roleplay related. I think you're probably in like 200 of it.

Geoff: Yeah.

JP: You're in a good portion of it.

Geoff: I've been around for a while.

JP: Yeah. Alright, cool. That does the intros and everything. Adam, I guess this is your turn to take it away. Typically the DM will, from here on out, tell us what the fuck this game is, and I guess you could probably tell us why the show's called 'Swan Song,' because I think a lot of people are wondering.

Adam: Totally. So, the game we're going to be playing is called 'Stars Without Number.' It's a sci-fi roleplaying game, based primarily on basic Dungeons & Dragons, so real old-school, real lethal, very simple mechanically. It's got a skill-set that comes to us from a game called 'Traveller,' which if you're an older nerd, you've heard of. If you're not, Traveller is to sci-fi RPGs what D&D is to fantasy. It came out in the 70s and Stars Without Number has got a skill system that's sort of based on that, and Stars is what we call a sandbox game. So, rather than me leading the players from plot point to plot point, I'm just going to say, 'Here's the universe. Go be in it.'

Geoff: Go forth.

Adam: The show is called Swan Song because that's the name of the ship that the characters are responsible for. It's technically property of the Sunbeam Multistellar Corporation. You guys owe an ass-ton of money on it, and the games going to be about paying that money down, in your ship. Or, you might just bail out part way through, and then it'll be about evading people trying to collect money for the ship.

JP: I hope, actually, within the first ten minutes we lose the ship, and then it's called Swan Song for no fuckin' reason.

Steven: 'Part way through,' Adam? Debt is one of our primary responsibilities.

Adam: Well, the great thing about the show being called Swan Song is that 'swan song' also means 'the last glorious thing you do behind you die horribly,' so, you know, multi-purpose title there.

JP: There you go.

Adam: So, for today, it's the name of the ship.

JP: We can just name each season. I mean, I can fit eight characters in there. We'll be good. We can change the title any time we lose the ship. Just, let's get through a couple of episodes, because it's not cheatin'.

Adam: So, the setting is inspired primarily by classic era, 70s, 80s, sci-fi, Sid Mead concept art, Blade Runner, the novel 'Dune'. I'm particularly inspired by Ian Bank's culture novels, so if you want any extra media to absorb while you're desperately waiting for the next episode, go and do that. So, things that exist in Stars Without Number: faster than light travel. Ships have what are called 'spike drives' that allow them to drill down into sub-space and travel at faster speeds. Psychic powers are really important to the setting, primarily because the sector that the characters are in – it's called Asgard Sigma – it's very far away from Earth. So far that no one that lives in that sector knows where Earth is anymore. The people of this setting have been separated from Earth for a very long time by an event called 'The Scream' which was horrible psychic backlash that killed most of the powerful psychics, and now you're stuck out in the wilderness, trying to get by.

There are aliens. We may or may not see them. Cybernetics are a thing. You know, standard sci-fi stuff. Energy weapons, repulsors, space ships, cool motorcycles, that kind of thing. But one thing you don't have is faster-than-light communication, so in a lot of ways the setting feels a little like a high-seas thing where you have to take communication on-board your ship. There are mail ships, travelling from sector to sector, delivering news. So what might happen in one sector might not reach the far reaches of the sector for a while, so that's something to keep in mind. The characters are all members of the crew of the Swan Song, filling various roles. The Swan Song is a small, free-merchant ship built on a freighter hull. It's got a simple spike drive. It's got 1000 or 100 tons of cargo space, on the sheet, you guys have it, and hopefully you'll be using that cargo space to move expensive stuff around.

So, what we're going to do for character creation, we'll jump right into it, we need attributes for the characters. As I mentioned, the game uses the oldest of old-school, the 3D6, rolled in order and assigned to strength, intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, constitution and charisma. Let's get doing that.

JP: So, who wants to go first?

Geoff: I suggest Wheat.

Wheat: Why!? No, I'm not going first! No, fuck you. Steven has been GMing for years. He's going first.

Steven: Alright, I'll go first.

Wheat: And fuck you, Geoff!

Adam: We'll do them altogether. Steven, roll your 3D6 six times and then we'll move on. We'll get everybody's attributes before we-

JP: So, I want to state that in other Roll Plays, typically where we do the 3D6 or the 4D6, I guess mostly Solum and D&D, it was always 4D6, remove the lowest one. So this is even a little bit more hardcore than that, but, what's the ruling again Adam? You can change it from an 8 to a 14, or something like that?

Adam: There's two ways you can move your scores around. So, you can reduce scores that are above 13. You can basically mediocritise yourself, so if you got a 16 you can bring it down to a 13 to bring your 4 up to an 8. So there's a middle band between 8 and 13.

JP: Or to a 7?

Adam: Yeah. You can move them up, but you can't bring a low score above 8 or lower a high score below 13, and then when you choose your class you'll be given the opportunity to bump one of your prime requisites up to 14 if it's not already. So, the thing about this is, because it's based on that old version of D&D, the attributes really aren't that huge a deal. Your skills are way more important. The way you just get shit done, in character, is going to be way more effective than being like, 'I've got a plus 17,000 on my strength. I'm going to punch everything to death.'

JP: Okay.

Geoff: Which is still cool, Adam. Alright?

Adam: Yes. It is cool, but do it without the numbers, man.

JP: Also, do we go in order? Is it, the first roll is strength?

Adam: Yeah, the first roll is strength, intelligence, wisdom... It's terrible.

