



MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

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You're young and ambitious, with music in your heart and a guitar in your hand. You and your friends are set to take on the world, and change it with the power of your music. You might be one of hundreds of hopeful bands, but you have something special on your side - the power of the Light, given to you by your mysterious mentor and friend...

This is a game for 4-6 players. Over the course of a 3-hour session you will tell the story of an amazing band trying to change the world with their music while trying to walk a path between idealism and realism.

Most of you will play the band – gifted individuals brought together by music and friendship, but with your own dreams and drives pulling you in different directions.

One of you will play the Light – the supernatural force of radiance and change that is the character's staunch ally and source of their magical musical powers. Your job is to track the character's balance between the Light's ideals and the World's vices.

The last one will play the World. It's your job to place obstacles between the band and their goals, and to present them with conflicts that test their dedication to the band and to the Light.

This is a game about the power of music to change lives and transform worldviews, about the ways that idealistic performers can be corrupted by the stresses and pressures of the mundane world, and about how your friendships and ideals change as time forces you to mature and adapt.

Setting Things Up

The Light and the World

This is a game about the conflict between two fundamental forces: the Light and the World. Each of these forces will be controlled by a player, and these two players will between them perform the normal duties of a game master.

The Light is a force from outside of mundane society that wants to change it through the band's music. They're in control of the message that the players are spreading through their music, and play the Light's representative on Earth. This representative is a single charismatic individual, possessing mysterious supernatural powers. This character could be an alien being from the stars, a prophet who can see the end times, or an artificial intelligence interacting with the characters through their computers and devices. While the true purpose of the Light may be a secret from the player characters in the game, the players themselves should all know and agree on the Light's role. Their end goal may be surprising or even evil, but as the player characters are assumed to begin the game naive and idealistic the Light's initial goal should appear benevolent.

The World represents mundane society's stresses and compromises, and governs all the people and forces in the game other players aren't controlling. The World's job is to present a story creating moral conflicts that the player characters must decide how to resolve. The World may be, at its heart, a positive and stable reality, or it may be a place of decay and corruption. Players should agree on the role of the World. The natures of the Light and the World must be opposed in some critical way. For example, if the Light spreads a message of socialist utopia, the World could be full of capitalist record producers. If the Light is represented by a religious figure, the World should be full of doubt and challenges to that faith. If the Light is the leader of a cult who has brainwashed the players, the World should contain people grounded in reality who want to help them to break their ties with that cult. The Light need not be evil or good, but it should have a distinct opposing force in the World.

Setting

While keeping the theme of the band with a cause, this game can take place in any time period or any place. Most of the tropes that this game draws inspiration from are represented in movies and television set in the United States and England during the 1960s through the 1980s, but any society from the 60s onwards should work. Depending on the time and place you decide, the World may be filled with sexism, racism and other bigotry. Decide as a group if that's something you want to deal with - even if you do, the PCs are explicitly mould-breaking radicals, and are free to be whoever they want to be.

Virtues and Vices

The next step is to choose five Virtues that the Light wishes to spread, paired in conflict with five Vices of the World. The Light's Virtues are chaotic and liberating, while the World's Vices are stifling and controlling, but all of them can have positive or negative uses.

The Virtues and Vices together represent all actions the characters may take that the system is concerned with - if someone wants to do something that doesn't seem to fit under any Virtue or Vice, they can just succeed but it shouldn't have much of an impact on the character's mission.

The Light and the World should take it in turns picking their Vice or Virtue from the list below or making up their own. Once five of each have been picked, arrange them so that they form five opposing pairs, adjusting things as needed to fit.

Virtue and Vice List:

Freedom. Use Freedom to take an action to escape a bad situation. For example to break out of a locked room, dodge an attack, break free of a cycle of addiction, break out of a creative rut, or cut off an abusive relationship.

Responsibility. Use Responsibility to take an action that diminishes your own resources in order to benefit others. For example to apply first aid, carry an unconscious person, take the blame for another person's mistake, talk another person through a bad situation, or buy a gift.

Innocence. Use Innocence to ignore harm from the World. For example to not be affected by poison, continue to perform despite fatigue, avoid temptation, disbelieve lies, or keep up your spirits during hard times.

Experience. Use Experience to be aware of dangers or other hidden things. For example to notice someone watching you, use contacts and other information sources, remember something you have forgotten, empathize with another person's feelings, or recognize when a person has false motives.

