Caution:

• 8/31/2006: The data on the wiki has been restored from a March 2006 backup. We hope to upload the latest version of the wiki data soon. If you make any new additions to the wiki before that time, please save a copy of your work to your own machine.

The static HTML pages for Puzzlebox have been assimilated into the Puzzlebox Wiki! All the information that used to be on these pages has either been added to the Wiki or was obsolete anyhow.

Here are some handy links:

If you're new to PuzzleboxMUCK, the Newbie Guide gives a quick orientation to the game world. You can also read about the universe the gameworld is set in, the city where most of the MUCK activity takes place, and its six themed districts.

If you'd like to apply for a character, information and advice on how to do that is in the Application Guide. It's also hoped that our players will familiarize themselves with our Etiquette Guide. There is more discussion of our standards for a good application in the Application Handbook, but it's not required reading.

For information about the inhabitants of Puzzlebox and what they do, you might want to look at the index of our PC and NPC biographies, the list of artistic and philosophical factions, or a summary of recent plotlines.

Visitors interested in the (pseudo?)intellectual side of Puzzlebox might want to look at the Meta page for discussion of design and conceptual issues, this list of themes frequently explored in our roleplaying, and our bibliography.

Non-Wiki resources for PuzzleboxMUCK include the Livejournal discussion community (the name refers to an earlier incarnation) and an LJ feed of character journals and public RP logs.
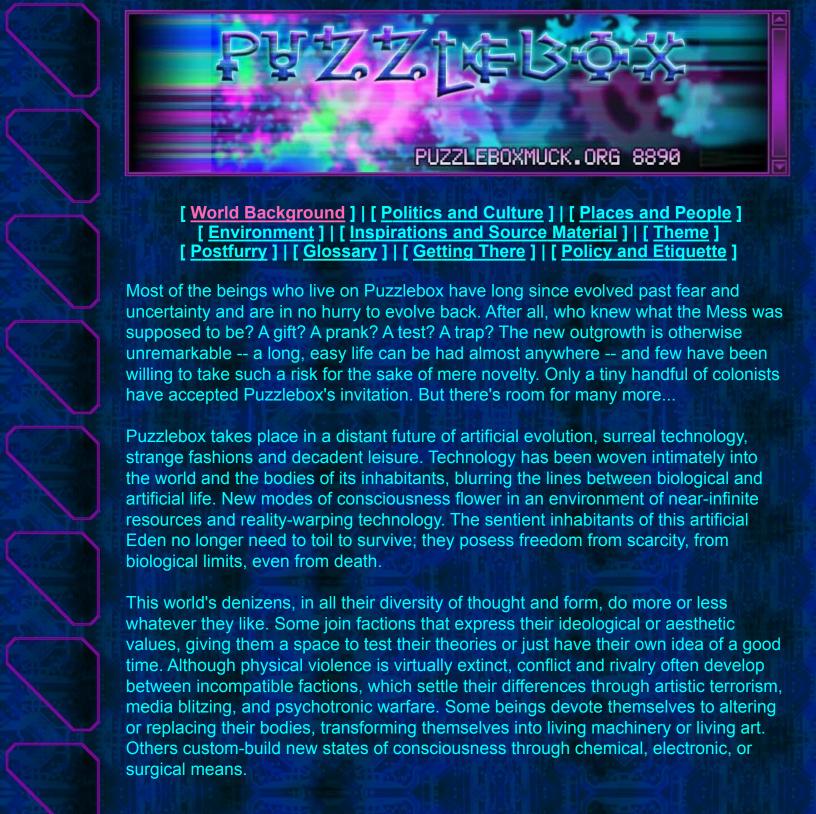
News:

• We have a new domain! The new muck server is puzzleboxmuck.org, and the new web address is www.puzzleboxmuck.org, although our web pages can still be accessed at puzzlebox.dreamchaos.net. Many thanks to NOR and AND for setting up the new domain.
• Help us build the Puzzlebox Wiki!

Puzzlebox is more than just the world. Puzzlebox is more than just the terrain. Puzzlebox is more than just home. Puzzlebox is a mind, a machine, and quite possibly somebody's idea of a joke. Nobody ever tries to talk about how big Puzzlebox is, unless they're being ironic. It folds in on itself in such arcane patterns, trying to measure it would be an exercise in neurosis. It's big, that's all, big enough that nothing outside it really matters. And it's still growing.