Geoff: Alright, let Steven do it first.

Adam: Alright Steven, what's your strength?

Geoff: Should we describe our characters after the attributes? Should we introduce our characters after?

Adam: Yeah, we'll do character introductions-, because we'll do attributes, classes, backgrounds and training, and then we can talk about what your character's about.

Geoff: Okay, cool.

Steven: Is it, strength, dex, con, intelligence, wisdom, charisma?

Adam: It's whatever the order is on the character sheet.

Steven: I'm going, strength, dex, con, int, wis, char. Here we go!

JP: Oh my god, fifteen!

Steven: Alright, let's see what the next one is. Oh my god, why doesn't it let me go up? 9 dex.

Geoff: JP, can you send the warrior one?

JP: Oh, you mean the PDF?

Geoff: Yeah.

Steven: 9 con.

JP: 9s pretty good.

Adam: You peaked early, Steven.

Steven: 15, 9, 9, 9, 9, 9. (Rolls a 7). Oh no! (Rolls an 8). Oh no, this is going to be the worst.

Geoff: It's not all about the numbers, though. Remember that.

Steven: (Rolls a 14) Ahh, so nice!

Geoff: You're a (?), charismatic guy.

JP: So it goes, strength, dex, con, int, wis, charisma.

Adam: So Steven, while we move on to the next person, you can keep that 15 and 14 if you want to, or you can bring them both as far down as 13, to bring up the other scores, but the only thing you could bring up would be int, by 1.

Steven: Oh, I'm keep them.

JP: I'm going last.

Wheat: I'll go now. So, strength, 11. 10. 12.

Adam: 'Slightly above average' guy.

Wheat: 12, and, bring it home!

JP: 13.

Wheat: No, Adobe, why do you do that? Now my character sheet crashed.

JP: Don't worry, I'm recording all of this. Well, you're going to be adjusting it, so you're going to have to tell me what the final ones are.

Wheat: Okay, I'll re-do it again. What was my int, 13? And then, 12.

JP: King of mediocrity.

Geoff: Well-rounded.

Wheat: And charisma (rolls a 13).

JP: Damn, good fuckin' rolls from Wheat. Geoff, one of us is going to suck, man.

Geoff: I know, I know. Can we just have Wheat roll for me?

JP: Geoff, you're up next.

Geoff: Alright, alright. Roll 3D6.

JP: 10.

Geoff: That's about what I was imagining.

JP: Next, 10. 9. 9.

Geoff: Is there one more?

JP: There's two more. 10.

Geoff: Oh, god!

JP: Last one, charisma.

Geoff: It's going to be a 9. (Rolls an 8).

JP: Those were the worst rolls. Goddamn it.

Geoff: You guys are lucky I'm really good at, you know, imagination shit, because the numbers ain't doin' it for me.

Adam: Try to imagine yourself having better stats, maybe?

Wheat: So, Adam, we have two columns in the stats.

Adam: One of the columns is for the number. There's a modifier that'll be what you roll, when you have two rolls. You can see it if you have the PDF on page 10. We'll get to that in a second. Just be consistent, like fill out the left-most one with the numbers you've already got.

JP: Okay, here we go. Strength 13. Not bad. Dex 7. Con is next, right? (Rolls an 8). Fuck me. Int 11. That's not good. Wisdom. (Rolls a 7). Motherfu-,

Steven: Yeah, boy!

JP: Last one is what?

Steven: Charisma.

JP: I need this one. (Rolls a 6). Fuck! I only have two double digits. That's so bad.

Adam: Alright, so you can move points between your scores, lowering abilities above 13 and raising above 8 to even out. No such modifications can lower a high score below 13 or raise a low one above 8.

JP: So I'm fucked.

Adam: Alright, so now everybody needs to choose a class. There's only 3 in the game. Warriors are survivors, proficient in fighting in combat. Psychics are gifted with unique mental powers. Experts are everybody else. Experts have expertise in a wide range of useful skills. So, pick one of those three things and then we can talk about your prime requisite.

Wheat: By the way, does anyone else have this issue with the character sheet? When I change my dex, the con changes as well.

Adam: Oh, the fields might have the same name.

Geoff: How do you save this, actually, now that I look at it?

JP: What do you mean?

Geoff: How do you save your sheet? Or like, right-click, save as, I guess?

JP: You've gotta download it.

Adam: Yeah, if dex and con are linked then I'll have to fix it. I'll just make a note somewhere.

Steven: Can we talk about character concepts for a second? So, Wheat, what's the idea behind your character?

Wheat: What do you mean?

Steven: You know, we need someone to drive the ship. We need someone to-, what is it, we need navigation, computers and vehicle flight?

Adam: Navigation will allow you to chart your trip from one place to another so you don't end up in like the middle of a star or in empty space with no fuel, so it's useful. Computers is for managing all the stuff that happens in the system, so, communications in the ship, both the jamming and detection, there are scanners, that kind of stuff, 'Spock shit.' Then the 'vehicle space' is the actual piloting of the ship, and it would be probably helpful if someone had 'business' so you can haggle when you take jobs, but not necessary.

JP: So, Wheat, what were you going to go with? Were you going to take any of those?

Wheat: So, my character is going to have the computer skill.

Steven: Okay, cool.

Geoff: I'll take business, too, if we need that. Can a warrior take business, or do you need to be an expert to take business?

JP: It depends on your background, right?