Peace. Use Peace to end a conflict through non-violent means. For example to calm down someone who is angry, interpose yourself between attackers, meditate to calm your own conflicted thoughts, distract people from fighting through music, or disable a weapon or other harmful device.

Action. Use Action to fight against dangerous forces of the World. For example to attack in all types of combat, from physical battles to a battle of the bands, to destroy physical objects, or to force another person to do something against their will.

Spontaneity. Use Spontaneity to suddenly do something unexpected. For example to make a surprise attack, to quickly run away, to improvise a song, or to bring an unexpected item or person or idea into the story that was not there before.

Diligence. Use Diligence when you have practiced doing something, in order to excel at it later on. For example for all sorts of performances, such as playing music, dancing, and singing, or for picking a lock, driving a car, or firing a weapon.

Individuality. Use Individuality to do something that only your character can do. When you first use Individuality, you assign a single skill or ability to this Virtue or Vice, and all other player characters must agree that they will not use it.

Teamwork. Use Teamwork to do something that you can only do together with all the other player characters. All player characters must agree to take the same action. The World may set a lower difficult for rolls using Teamwork, but all characters must succeed at their roll, or all characters will fail.

Persona. Use Persona to do things that trade on your established personality as a performer/celebrity. For example getting special treatment at a restaurant, entertaining audiences with your old material, or getting away with acting like your stage character.

Metamorphosis. Use Metamorphosis to do things that are 'weird' or go against your established persona. For example getting people to like your new material, doing things that go against society's mores, or disguising yourself so you don't get recognised in public.

For each Virtue, the Light chooses a special ability that the characters can use if they conform to this Virtue. It may be a supernatural ability, or it may be a highly expert natural skill. When they're using this ability they can achieve supernatural feats.

Ideas for Light-granted abilities:

Summon animals and talk to them - often Innocence or Peace.

Psychically send an image into your bandmate's minds - often Teamwork or Responsibility.

Keep going beyond mortal endurance, so long as you can keep performing in some way (dancing, singing, etc.) - often Action or Experience.

Levitate and glide a few metres above the ground - often Freedom or Innocence.

Create lights and illusions from your music - often Peace or Spontaneity.

Summon an avatar of your music to fight other bands or do something mighty - often Action or Teamwork.

Make the world operate under cartoon/video game logic - often Innocence or Spontaneity.

Produce audio, visual or sfx equipment from a pocket or a hiding place - often Diligence or Responsibility.

Magically changing your clothes, your face, or even your whole body - often Metamorphosis or Spontaneity.

Manifesting the powers and abilities of characters from your songs and performances - often Persona or Individuality.

Write each Virtue/Vice pair at the opposite sides of a piece of paper for each character and put six boxes in between. Place an X on one of the boxes along each track. The X can be placed anywhere the player chooses. The number of empty boxes on either side of the X shows the amount of that character's Virtue and Vice. Each player character's sheet should have five lines that look like this:

-1 0 1 2 3 4
 Freedom ○ ○ ○ ● ○ ○ Responsibility
 4 3 2 1 0 -1

The example above indicates that this player character has a Freedom of 2 and a Responsibility of 1.

Using Virtues and Vices

During the game, **the characters will be faced with tough choices.** When they choose to exercise a Virtue, the Light can, if they feel it is appropriate, move the player character's mark one space further away from the Virtue side of their character sheet, increasing their Virtue score and decreasing their Vice score. When they indulge a Vice, the Light may move their mark one space further from the Vice side of their sheet, indicating that they are moving away from the Light and fitting in better with the World. The Light need not do this for every roll, only those that represent a difficult decision being made.

Every action in the game that reasonably may or may not succeed is determined through a Virtue or Vice roll. More than one Virtue or Vice may be a good fit. **The World decides which Virtue or Vice applies to an action.** Generally, Virtues should aid the player characters in completing the band's mission of bringing Light to the people, and Vices should help them fit in with the World and use it to their advantage. Supernatural abilities that are given to the player characters by the Light always use Virtues, never Vices.

The character's player then rolls two six-sided dice and adds the number of open boxes between the mark and that Virtue or Vice.

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The number they roll determines their action's effectiveness:

4 or below: Total failure. Your action doesn't succeed, and it's likely because your character didn't truly want it to. Why not?

5-6: Thwarted. You were on track to succeed, but someone actively intervened to stop things.

7-8: Entertaining Distraction. You do the thing and while you're doing it you're having a good time, but it doesn't significantly advance your goals. Say what remains to be done.