Puzzlebox has been growing since before the oldest written record -- probably since before the oldest biological life. There is no record of its builders, if it had any. It seems to build itself, and it may have created itself. It's not unusual for Puzzlebox to extend another 50,000 km into the void in a single day.

It is, however, most unusual for Puzzlebox to display artistic ambitions. Its titanic crystalline shoots and planet-sized seedpods constantly mutate into new materials and patterns, giving it a certain natural majesty. But only once has it displayed a sense that its construction meant anything to its inhabitants. Only once has it expressed a sense of style. The result is now known as "the Mess."

The Mess was named by its discoverers, who failed at first to recognize anything but uncharacteristic disorder in it. The area is like nothing Puzzlebox has ever extruded before. Instead of hospitable but empty seed-worlds, the Mess came prepared with cities, buildings, rooms, even furniture. There are signs of civilization, though no being had ever lived there. The architecture references cultures long forgotten, and some that only existed in stories. Clearly, Puzzlebox had a point to make. It was as if it had recognized its inhabitants' need for mental stimulation, and created an environment optimized for nothing but.

Most of the beings who live on Puzzlebox have long since evolved past fear and uncertainty and are in no hurry to evolve back. After all, who knew what the Mess was supposed to be? A gift? A prank? A test? A trap? The new outgrowth is otherwise unremarkable -- a long, easy life can be had almost anywhere -- and few have been willing to take such a risk for the sake of mere novelty. Only a tiny handful of colonists have accepted Puzzlebox's invitation. But there's room for many more...

Puzzlebox takes place in a distant future of artificial evolution, surreal technology, strange fashions and decadent leisure. Technology has been woven intimately into the world and the bodies of its inhabitants, blurring the lines between biological and artificial life. New modes of consciousness flower in an environment of near-infinite resources and reality-warping technology. The sentient inhabitants of this artificial Eden no longer need to toil to survive; they posess freedom from scarcity, from biological limits, even from death.

This world's denizens, in all their diversity of thought and form, do more or less whatever they like. Some join factions that express their ideological or aesthetic values, giving them a space to test their theories or just have their own idea of a good time. Although physical violence is virtually extinct, conflict and rivalry often develop between incompatible factions, which settle their differences through artistic terrorism, media blitzing, and psychotronic warfare. Some beings devote themselves to altering or replacing their bodies, transforming themselves into living machinery or living art. Others custom-build new states of consciousness through chemical, electronic, or surgical means.

Politics and Culture:

Language:

Assume there's more than enough machine translation, electrotelepathy, kything, suboptical subtitling, and so forth that language is only an issue when a being decides to make it an issue. It's entirely conceivable that a character would shut off their translation method, or speak cryptic gibberish, as a fashion statement -- or even tune their minds to a logic so alien that it defies translation, just to see what it feels like.

Government:

Puzzlebox has no government, little organized economic activity, and no laws; whatever entity/ies initiated Puzzlebox's construction seems utterly disinterested in policing its inhabitants, and the one issue that's of concern to all -- the future development of the megastructure itself -- seems to be decided by mysterious and unseen forces that don't submit themselves to any kind of democratic process. Most Puzzleboxians, finding anarchy and nanotech superabundance a very congenial environment, lead quite apolitical lives, happy to be left to their own devices.

Factions:

The only remotely political organizations on Puzzlebox, this is a loose term for groups of sentients who associate to varying degrees of closeness around ideological or religious beliefs, morphological similarities and/or technical or artistic practices. Many live within factional enclaves where they have their own rules and pursue, to a greater or lesser extent, some common goal. There are easily hundreds such groups, with new factions forming as old ones dissolve. However, in keeping with the generally loose and unstructured nature of life on Puzzlebox, most sentients don't even bother to join one, preferring to do as they please with as few constraints as possible. Even those who adopt the style of a certain faction may not necessarily be associated with that faction; a sentient with the childlike appearance and neotenic mindstate of the Laughing might in fact be a Surrealist intent on mischief and pranking, a local agent of Holotron Industries, or an Experiencer capturing the experience of childhood for recording.