Adam: Yeah, what'll happen is, after you pick your class-, so the class really just modifies your stats and gives you a special ability. Your 'background package,' which is your characters early training and origins, like where you came from, you can pick up business from that, if you want to, and then your training package is like, what kind of warrior you are, so like space marine or primitive dirt world, or whatever. If you want a skill that's outside of what you'd expect in your normal skill package, usually the background covers it.

JP: Okay. I assume everyone's picked a class, so Steven, what class are you going with?

Steven: I was thinking I was going to be an expert.

JP: Okay. Wheat, you're going psychic? Is that still true?

Wheat: I'm going psychic, yes.

JP: Okay. Geoff, are you still going warrior?

Geoff: Yep.

JP: Okay, and I'm going expert as well. I'm marking all this down so I don't have to put it on the sheet. Real quick, what again are the stat modifiers? If they're higher than a 14, we can take it down?

Adam: If it's higher than a 13, you can reduce it down to 13. If it's lower than 8, you can bring it up to 8.

Geoff: What do you do if all your numbers are 10, 9 and 8?

Adam: You live with them.

JP: I can't modify at all, either (laughter).

Adam: Here's the thing. Once you've picked your class, you can replace one of your two prime requisites. So, if you're an expert and you don't like your intelligence or your charisma, get rid of that stat. Make it a 14. But, pick one or the other.

JP: Oh, okay. Perfect.

Adam: If you're a psychic you can turn either your wisdom or constitution into a 14, and for a warrior, you pick strength or dex, and if it's lower than 14 you can pump it up.

Geoff: Alright. So, I just get to do that? So as a warrior I'm going to put my dex as a 14, now.

Adam: Yep.

Steven: What's that, you say? My lowest score becomes equal to my highest? Now I've suddenly become the best character in this group because I have a 15, 14, 14, 9 and-

JP: Is that the only stat modifiers we're going to get at all, Adam?

Adam: That's it, you're done, once that's finished.

JP: Then Steven, can you read me your stats?

Steven: Strength 15, dex 9, con 9, int 14, wis 8, charisma 14.

Geoff: Everytime I change my dex to 14, it changes my con-

Adam: Yeah, that's a bug in the sheet. I'll fix that for next session.

JP: Wheat, do you have yours?

Wheat: Yeah, so, strength 11-, and I can only raise a stat that's my prime to 14, correct?

Adam: Yeah, so you can take either constitution or charisma.

Wheat: So, strength 11, dex 10, con 12, int 13, wis 14, charisma 13.

JP: Fuck you. Okay, Geoff, do you know what your stats are?

Geoff: Yeah. 10 strength, 14 dex, 9 con, 9 int, 10 wisdom, 8 charisma.

JP: Alright, and mine are, goddamn it, 13, 7, 8, 11, 7, 14.

Steven: That's pretty wild.

Adam: You're all over the place. Not a balanced individual. Alright, so now that you've got your classes and your stats are all ironed out, if you have a stat that is from 4 to 7, put a '-1' next to it. This is going to be the modifier, so anytime you do anything with this stat, it'll be that number. So, 4 to 7 is -1. 8 to 13 is no modifier, and 14-17 is +1, and nobody has a 3 or an 18.

JP: Okay, perfect. So, me and Geoff just have no modifiers at all, ever.

Geoff: Yeah, and the +1 thing does it for con as well, so-

JP: Wait, 14 to 17's +1? Oh my god, I have one modifier.

Geoff: Same here.

JP: Geoff, high five, buddy.

Wheat: I have one as well.

JP: HP, is that-, do we roll a D6 or do we start with 6?

Adam: Just start with a maximum amount of HP for your class.

Steven: You're starting us with max?

Adam: Dude, if I didn't then Wheat would have 1 hit point.

Wheat: Can I just roll, for the audience?

Adam: For shits and giggles?

Wheat: So I could put 16, but let me just roll for the audience.

Geoff: Is 16 the max?

Wheat: For me.

Adam: No, hit points is a D4 plus your modifier for constitution, so, Wheat, what's your constitution modifier?

Geoff: Oh my god.

Wheat: Oh, my constitution modifier's 0.

Adam: So you have 4 hit points, buddy.

Wheat: Oh, 4 hit points? Oh my god. Yeah, I was thinking 4D4.

Adam: You can survive, like, a single, average shot from a pistol. Way to go. Don't get shot.

Steven: Don't get shot.

Geoff: Also, that's a good rule for, just, life, guys.

Wheat: Oh my fucking god.

JP: So, Geoff, is yours 10, as a warrior?

Geoff: Where does it say that?

Steven: It's in the upper-right of your sheet.

Adam: Warriors? Yeah, it's 8.

JP: It says 'HD,' so I guess that's 'hit dice.' So you've got 8 and Steven has 6. Okay, cool. What do we do now?

Steven: JP, do you have a minus 1 in your con?

JP: I'm 8, so, no. Oh, my dex is 7. Whoops, I entered that wrong.

Steven: Because chat's saying you have 7 hit points, not 8. Or 5, not 6, I guess.

JP: No, I have 8 con and 7 dex.

Adam: So you're fine.

JP: Chat, that's a bug.