9-10: Effective and Professional. Your skill and dedication is clear, and your actions bring the band's goals closer.

11-12: Impressive and Glamorous. Your actions bring the band's goals closer while also being incredibly flashy. On top of your action's results, say who you've impressed - they'll support your band's actions sometime in the future.

13+: Miracle/Burn Out. If this was a Virtue roll, the Light temporarily manifests. The Light describes what happens, modifying the world in some major way or causing an impossible event to happen. If this was a Vice roll, your character becomes a bit more mundane - they have been blocked off from the Light and cannot use the special ability of the Vice's opposing Virtue until a Miracle restores their connection.

Character and Band Creation

While the Light and the World are choosing Virtues, Vices and Powers, the other players should think about the characters they'll be playing and the band they'll be a part of.

Start with how you got together. Are you:

- Childhood friends kept together by your music.
- Prodigies only willing to work with other maestros.
- Darlings of the scene brought together when your old bands collapsed.
- Or something else?

Also consider what form the Light's avatar takes – are they the ghost of a dead friend that occasionally appears to give advice? An alien presence that encourages you in your dreams? A guru and mentor who you go to for advice? Do you all have a strong connection to them, or are some people more strongly linked?

Then think about your characters. As well as their rating in each virtue/vice pair, each character has four other things to decide: their instrument, the role they play in the band, a stage persona, and a true nature.

Instruments

When you start your performance, what are you performing with?

- Singing
- Dancing
- Guitar
- Bass
- Percussion
- Saxophone/Woodwind/Trumpet
- Keyboard/Synth
- Something exotic

Take as many as makes sense - maybe your drummer is also your vocalist, or your guitarist also plays the occasional piano solo. Feel free to double up too - you could have a lead and rhythm guitarist, or a main and backing vocalist.

Band Role

There's something special you bring to the band - what is it?

- **Songwriter:** you write the riffs that have everyone tapping their feet for days afterwards.
- **Frontman/woman:** your charisma dominates the stage, and you take the lead in interviews and on the red carpet.
- **Virtuoso:** when you start playing - when you really start playing - people can't help but listen.
- **Lyricist:** you turn songs into poems and albums into epics - or maybe can turn a phrase so that it lodges right into people's memory and never leaves.
- **Manager:** You're an expert at putting the word out, getting gigs, and striking deals.
- **Stage Technician:** You can set up pyrotechnics, great stage designs, and fancy audio-visual effects without breaking a sweat.

When you're trying to do something in line with your role, get +1 to the roll.

Stage Persona

You learned early on to cultivate a character for the stage. Maybe they're just you, with certain bits muted and other bits turned up to 11? Or maybe they're a complete fiction, with a fancy costume and makeup to match? However it works, stepping into that character helps you get into the performing mind-set. Pick options from below to build your persona or make up your own ideas!

Costume:

- Military
- Gothic
- Suave
- Punk
- Glam

Presence:

- Intense
- Aloof
- Cheerful
- Soulful
- Ethereal

Background:

- Extra-terrestrial
- Your own life history, a bit edited
- Prince/ss of a lost kingdom
- Cyber-revolutionary
- Vampire Lord/
Queen of the Night

Accessories:

- Elaborate Makeup
- Fancy crown and jewellery
- Attendant disco drones
- Backing dancers
- A very impressive hat

Motivation

Who are you, away from the floodlights and amplifiers and cheering fans? What do you want out of the band, and out of life? Here's some options - think up others if you like.

- **Crusader:** You have a cause you're fighting for - maybe you want to save the rainforests, or get a corrupt politician removed from office.
- **Libertine:** You're in this to experience the best things in life - the fanciest parties, the best highs, the fastest cars, the most beautiful partners.
- **Seeker:** There's a central mystery in your life - maybe it's personal, like what happened to your missing parents, or mystical, like what the Light can teach you about enlightenment.
- **Mundane:** You're actually happiest with a quiet life - perhaps you're searching for how to balance the drama and theatre with the simple living you're comfortable with, or you try to spend time anonymously doing simple work helping others.
- **Creativity:** There's a magnum opus you're working on. It's pretty different from the music you make in the band – it might not be music at all. It's everything to you, and you're dying for a chance to show it to the world.

Your Motivation may sometimes make the band's life difficult, or drive a wedge between you and the others. When it does so, the World may choose to shift one of your stats towards their Vices.