Factions and the Art War:

Sometimes factions come into conflict with each other. Common motives include remodeling a piece of the Mess in their own style, recruiting an especially popular or interesting citizen, a general desire for attention and prestige, or simple boredom. Since bloodshed and force are virtually worthless in a world where most of the population is immortal and saved to backups, these battles are more like elaborate propaganda campaigns, blending prank wars, "artistic terrorism" and vandalism, mind control, memetic engineering and PR tactics, performance art, and ritualized violence and theft reminiscent of the Amerind tradition of "counting coup." Since it's almost impossible to coerce an enemy, the goal of war in Puzzlebox is to make them want to join you by any means necessary. Hearts and minds.

A sampling of Puzzlebox's factions:

• **Chitin Queens:** The CQ's are an enigmatic faction of femme insectoids with a reputation for skillful social manipulation and unnerving patience. Typical Chitin Queen style blends images of refined feminine power with grotesque forms of beauty borrowed from the invertebrate phyla. Some CQ's belong natively to such species while others merely adopt the "bug" look through body art and costuming. Some even take the opposite extreme, living as a tiny symbiote within a harem of brainless host clones.

With characteristic reserve, Chitin Queens never discuss, nor tolerate outside speculation upon, whether a particular Queen was born or made. If you're wondering whether there are such things as "Chitin Drones," just find somebody who asked too many questions about a Chitin Queen's private life. They'll answer exactly as they were told to, verbatim... The CQ's are exacting about manners and very, very good with what they call "pentitentiary neurosculpture."

In general, the image of the Chitin Queens is cold, self-interested, and eccentric, but also civilized, elegant, and (within their own byzantine law) fair. The Queens are most active and overt in Topwarp, but are thought to have hives hidden in every Warp, including Strange.

PUZZLEBOX

PUZZLEBOXMUCK.ORG 8890

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• **Eisenstimmen:** The Eisenstimmen (nicknamed "Rivethearts") could be mistaken safely for a benign splinter faction of the Architects -- but not to either group's face. Both factions share an interest in archaic industrial systems as performance art, but the Eisenstimmer abhor the same sadistic legalism and depersonalization that the Architects fetishize.

The Eisenstimmen vision of industry is individualistic and expressive, based on a love of noise, labor, and machinery for their own sakes. Eisenstimmen factories are imposing affairs, part sweatshop, part dance club, part academic salon, and part tribal conclave. Many of their factories exist to produce nothing but interesting sound and movement. All their labor is voluntary and inhumanly disciplined. In fact, many Rivethearts have industrial machinery built directly into their bodies -- the clunkier and more functional, the better.

The archetypal Eisenstimmen personality melds a stoic, boisterous exterior with a sensitive, sincere heart. They are an intellectual bunch, but frown upon empty ornamentation in both objects and people. They have little patience for those they consider fools, liars, or fops, and tend to be very blunt speakers.

The Eisenstimmen are virtually synonymous with Down. They find Up far too quiet, Top too insincere, and Charm too frivolous. Bored Rivethearts have been known to drop heroic doses of hallucinogens and visit Bottom in leather and metal clad mobs of over a hundred. Really bored ones have been known to eat fistfuls of fear-blockers and visit Strangewarp in full hazmat gear, armed to the teeth with and decryption grenades and fixklez guns.

• **Hemotopians:** The Strangevirus contorts the bodies and mind of all it invades, turning them into creatures cold and alien. The Hemotopians are unique only for making the death of the soul into haute couture. Those who join this faction typically choose to appear as pale, androgynous, beautiful youth with luxurious clothing and gruesome abnormalities. Their "fashion" emphasizes the horrid resilience the Virus gives its hosts (e.g.: stitched-on smiles, exposed innards tied in pretty bows, nominally-fatal piercings, unhealing tattoos).

Hemotopian culture is anarchistic. It's also courtly, catty and somewhat competitive. Hemotopians tend to roam in cliques of up to a dozen, looking for unwary visitors and less beautiful viral hosts to torment. Members who fail to live up to their ever-changing sense of fashion, or offend a more persuasive host, are promptly and brutally ostracized. Often, the Virus will even leave their body in a snit, leaving their body mods -- and their old comrades -- to give them a good killing.

The Hemotopians do often venture outside of Strange to cause trouble, but generally take precautions not to spread the Virus. It's not that they give a fuck about you. They just don't think you deserve it.

• **Plurals:** The Plurals arose from the inevitable urge to put the Mess's ubiquitous cloning, bodysculpt, and mindbeam facilities to artistic use. A Plural typically consists of between 2 and 10 bodies, although Plurals of up to 1,200 bodies are known. The mental configuration of each Plural varies but always includes some commonality that gives the impression all its bodies share a single soul. Favorite methods include p2p mindshare, hypnotic integration via PDKL-95, and Corsican Implant surgery.