Adam: It's your dex that's minus. Okay, so, if it wasn't already on the character sheet, you would note down your class's special ability, but for the audience I'll read them out. So, experts have a knack for success and can re-roll a failed skill check once per hour. That's hour of real-time gameplay, so if we play for 3 hours, experts, you can do 1 re-rolled fail check per hour. Warriors have uncanny luck on the battlefield. Once per fight, they can automatically evade an attack that otherwise would have hit them, and you can wait until I do damage on this, if you want, Geoff. So I can be like, 'You take 47 damage,' and you can be like, 'No, thank you.' And psychics, your special ability is psychic powers.

Wheat: That's just-, that's-, okay.

Adam: Oh, it's so hard. Life is hard. You can move things with your mind.

Wheat: But I can't, but, 'good.'

Adam: It depends on what powers you pick. So, the next thing everybody needs to do is select your background package. This is an option to reflect your character's early training and origins, and you'll record the skills the package grants on your character sheet. Backgrounds can be found on page 13 and they represent things your character did before you got roped into this crew of misfits. So you might have been a bandit or a hermit or a noble, or you might have been a con artist or a priest. Each one will give you a set of skills that you'll gain. If you don't like any of them – there're already here – the adventurer one allows you take culture, a specific world, or a culture spacer, and then any two skills you like. So you get less skills overall but you can make up your own background.

JP: I do have a question. Since we have to have either navigation, flight, space and computers, can we just get that or does it have to be part of our background packages?

Adam: It'll either be part of your background package or your training, which is the next step. So if you don't take it now then you'll have to pick one to fix it later. We'll do this again, but they're going to be class specific ones.

JP: Adam, also, do you have the link handy for that free PDF?

Adam: Yes, I do. I'll just give you the drop box.

Wheat: So, when I was reading through, it seemed like we could bargain with you in terms of these background training packages, right?

Adam: Maybe. What are you looking to bargain about?

Wheat: So, rogue psychic and criminal mind are both ones that I like, and they're somewhat similar. So basically, I want to give up culture criminal because I already get a culture from my class, and take combat any, in its spot, and I feel like criminal mind-, that's a good-,

Adam: Yeah, that's fine. I'm not gonna stick you on that stuff, but you're jumping ahead. Criminal mind and combat psychic, those are for later. We're just looking at background right now.

Wheat: Oh, background, goddamn it, my bad.

Adam: We're playing *advanced* Stars Without Number. So, just to give you an idea, most of the skills are pretty straight forward. Like if you have combat primitive weapon, you could use a bow and arrow. If you have history, you know things about galactic history. Culture is a little bit different because culture allows you not only to learn things about specific stuff-, So, if I'm like, 'You crash land on planet x,' and you're like, 'I've got culture space, I want to learn some stuff about the customs of planet x,' you can roll to know that, but it's also a way to generate NPCs. So if you show up in a world and you're like, 'I know a guy here because I have culture traveller, so I know lots of different space travellers,' we can roll and then we can introduce that character.

It's kind of like how, when Han Solo's on the run from the Empire, and he's like, 'Oh, hey, Bespin. Lando lives there. He's my buddy,' and then his player flubs the roll so it's a trap, but he doesn't know that. That's how it works in this game. So, culture skills are useful both as knowledge skills and then also for having your character tied to the various cultures of the sector.

JP: Okay.

Wheat: And these are separate from the class background packages?

Adam: Yes, that's right.

JP: So you get to choose both.

Adam: You'll get two. You'll get a background first and then a training.

Wheat: So, if I was going to choose computer, com crew would be-,

Adam: Yeah, that'd be a way to get it. For the skills that you take, just put a 0. Skills start at 0, because the way this game works is that if you're trying to do something you don't have the skill for, you take a -1. If you have the skill, you don't add anything, and then they range between 0 and 5.

JP: For the skill combat/gunnery, is that only on ships?

Adam: Yeah, that's ship lasers and sand-throwers and missiles and stuff.

Steven: We've got lasers and sand-throwers, JP.

JP: Is anyone taking-, because I was going to go navigation, but I want to take con artist, but that doesn't give us anything that we need.

Steven: But you get the option to get something we need with your expert training package as well, right?

JP: What page is that on, Adam, because I feel like we should be looking at them in the book at the same time?

Steven: That's page 18 and 19, JP.

Adam: Background packages are 13 and 14.

JP: Oh, nice, okay, perfect, yeah. I got navigation, guys. I got that under lock. So, I'm going to take con artist. Background con artist.

Geoff: I'll just take soldier, I guess.

Steven: Then, Geoff, are you looking to take coms, navigation and computer?

Wheat: I took com crew.

Steven: You took computer, navigation and-, what's the other one? Damn, I can't remember this at all.

Wheat: Business?

Adam: Computers, navigation and vehicle space.

Steven: Ah, yes, vehicle space. Are you planning on being a pilot, Geoff?

Geoff: No, but if we need to, I guess I could do that.

Steven: I can be a pilot.

Geoff: We need business, I guess, but I could do that in the other one. Which one has business?

Adam: If you are a warrior-, let's see if any of these have it. I imagine there's like a private (?) one. Ah, mercenary. So if you do soldier mercenary, you'll get business from mercenary. When you're picking your training package, if you get a repeat, so if you get a skill you've already got, I think it just gives you a bonus of +1 to that skill. So if you double up then you get-,

Geoff: Really, and where's the training one?

Adam: If a skill appears in both your background package and training, take it at level 1 instead of level 0. Those come immediately after each class description, so pages 19, 21 and 23.

JP: Oh shit, I'm excited guys.

Wheat: I'm excited too.