Band Goals

Finally, work out the 3 ambitions the band is working on. These should be appropriate to the scale the game is working on; if you are a college band trying to hit the big time they could be:

- Win the Battle of the Bands.
- Get a record contract.
- Get played on national media.

On the other hand, if you're already a global phenomenon, they could be something like:

- Put on a huge charity concert.
- Tour round the world.
- Record an amazing new album.

Write each goal down on a piece of paper. The Light and the World each then write something of their own on the paper's reverse: the Light writes down what miracles and supernatural occurrences will happen when the characters bring it forth, and the World writes down what mundane rewards the characters will be offered. When a goal is met, the piece of paper is flipped over and the players must decide: do they focus on the Light, bringing about the specified miracle, or do they accept the treasures the World offers.

Building the Story:

Although the roles of the Light and the World are opposed, this is primarily a cooperative, not a competitive game. The conflict between the Light and the World is designed to further the shared goal of creating an interesting and fun story. The player characters may succeed or they may fail, but everyone should have fun playing the game.

To start the game after character and band creation, each player should tell a very brief story about a time in which they and another player character both exhibited one of the Virtues, and another brief story about a different player character in which they both exhibited one of the Vices.

After these initial scenes the World sets up the initial situation the characters find themselves in - working towards one of their personal or group goals but running afoul of some difficulty.

For later scenes, **the World should set up conflicts** that make the band's quest to achieve their ambitions an interesting story while testing their dedication to the Light over the temptations of the World. The World plays every character apart from the player's characters and the Light's representative.

The goal of the Light is to increase the character's devotion to the Light and guide them to use their music to enlighten the World, bringing it closer to the Virtues of the Light. The Light plays a special character who can communicate with the player characters at any time, whether directly, supernaturally, or through the player character's own moral conscience.

The player characters move the story along through their choices to use Virtue or Vice in order to pursue their goals and deal with difficult situations. They begin with the desire to serve the Light, but may change as the course of the story continues, and may diverge from each other in important ways.

The story ends when the band has met all their goals, or has broken up or lost their way such that the goals are no longer possible. Depending on their choices, they will have made a concrete step towards bringing Light to the World, or towards becoming part of the World themselves. Stories may be told in a single play session, or as an episodic campaign.

Inspiration and Ideas:

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band:

Travel in a yellow submarine to free Pepperland from the Blue Meanies through the power of love.

Virtues: Freedom, Experience, Peace, Spontaneity, and Individuality.

The Monkees

Start as an imaginary band, created by TV producers, and slowly try to become a real band.

Virtues: Freedom, Innocence, Peace, Spontaneity, and Teamwork.

KISS

Use your superpowers to save an amusement park from evil robots.

Virtues: Freedom, Experience, Action, Spontaneity, and Individuality.

Jem and the Holograms

Fight corporate rock and gain fame and fortune in order to fund your charity for orphans, aided by your computer AI.

Virtues: Responsibility, Experience, Action, Diligence, and Individuality.

School of Rock

Learn to play music in order to help a dysfunctional con artist beat his old band, who threw him out, in a battle of the bands.

Virtues: Responsibility, Innocence, Action, Diligence, and Teamwork.

Interstella 5555

Break through the mind control implanted by your corporate abductors to realise your true destiny as intergalactic pop stars.

Virtues: Freedom, Innocence, Action, Spontaneity, Teamwork.

Scott Pilgrim vs the World

Can you get over yourself and realise what you really want out of life while avoiding attacks from evil exes, vengeful parents and your own dark self?

Virtues: Action, Innocence, Responsibility, Spontaneity, Teamwork.

The Man Who Fell To Earth

A cautionary tale of what can happen when the characters (here Bowie's alien pilgrim) completely falls to the World's vices.

Virtues: Innocence, Diligence, Individuality, Transformation, Responsibility.

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Name:

Instrument(s):

Stage Name:

Band Role:

Persona:

Motivation:

Virtue			Power		
-1	0	1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○	○	○
4	3	2	1	0	-1
					_____Vice

Virtue			Power		
-1	0	1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○	○	○
4	3	2	1	0	-1
					_____Vice

Virtue			Power		
-1	0	1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○	○	○
4	3	2	1	0	-1
					_____Vice

Virtue			Power		
-1	0	1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○	○	○
4	3	2	1	0	-1
					_____Vice

Virtue			Power		
-1	0	1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○	○	○
4	3	2	1	0	-1
					_____Vice