Each Plural typically chooses a single design theme to unite all *r bodies -- one rainbow color each, for example, or five identical bodies but only one can speak, or a rotating sampler of twelve popular genders. Many Plurals choose a single theme upon becoming Plural and stick with it; some are radical shapeshifters first and Plurals second and change themes as one might change clothing. These casual polymorphs are generally warmly welcomed -- Plurals are nothing if not inclusive. (In fact, rumor has it that some Plurals are so inclusive, they're scheming to make all sentient life on Puzzlebox into one big happy collective mind...)

Plurals, unsurprisingly, can show up anywhere, but they're particularly fond of Up and Charm.

• **Architects:** The Architects are an "creative anachronism" group devoted to the aesthetic appreciation of oppression, authority, and social manipulation. They are self-styled connoisseurs of the insidious and the brutal, finding a sort of elegance in the ease with which sentient beings can be enlisted in their own captivity. Many Architects are in it for the sense of power, and struggle to rise in their clubs' arbitrary ranks. Others seem to be seeking respite from the dizzying freedom of Puzzleboxian post-scarcity, and are content to be ruled.

Architects are not too warmly welcomed anywhere in the Mess, but they've been known to have extensive cells in Upwarp, who will at least concede their admirable efficiency, with lesser presence in Downwarp (where they're particularly despised) and Topwarp. Charmwarp and Bottomwarp generally won't sit still long enough to produce good proles; Strangewarp chews or burns through leashes.

• **Bubble Dolls:** An army of militant empaths, the Bubble Dolls have adopted whimsical, toylike bodies through which to pursue their relentlessly friendly jihad against hatred and despair. Reasoning that negative emotions are useless in a world where all needs can be met consistently, Theeka the Doll Queen programs her followers into a state of permanent empathetic bliss. Bubble Dolls are typically intelligent but egoless, contentedly performing the will of others -- as long as it promotes joy and pleasure, an eerily seductive recruitment strategy. Rumor has it that the Dolls seek to provoke an event called the "Heart Singularity," but those who claim knowledge of it are generally too... giggly to give useful answers.

The Bubble Dolls are virtually synonymous with Charm, but many are stolen away to Bottomwarp to serve as pleasure droids, or less frequently, to Upwarp to serve as vending machines.

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• **Fever Cathedral:** This is a shadowy religious order thataims to revive a mythic Vinyl Age, when music was rightfully fast, loud, and Satanic. The Cathedral is founded upon the doctrine of "pre-emptive discord": the entropic decay of the universe is irreversible. But there is one song, as yet unwritten, which will encode the principles of entropy perfectly within its thrashing guitar chords. And if that song is played loudly and drunkenly enough to a sufficiently unruly audience, all present will be raptured from this dying universe in a state of perfect nihilistic grace, and the singer will reign over them for eternity. While they wait for the Great Gig, acolytes of the Fever Cathedral occupy themselves with devotionals of rough genderbent sex, stage makeup, recreational psychosis, explosives, and surprisingly inventive acts of vandalism.

The Fever Cathedral is most powerful in Downwarp, but it has a "darkwave" splinter in Strangewarp. This subfaction is considered scary even by other Fever Acolytes, not to mention extremely depressing. The Strange Creed is considered heretical by the Down Creed, in particular for excessive dependence on analog synthesizers.

• **Neo-Boreals:** This faction, known for its beautiful biotecture and uncanny ability to predict Puzzlebox's growth, is devoted to seeking signs of cosmic consciousness in the growth patterns of ordinary things. The neo-Boreals believe that natural (and pseudo-natural) phenomena contain an encrypted, lucid, and possibly urgent message from Puzzlebox or its creator. Conscious thought, which is based on a completely different set of formulae, tends to corrupt this message, and thus conscious design must not be allowed to overtake the universe. (In a world where even black holes wear evening gowns and tell jokes, this is a legitimate concern.)

The Boreals (or "neoBs") do not believe that consciousness is evil -- they don't, in fact, put much stock in concepts of good and evil. They celebrate consciousness for its own merits, but simply fear the consequences of its overgrowth. Thus, they operate huge preserves where natural and artificial life is allowed to develop along simple, serendipitous principles. Trained mystics study the results after drugging themselves into pre-conscious states, so as not to contaminate the systems with their observations, and try to intuit meaningful patterns that might lead them to the One Text. ("Boojum," which induces species-atavism, is an especially popular drug for this purpose; it is finding its way into the Mess as a recreational drug, much to the neoBs' dismay.)