JP: This is workin' out. Okay, I'll just have to edit that in because the sheet has culture, slash, but it's not editable for those three things.

Adam: Yeah, just make a note.

JP: Steven, did you already choose your background?

Steven: I'm still looking through it all. Let's see here. I want to see what kind of expert training packages I could get. Oh geez. Well, I could become a pilot. That could be a training package that I take for expert. So, yeah, I think I'm going to be a biotech crew, which gives me culture, spacer, science, tech astronautic and tech medical.

JP: Interesting.

Adam: Get some Lazarus patches. Make sure no one else dies. Especially Wheat.

Wheat: Yes.

Adam: With his 4 hit points.

JP: Okay. Wheat, did you choose?

Wheat: Yeah, I'm choose com crew.

JP: Com crew, okay. Geoff, what about you?

Geoff: Mercenary.

JP: Okay, and I'm taking con artist.

Geoff: How do we know what this gives us? Is it on the sheet? Can we highlight that, somewhere?

JP: It's on the PDF that you just got. Go to page 13.

Wheat: So, you take that and then where it says skills underneath, you just put a 0 next to that skill on the character sheet.

Adam: Yeah, so you've got combat projectile, combat unarmed, culture, and then you'll pick a specific world, and tactics, all at 0.

Geoff: But for the ones you have redundant between background and training, you do +1, right?

Adam: Yeah, if you have it on both. Like if you have solder and then mercenary also gives you combat projectile, you add another 1, so it goes from 0 to 1.

JP: How do we get skills? Do we get skills when we level up?

Adam: Yep. You'll get skill points that you can spend when you level up. Experts get them a lot faster than everybody else, because it goes with the jam.

JP: You're damn right they do.

Geoff: You're damn right.

JP: Okay. What package are you gonna take, Lumpkin? I don't know why I'm calling you by your last name but let's just go with it.

Geoff: It is what it is, you know what I mean?

JP: Come on, Lumpkin. Hurry the fuck up, Lumpkin.

Steven: Ah, Jesus. There're so many.

JP: Okay, well I'm taking bounty hunter.

Steven: I was not looking at bounty hunter, so you're golden.

JP: I figured.

Adam: So, your background is con artist and your training is bounty hunter?

JP: Yup.

Adam: Okay, cool.

Geoff: Culture/world isn't here. So, there's a culture one, you just-,

Adam: Yeah, again, I think JP mentioned you can't edit that, so I'm going to fix that.

Geoff: Okay.

Adam: But yeah, think about that. It'd be a specific world. It might be your home world. It might be another world.

Steven: Vehicle/any means I choose one of-,

Adam: You pick one, yes.

Steven: So, I'm going to be a xenoarchaeologist.

Wheat: Oh, nice.

Steven: Which gives me another combat, another culture history, language, perception, science, tech any, and vehicle any.

Wheat: You want to be a pilot, too, right?

Steven: Yeah, vehicle any's going to be vehicle space.

Adam: So, what background did you take?

Steven: Biotech.

Adam: Biotech crew and xenoarchaeologist. Your character is such a nerd. Ship's nerd.

Geoff: If it says combat any, do you put a 0 in all the combats?

Adam: No, you pick one.

Geoff: Okay, but it gives me combat projectile, so potentially I could just double up on that, right?

Adam: Not if it's in the same-, like if it gives you combat projectile, combat any, you can't, but if you have projectile in one and then any in the other, yeah, you could just have projectile again.

Geoff: Okay. Would knives be unarmed, technically?

Adam: Primitive. And as a bonus, you get spears, and other sharp objects.

JP: Steven, are you flying?

Steven: Yeah, I'm flying.

JP: You want me to fly and you not to fly?

Steven: Hell no, sucker. Ship's my baby.

JP: Do we have any other vehicles on the ship?

Adam: Not presently, no. I mean, you have the cargo space to fit vehicles if you want to, but you don't have enough-, I mean, you have no money, so-, You could steal one, though.

JP: What would be considered a vehicle grav? Would that be something that is floating?

Adam: Yeah. Hover cars, hover tanks.

JP: What is more common in this world?

Adam: Depends on what planet you're on Tech level 3 planets don't have grav technology. TL4 and above, will.

JP: I chose my planet early. Oh shit, I've gotta open up that thing that you sent me.

Wheat: I'm going to choose criminal mind, by the way, for my training, but, as I mentioned, I want to give up culture criminal for projectile weapons. You're cool with that?

Adam: Yeah, that's fine.

Wheat: Okay, great.

Geoff: Are we starting at level 1?

Adam: Yeah. So, JP, just for reference, I would say two thirds of the worlds in the sector are TL4 and above.

JP: So they would have grav?

Adam: Yeah, grave stuff is pretty common.

JP: I'm kind of jumping ahead here, but I don't have it easily accessible and I think you do. Can you tell me what type of planet Asa is? Because whatever that is, I'll choose my vehicle from there. And yes, I did choose the planet named after the porn star.

Adam: Okay, planet Asa. It is a tech level 4 planet.

Wheat: And then I have one other question. So, in between all the background packages and the individual classes, there's also the character skills?

Adam: Yes, so the class skills-, it just modifies the cost of raising them later. So, where it says, like, expert class skills, all except combat skills, tactics and tech psytech-, for psychics there's a list, like combat psytech, culture any. Those are your class skills. They're going to be cheaper later on, but they don't really matter yet.

Wheat: So you don't actually select one. It's just kind of an explanation of them, right? I gotcha.

Adam: Just stuff your classes-,

Geoff: So, Adam, give me a world that would be like city and high-tech and crime.

Adam: The highest tech level world is Onintza. It is an abandoned colony.

Geoff: How do you spell that?

Adam: Onintza.

Geoff: Oh my god, you just said 'z.' Are you German?

Adam: No.

Steven: He's Canadian!

Geoff: We don't hang with Germans, here! Happy Canada day, a week ago, though.

Adam: Sprechen sie space?

Wheat: So, are you selecting homeworlds?

Adam: Onintza, just to make sure it sounds like a place you want to be from, was a colony world that was abandoned due to a religious war. There was a religious war over the planet that caused massive damage and most people left. There're still some embittered hold-outs that still live there, fighting the war.

Geoff: But it's the highest tech planet?

Adam: Yes. It has pre-tech and pre-Scream technology, which is probably why people were fighting over it.

Geoff: If you think a criminal, kind of, suave dude could come from there, though?

JP: Of course. You're going to be the one trying to steal the shit.

Geoff: Okay. Chat, don't freak out. I am half German myself.

JP: Yeah, we're very sarcastic on the show. Don't take anything we say seriously.

Wheat: Adam, can you tell me what the most wealthy homeworld would be?

Adam: The homeworld that's, sort of, the most prosperous?

Wheat: Yes.

JP: Guys, I just went by, like, the name. I didn't go by the stats of the world. I saw 'Asa' and was like, 'I'm in.'

Geoff: He done goofed.

JP: I know. I'm worried now.

Wheat: JP, don't worry about it, because my character is poor as fuck in the wealthiest place in the universe.

Adam: So, there's a planet called Majid. It's currently undergoing a gold rush and that's probably a good bet. Majid.

Geoff: Or 'Jed', as they say.

Adam: It's planet 5 in the Vafa'i System.

JP: I do have a question for you. In terms of combat, what would be an energy pistol, and would I have access to something like that at level 1?

Adam: So, at character creation you are allowed to purchase tech level 4 and lower equipment. The lowest tech level energy weapon is a laser pistol. It's tech level 4, so you could buy it. It's 200 credits, though, so you may not be able to afford it. You'll start with-

JP: Could I somehow con someone out of it?

Adam: You could do that at the beginning of the game, or you could convince your friends to lend you some money.

JP: I could.

Geoff: How much money do we start with?

Adam: I'm lookin' for that right now.

JP: And you said that's an energy weapon?

Adam: Yep. Shoots lasers. Oh, yeah, you start with 400 credits plus 1D6x100. So, you might have 1000 credits to start with.

JP: Oh, okay. Can we all roll for our credits start, right now?

Adam: Well, has everybody picked their background package and training package?

Geoff: Yes, I believe so.

Adam: Okay, so I'm just going to make sure I have it on my notes. So, Wheat, you're coms crew, criminal mind? Okay, I think that was the only one that I had. So, these are ways, too, in thinking about how you want to play your character. The first one is the thing you were before, and then the other one is the thing you are now. Like, Wheat, for example, used to be coms crew on a ship but now you're like a criminal psychic, so think about what moved you from one to the other. What happened to your ship? Where's the rest of the crew? What made you go from coms crew to criminal mind? Things like that. Some of them are easier to figure out, like soldier to mercenary. Maybe you were part of the army. Now you're part of your own army.

Steven: Biotech crew to xenoarchaeologist. A natural transition, if ever I heard one.

JP: You're just a fuckin life-long nerd. There's no-

Adam: I'm pretty sure Steven's playing Zoidberg. That's what's happening here.

Geoff: Except he's, like, more charismatic, strong, dexterous, powerful than the rest of us.

JP: He chooses not to care about all that.

Adam: Super nerd. Alright, so everybody has that stuff. You've all marked your skills down. Does everybody have a homeworld?

Steven: No. Can you link us to the dropbox with the system in it?

Adam: The thing? Yeah.

JP: While you're doing that, if I wanted to dual wield pistols, would that give me any benefit and is there a skill relationship to that, or no?

Adam: No, the skill is just-, I mean, in combat it's real simple. You get a move and an action. The benefit of having two pistols is that if one runs out of ammo, you have the other one without having to draw another weapon.

JP: But I couldn't use two pistols at once?

Adam: No, not initially because you only have time for one shot.

JP: Okay.

Adam: If anybody in the chat wants to follow along and look at the Asgard Sigma Encyclopaedia, it's on JP's Reddit. All the maps and stuff. Cool, so there's Asgard Sigma. So while Steven is deciding where he wants to be from, if you haven't already, note your hit points. Just take the max for the die, so the two experts will have 6 plus your constitution modifier. Geoff, you'll have 8 plus your constitution modifier.

Steven: Did you say, Adam, we were starting in Gunnhild?

Adam: Yes, I'm gonna start you off there.

Steven: I will be from Andoni.

Adam: Oh, nice. Okay, cool. Wheat, where are you from, again?

Wheat: Majid.

Adam: And Geoff?

Geoff: That last one we just described. Onitza.

Adam: Cool. Okay. So, choose your language. Your character speaks English. You speak your world's native tongue, if that's different. You can decide that yourself, I don't care. It'll just matter if you go there. And you can add one more language per point of intelligence modifier bonus.

Geoff: Excellent.

JP: Geoff, next, let's go!