The Neo-Boreals are particularly well-suited to Top, and a large minority of their converts are Chitin Queens; insectoids seem particularly at ease with at the transrational thought processes needed to seek the One Text. Upwarpians tend as a rule to have little use for information gathered non-rationally, but there are surely exceptions. Strangewarp attracts a substantial amount of neoB curiosity because of its unique type of fertility, but it is almost never acted upon, and it's doubtful that Strange returns the affection. The neoBs are quite welcome in Charmwarp, but they find the Bubble Dolls too challenging to their notions of consciousness to be more than amiably distant with them. Bottom's Aquarian do-your-own-thing vibe attracts neoBs in droves. And as soon as it was understood that the One Text wasn't found exclusively in organic life, but in anything and everything that grows wild, they gained quite a few converts in Down; these are the fabled "rust shamans."

Drugs and Consciousness Alteration:

Just as technologies of body alteration are common on Puzzlebox, so are methods to redesign mind and thought. The sheer ease of tampering with nature's design has corroded any taboos the locals might have otherwise had about the sanctity of the unaltered mind. (Of course, there are exceptions, like the sober Victorian Retrotech Collective.) Most of the drugs available in the Mess are safe -- and those which are not, are dangerous by design.

Races, Species, and Nations:

Not much is usually made of the concept of ancestry or pedigree on Puzzlebox. A good many citizens were grown in vats or built from scratch anyhow, and genetic engineering is more than sophisticated enough to allow members of any species to interbreed -- or simply construct offspring from scratch and bring them to bear in either/any partner's body. Thus, recognition of discrete species is one of those past facts of life which is now treated like a quaint hobby at best. Some enclaves still maintain a pure species by habit or choice, but they're in the minority. Nations, of course, are similarly obsolete, since it's not really feasible to have a coercive state-based government over a population of transcendi. Power blocs instead concentrate in voluntary associations such as the factions (similar to the "phyles" in Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*).

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Places:

If you know of an area that should be listed here, or own one of these areas and would like a different description for it, please email functionxor [at] gmail [dot] com.

Charmwarp (Light): "Shiny, happy people."
Nestled in a maze of translucent zero-G habitrails and vivid alien playgrounds, the childlike inhabitants of Charm are devoted to the art of blissing out. More than any other Puzzleboxers, they use themselves as their aesthetic medium. Charmers paint their faces, hide their bodies with elaborate masks and costumes, and remake their flesh into bright, pretty, crazy things. Living dolls, balloon people, volunteer trip-toys, masked wind-up dancers, rubber gargoyles, neon-blue mouse trees, see-through harlequins, bubbles with butterfly wings -- these are ordinary sights inside the psychedelic sensory overload of a Charmtube.
Factions: Bubbledolls, Plurals
Inspirations: Kidd Video, Piki and Poko, Yellow Submarine, Cirque de Soleil

Strangewarp (Dark): "Home of the Brave"
Polluted by a ruthless alien infection made of liquid software, Strange is one of the few places in The Mess where there's authentic physical danger to be found. Teeming with twisted life and unlife, Strange offers a Grand Guignol of feral beauty and sordid pleasures that shocks even the jaded citizenry of the Mess. If you must visit, be careful what you eat, drink, breathe, touch, and look into -- or you'll arrive as a guest and leave as a host.
Factions: Architects, Fever Cathedral, Hemotopians
Inspirations: H.R. Giger's Necronomicon, John Carpenter's Shivers, Naked Lunch, the Zerg from Starcraft, A Clockwork Orange
Points of Interest:

• *Strangewarp Library*. It's said that all the secrets of Puzzlebox and the Mess can be found if you search the Strangewarp Library long enough. It's also said that you probably won't survive long enough to find out where the bathrooms are.