Adam: So, the game is set in the year 3200, so you're pretty distant from normal Earth cultures, but people have managed to hang onto their languages pretty solidly, so if you want to speak Korean, that's a valid choice.

Geoff: I don't see this on the-

JP: Where is this on the character sheet?

Adam: I'm not sure. Make a note somewhere. Maybe in the notes section.

Geoff: So, English, but it's based on Earthly-,

Adam: Yes, it's based on actual languages, unless for some reason you're-, like, if you're a mercenary you could have a special mercenary hand sign. You can make up languages if you want to, but they tend to be pragmatic rather than culture because you haven't had time to build a full, cultural language.

Steven: Surely I could speak some sort of ancient, alien tongue?

Adam: Sure, yeah. So, the alien races you may have encountered, you can see them if you have the galactic encyclopaedia open. So you can pick one of those. You could speak their native tongue.

Steven: I like Shindel because they're hybrid avian and exotic. They have scales instead of feathers, and chainsaw-like mouthparts or claws.

Adam: I would love to hear you try and use your human mouth to make a chainsaw-like mouth sound.

Steven: Probably I have to, like, use my hands here.

Adam: Yeah. You have chew, like, a rock while you're speaking.

Steven: Okay, so I speak English and ancient Shindelian. I have no use for modern Shindelian.

Geoff: So, you said without modifiers you just get to pick one other?

Adam: You get English and your world's native tongue if it's different.

Geoff: Also, Onitza is Japanese. It sounds kind of Japanese, right? Oh, I did say 'Onithiwa,' which is not what it is. It's Onitha.

Adam: Onitza. Yeah, you could say Onitza in Japanese. There you go.

Geoff: I'll steal all the anime fanboys that djWheat would have otherwise garnished for himself.

Wheat: Then I'll take all the Firefly fanboys and choose Chinese, so fuck off!

Adam: Cool, so does that mean, Wheat, that Majid speaks Chinese primarily, and if so, Mandarin or Cantonese?

Wheat: Mandarin.

Adam: Okay. So, Majid, I'm guessing, it sounds to me like it wasn't named by Mandarin speakers, so it is a different ruling group that originally named the planet, because it sounds kind of like Arabic?

Wheat: I feel like the people that are governing the planet basically bought their way in there and so they had enough money to call it whatever they wanted and do whatever they wanted to do. So, hence the mining of all the gold. The rich get richer.

Adam: That's kind of awesome, so it's like a gold rush world led by a Mandarin emirate. That's pretty cool.

Geoff: You're welcome.

Adam: Watch that.

Geoff: He'll kill anybody that said that.

Adam: Alright, so you start with 400 credits plus 1D6x100 credits. You can buy any equipment of tech level 4 or lower and you can find all of that fun stuff – I know you like gear porn – on page-, starting on 33.

Geoff: Did you say 1D6x100?

Adam: Yeah, roll a D6. Multiply it by 100.

Geoff: Oh, I got a 5. Okay, there you go. So I'm at 900 credit, is what you said? Then we buy our weapons? We don't start off with anything?

Adam: No, you don't start with anything. Well, you've got clothes and a space ship.

JP: 400, Wheat. Oh, 1000!

Adam: Rich psychic.

JP: Yeah, you're a rich, poor person, Wheat. Good job. I can't wait to roll this 1. (Rolls a 1).

Geoff: Motherfucker!

Adam: Your last con didn't work out so good for you.

JP: No, man, not at all.

Adam: Trying to get into some old lady's bank account.

Geoff: How do you change your name?

JP: Click the cogwheel in the top right.

Steven: Cogwheel, top right.

JP: Alright, what's next?

Adam: Buying stuff. Buying equipment. So, you can find all your equipment starting on page 33, and I would suggest purchasing-, look at regular equipment first.

Wheat: Adam, did you want me to tell you my psychic powers, by the way?

Adam: No, well do that next. That's the last thing you need to-,

Wheat: Okay. Gotcha.

Adam: Yeah, look at exploration gear on page 41 first. Things like communication equipment. That sort of thing, like, you want to have the space equivalent of a cell phone. Steven, I would suggest spending a few credits on Lazarus patches and a med-kit. A Lazarus patch will allow you bring someone back from 0 hit points if they're dead, and you get like one shot at it. So, if you want to be the-,

Steven: Difficulty 6. Oh, that's not too bad.

Wheat: So, a com server, you were saying?

Adam: Like a com pad or a data slab. Both of those are useful. Think of them as a phone or an iPad.

Geoff: Adam, what's a monoblade?

Adam: A monoblade is a knife with an edge that's as sharp as a single-,

Geoff: Stop! I'll take it.

Steven: Adam, can I get a motorcycle if I am in debt by an extra 200 credits?

Adam: No. Borrow it from the rich warrior.

Geoff: Woah, hey, ease up there, alright.

Wheat: So a com pad, you said, is good to have?

Adam: Yeah, if you want to be able to communicate with each other or make phone calls.

Wheat: It can reach other com pads within 1 kilometre. Is our ship equipped with something?

Adam: Yeah, the ship has built-in long and short range communication information, so you can always call the ship and the ship can call you.

JP: Wait, how much is a com pad? I only see com server.

Wheat: No, the com pad's down.

Adam: Yeah, keep going. Com pads are-,

Geoff: Adam, can I ask you a question? When I get to the show, how soon can I kill someone with a really good weapon and keep that?

Wheat: Shut up, let me ask a real question. Can you actually explain armour, before I spend any money on it?

Adam: Yes. So, combat in Stars Without Number, the attack roll that anyone will be making – you or other NPCs – is, you take a D20 and you roll and you add your bonus, and you add your opponents armour. So, the lower your armour, the better that armour is, because that's what you're adding. If you have no armour, anyone who attacks you gets to add 9 to their D20.

Geoff: There's a fuckin' musket that you can have. I goddamn dare someone to take a musket into space.

Adam: So, if you want armour that's reasonably protective, look for something with low armour, because the idea is that you roll a D20, you add your target's armour class, you add your combat skill, your attribute modifier and your attack bonus, and if you get a 20 or better, it hits. It's a little weird if you're used to D&D but it basically just builds up.

Wheat: So, as a psychic, is there any limitation to what I can-,

Adam: Nope, you can wear whatever you can afford. Keep an eye out, though, that trying to wear power armour, which I doubt you can afford, requires specific training to use it, plus it needs batteries, so keep that in mind.

Wheat: Okay, gotcha.

Adam: JP, if you're gonna buy that laser pistol, make a note, all energy weapons get a +1 to hit, no matter what.

Wheat: How does ammo work for the laser pistols versus projectile?

Adam: You'll buy it more or less the same way. It'll say magazine and have an amount of shots available, and then there should be a section for purchasing. Don't worry about buying stuff like rations and stuff. Your ship has enough food for-, I put it on the ship sheet, but you can survive in the ship. You can live out of your car if you need to.

JP: What does 'AB' mean in the weapons thing?

Adam: Attack bonus.

JP: So, I get a +1 there?

Adam: Yup. With a laser pistol, essentially you're pointing it and you pull the trigger, and it goes exactly where you point it, because it travels at the speed of light.

JP: Are you giving us full ammo on the purchase or are you gonna be a dick and say that we're missing some rounds?

Adam: Yes.

Geoff: Good answer.

Adam: The gun comes with 10 shots. You can buy extra.

JP: Beautiful, okay. Well, if you guys want to move on, because we're coming up near the break, we can move onto the psychic stuff for Wheat and you guys can choose the equipment during the break. Does that work for everyone? Wheat, what were you gonna choose?

Adam: Yeah Wheat, you get a primary discipline at level 1, and one more point to spend on a secondary discipline. So, what are your disciplines?

Wheat: My primary discipline is going to be pre-cog, which means I get omen, and it's pretty cool. Basically, the pre-cog will receive a distinct sense of whether following that course of action will result in physical injury or mental distress within the next 10 minutes according to the GM's best judgement of likely outcomes. The power can be used only once

per hour, and then my second one would be bio-psionics and it'll be bio-stasis, which is somewhat ironic considering that I'm probably the most likely to die, but it lets me bring someone back to life.

Adam: Yeah, so essentially a psychic Lazarus patch.

JP: I know you already explained this, but is armour class higher or lower better?

Adam: Lower is better. You start with AC9 if you're not wearing anything and it goes down the more armour you put on.

JP: What is encumbrance based off of? Strength?

Adam: It's like number of slots, I think, like each item takes up a certain amount of encumbrance. I find encumbrance, generally, pretty boring and stupid, but it's there so that you can't be like, 'I'm carrying 47 assault rifles.' Try and keep track of it and if I think you're being abusive, I'll be like, 'What's your encumbrance?' and then you gotta justify it, but otherwise I don't care.

Wheat: Where does it show your encumbrance?

Adam: I don't know because I don't care.

JP: It only has it in the inventory. I don't think it keeps track of it, though.

Steven: I have a combat shotgun.

Adam: Oh, here you go. You can carry a ready number of items equal to half your strength score, rounded down. Ready items include those things you're wearing or are ready at all times, so like in holsters or in belt pouches. You can draw or produce a ready item as part of any other action. You can have stowed items equal to your full strength, so that's like crap in a bag or a deep pocket. So if you have a gun in a holster, it's ready, so you don't have to be like, 'I'm going to take an action to take it out. Now I'm going to take an action to shoot it.' You're just like, 'Out, done.'

Geoff: Why is 'armoured under-suit' expensive?

Adam: Because it's armour you can wear under other armour. So, you can hide it. It's like a body suit of nanoweave.

Geoff: But how does it stack, then? So, say you have woven body armour for 5, then you have armoured under-suit that's 7. What do you do to make your armour class lower? How's that work?

Adam: I think that it's like you divide the lower one in half, but I'll check for you on the break.

Geoff: But then why would you have the other one?

Adam: Well, you add them together, so I think it's like if you have 7 and 5 you add 3, or whatever. I'll check it for you, though.

Geoff: So what do we start at, in these? So, these are subtracting from what you start at, right?

Adam: Yeah, that's right. If you have no armour at all, your AC is 9.

JP: Cool. Is there anything else we need to do before-, we'll do some character stuff afterward, but-,

Adam: Yeah, when we come back, everybody can introduce their characters. We'll get names and descriptions and stuff and then we can jump into the action.

JP: Perfect. Sounds good. We'll take our first break. We're going for three more hours today, so stick around. We'll take a quick 3 minute break and when we come back we'll go into actually playing the game, but this is pretty typical for the first hour of the premiere shows, as we do character creation, so if people want to create a character, or perhaps do a game of their own they can follow along. We'll be right back in 3 minutes. Thank you, guys, for watching. We'll see you soon.