Topwarp (Apollonian): "Another pleasant valley Sunday."
For as long as the Toppers have lived here, they have sought perfect harmony of the senses. Who could see the vibrant weave of Top's living architecture and say they have not succeeded? Patient, thoughtful craft allows Top's countless strains of roots, tendrils, and hives to join in symbiotic serenity. That same patient refinement guards the hearts of the inhabitants. Often mistaken for passionless drudges, quite the opposite is true: a mere breath, well-drawn and subtle, can give a Topper all the joy she needs. Though far from celibate, they are a true rarity among Puzzleboxers: masters of delayed gratification.
Factions: Chitin Queens, Neo-Boreals, Victorian Retrotech Collective
Inspirations: The Spider Garden, The Diamond Age, The Golden Compass, "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," Otto e Mezzo
Points of Interest:

• *The Neke-Ovon Palace*. Formerly the home of an influential faction, this beautiful and strange structure, down the road from Topwarp Square, is now open to the public and home to a small number of sentients.

• *Interpron Studios*. Topwarp's more staid citizens fiercely resent the presence of Interpron's offices in Topwarp Square, but stop by and you just might find yourself embarking on a new career in erotic media.

• *The Galleria*. An eerily beautiful ruin, the Galleria is situated at the plateau of Mount Vinge, which can be accessed via boats that leave from Topwarp's dock.

Bottomwarp (Dionysian): "Snap into position and bounce till you ache."
Fueled by the intoxicating smog that rolls off the notorious faerie dragon ghetto, Bottom is a perennial carnival with no chaperones. Shyness and shame are taboo here, punishable by prompt engulfment in a mass of slick, undulating well-wishers. If you wanted your inhibitions, why the hell did you come to Bottom!? Come and make peace with your inner slut.
Factions: Bonobians, Bubble Dolls (usually as communal property), expatriate dragons
Inspirations: Vaughn Bode's Erotica, Skin Two, Rocky Horror, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Rudy Rucker's Bopper series (Software/Wetware/Freeware), Liquid Sky
Points of Interest:

• *The Upper Bazaar.* Just as licentious but not as crowded as the main square of Bottomwarp that it adjoins, the Bazaar is home to Ma Coyote's Restaurant and the notorious Quiche Lorraine's kiosk, with more under construction.

Upwarp (Order): "It's just that we can make you better."
Inside the clean, sterile white domes and pyramids of Up is a fantasy of perfect knowledge and control. Every need is met before it's even felt, anticipated by the just, infallable decision-making algorithms encoded into the very landscape. Up's institutional complexes are beyond compare, providing hospitals, schools, laboratories, gymnasiums, asylums, and correctional facilities free of charge or obligation. A visit to Up is certain to improve your health and enhance your sense of belonging.
Factions: Architects, Chitin Queens
Inspirations: Sleeper, The Prisoner, "International Geophysical Year," Player Piano, Alphaville

Downwarp (Chaos): "Stronger than ever before."
Though it's no older than its siblings, Down's iron bones are always heavy with rust, grime, and corrosion. Its inhabitants seem to thrive on this mysterious entropic streak, somehow. Amid the kipple-strewn alleys and crumbling stone, the Downers have created a society that exults in the ephemerality and chaos. Downers are hedonists just like any other decent Puzzleboxer and they excel at making luxury out of decay. And while their methods may not always be pretty or easy, you may always expect them to be sincere.
Factions: Eisenstimmen, Fever Cathedral, urbanized Zips
Inspirations: Neuromancer, Jubilee, Holy Fire, City Come a-Walkin', Brazil
Points of Interest:

• *The Tude*. A raucous arena and performance area at the top of the Big Active tower in Downwarp.

• *The Mind Electric*. Catering to the brainsurfer crowd, this drug bar in Downwarp is trippy, grimy, and loud.

• *Downwharf*. Do you need to find the perfect deadly strain of virus? Are you interested in trying out the trippiest, most mind-destroying drugs and VR equipment? Do you do most of your shopping on the black market? This old trading post on the river off Downwarp, across the J.G. Ballard Memorial Freeway, has all that and a bag of chips.

People

If you would like your character to be listed here, please email their name and a paragraph about them to functionxor [at] google [dot] com

The administrators (known as Functions on Puzzlebox) are:

• OR: Theme Function
• XOR: Building and Player Creation Function
• AND, NAND: Site Functions

The World Outside the Mess:

The MUCK itself, though it's called Puzzlebox, mostly only encompasses a small but unusual portion nicknamed "The Mess." In the game world, the self-constructing habitat called Puzzlebox is actually the size of a stellar cluster or larger. Most of the rest of Puzzlebox is fairly uninteresting, sort of a vast cosmological suburb consisting of relatively homogenous and static cultures. But there are a few areas of interest, such as the Tekalal Historical Preserve asteroid and the Zipstop travel stations; players are certainly encouraged to submit such non-Mess areas as building projects.

Puzzlebox: the World-Entity

Most of Puzzlebox's residents know next to nothing about the construct/creature/sentience/whatever-it-is that shelters and provides for them, and those who try to learn more are often frustrated by the paucity of available information. Puzzlebox is huge, probably alive in some sense, probably very old, and may be sentient, but apart from further expanding itself, and casually providing for the wants and whims of the immense numbers of sentients and postsentients who inhabit it, Puzzlebox seems content simply to be, making it extremely difficult for observers to ascertain its motives; the creation of the Mess was a shockingly, and to some, maddeningly, unusual and inscrutable act.

It is also known that Puzzlebox has and will act to defend itself in some circumstances: it will not allow the use of any known weapon of mass destruction anywhere near it. Various factions with motives malicious, suicidal, or unknown, having attempted the use of a panoply of terrifying weapons, have inevitably discovered that those weapons were ineffective: antimatter bombs, hostile nanotech, singularity generators, all have become resolutely inert and harmless when the trigger was pulled. The implicit message has largely permeated Puzzleboxian culture, although every few decades someone makes another unsuccessful attempt. Perhaps typically of three-dimensional sentient life, everyone thinks they're the exception.

Magic:

Perhaps the strangest aspect of Puzzleboxian existence is that reality can become surprisingly ductile in its proximity. In this sense, there is magic on Puzzlebox; but it's not generally the fireballs-and-newt-tongues style that you see in D&D and Harry Potter. It's more like the dreamlike "magical realism" found in the work of William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, and Grant Morrison, and in films like Being John Malkovitch and City of Lost Children. There are "glitches" in Puzzlebox's reality, loopholes in physical causality that can be exploited by sentient beings. Symbolism and metaphor take on physical reality and myths act as if they were real. Pseudosciences like alchemy and orgone studies work on the basis of belief -- if enough sentient beings see a strong enough pattern in something, it'll become a new physical law. This is another reason why surreal things -- psionics, genderswapping guns, energy vampires, etc. -- can exist in Puzzlebox.

Virtual Reality:

On the other hand, it can sometimes be difficult to tell what's "real" and what isn't, particularly in the Mess. Free real estate, shapechanging at will, the power to do almost anything you can put into words... Life for citizens of the Mess is an awful lot like, well, life on a MUCK. And there's a good reason for that -- virtual sensory technology is ubiquitous there. Simulated and real experience are so seamlessly integrated for most people that the locals don't concern themselves too much with the distinction. This is why we discourage people from nitpicking "impossible" actions -- if somebody seems to do something cartoony or surreal, like turn themselves inside out or blow levitating goldfish from their mouth, hmm, maybe they just transmitted the image to the simites in your bloodstream...

Inspirations

Puzzlebox was created by friends of the Dionysian Scream, a postfurry club on Tapestries. Here's a list of the books and other media that inspired and influenced Puzzlebox.

Books:

• **Terminal Cafe**, Ian MacDonald. "In the near future, nanotech raises humans from the dead and gives them transhuman powers, but the resurrected have no legal rights."

• **The Broken Land**, Ian MacDonald. "Pacifist fable about ethnic conflict in a high-biotech far future. Lots of weird posthuman ideas."

• **Schismatrix Plus**, Bruce Sterling. "Schismatrix traverses a two-century time span in a solar system where technology has split humanity into not one but many species, all with their own cultures and ideologies. At the beginning of the book, the System is divided between the Shapers (genetic engineers and biotechnicians par excellence) and the Mechanists (who to varying degrees have abandoned flesh altogether in favor of ever-evolving robotics and computer technologies), but by the end of the book, they look primitive and obsolete."

• **Holy Fire, Bruce Sterling**. "Relates the story of an old woman's rebirth and rediscovery of herself in a society that revolves around life extension. Like the earlier novel, it revolves around posthumanity and the preservation of values and identity in the posthuman state."

• **Only Forward**, Michael Marshall Smith.

• **Semiotext(e) SF**, edited by Robert Anton Wilson.

• **Blood Music**, Greg Bear. In the very near future, the world is transformed when a genetic scientist creates and unleashes sentient bacteria.

• **Aristoi**, Walter John Williams. Centers around a hierarchical, postscarcity nanotech society of the far future.

• **Last Stand of the DNA Cowboys**, Mick Farren.

• **The Bopper series**, Rudy Rucker (Software, Wetware, Freeware, Realware). "The story of the creation, rebellion, and evolution of a group of artificially intelligent lunar robots... it reads as if William Burroughs, Hunter S. Thompson and Isaac Asimov had all taken LSD and decided to write novels. Seethes with psychedelic weirdness and raunchy robot sex."

• **Ribofunk**, Paul DiFilippo. "Anthology of Paul Di Filippo's short fiction set in a near future world turned not only upside down but inside out... Ultra-far-out biotech, furry revolutionaries, and radical body modification available to anyone with a credit card are some of the milder features of Filippo's vision."

• **GURPS:Transhuman Space**, David Pulver.

• **Norstrilia**, Cordwainer Smith.

• **Over the Edge**, Jonathan Tweet. "One of the darkest, weirdest roleplaying games I've ever seen, this homage to William S. Burroughs and David Lynch takes place on a decadent Mediterranean island which is like a very dark cousin to the Scream. Mutant subcultures flock to a city called The Edge and sample every vice ever known, from illegal xenopharmaceuticals to sex with accursed ratling prostitutes."

• **The Diamond Age**, Neal Stephenson.

• **Vacuum Flowers**, Michael Swanwick.

• **Metaplanetary**, Tony Daniel.

• **Quarantine**, Greg Egan.

• **Biting the Sun**, Tanith Lee.

Graphic Novels:

• **The Spider Garden and Hydrophidian**, Michael Manning. "Extremely talented fetish artist. Most of his work has similar style and themes: highly sensual and feminine BDSM set in decadent futures or pasts, with rigorous caste systems and indolent nobles practicing mixtures of tradition Japanese bondage and tastefully explicit technofetish."

• **The Invisibles**, Grant Morrison.

• **Transmetropolitan**, Warren Ellis. "It's smutty, it's cynical, it's harsh, and Spider Jerusalem is perhaps the unsexiest man yet unborn... but every now and then Warren Ellis and Darick Robertson spare their readers a frame or so of unrepentant futuristic romance. Even better, it's usually something transgressive, whether it's gay Chinese Communist refugees playing mouth-hockey in the street, Russian lesbian biker werewolves sniffing at one another, heavily cybered lovers coupling their tonguejacks in an alleyway, or nanotech "foglets" making love, particle to scintillating particle."

Other:

• **DJ Spooky**

• **Deltron 3030**

• **Ruby**. "Blissfully surreal, anarchic, mystical space opera by the blessed hippie dramaturges of ZBS Studios. Every little three-minute soundbite of Ruby is full of strange, pretty notions, but robophilic anthropologist T.J. Teru is of particular interest, as is his custom-built lover, the femme fatale Angel Lips. The enigmatic Android Sisters also do a routine called "How to Fool Around With a Frankie" (i.e., a "Frankenstein," or an android) which is sexy, subversive, and hilarious."

• **Jubilee**. "Bizarre, wrenching, beautiful punk science fantasy by queer film director Derek Jarman. In the 16th century, Queen Elizabeth I's court magician summons an angel (a very young, very androgynous Adam Ant) to ask for a glimpse of the future - and the angel takes them to a wild, surreal alternate 1978, where Britain is something between a war zone, a gleeful hedonic anarchy, and a fascist state prowled by brutal police.. The movie drips with violence and unusual sex, but also with unconventional beauty and morality."

• **Wax, or the Discovery of Television among the Bees**.

• **Mariko Mori**. "Performance artist whose work essentially consists of dressing up in bizarre futuristic fantasy costumes and hanging out in public places in Tokyo. It's all a clever satire on topics including celebrity, postmodern escapism, the mingling of technology and spirituality, and idealized images of women in Japanese pop culture, but any of her costumes would be perfectly at home at the Scream. Miko no Inori, a silver-eyed space priestess, clad in puffy white plastic is particularly beautiful and haunting."

• **Galaxy High**. "1980s TV series about two Terran exchange students going to school in outer space. Good interspecies romance, mindplay, and transformation themes, and some just plain neat character designs. In one episode, the "Martian mumps" have everyone in school green-skinned, speaking in monotone, and behaving bizarrely. In another, the female lead decides to have herself dyed purple from head to toe, just to keep up with local fashion."
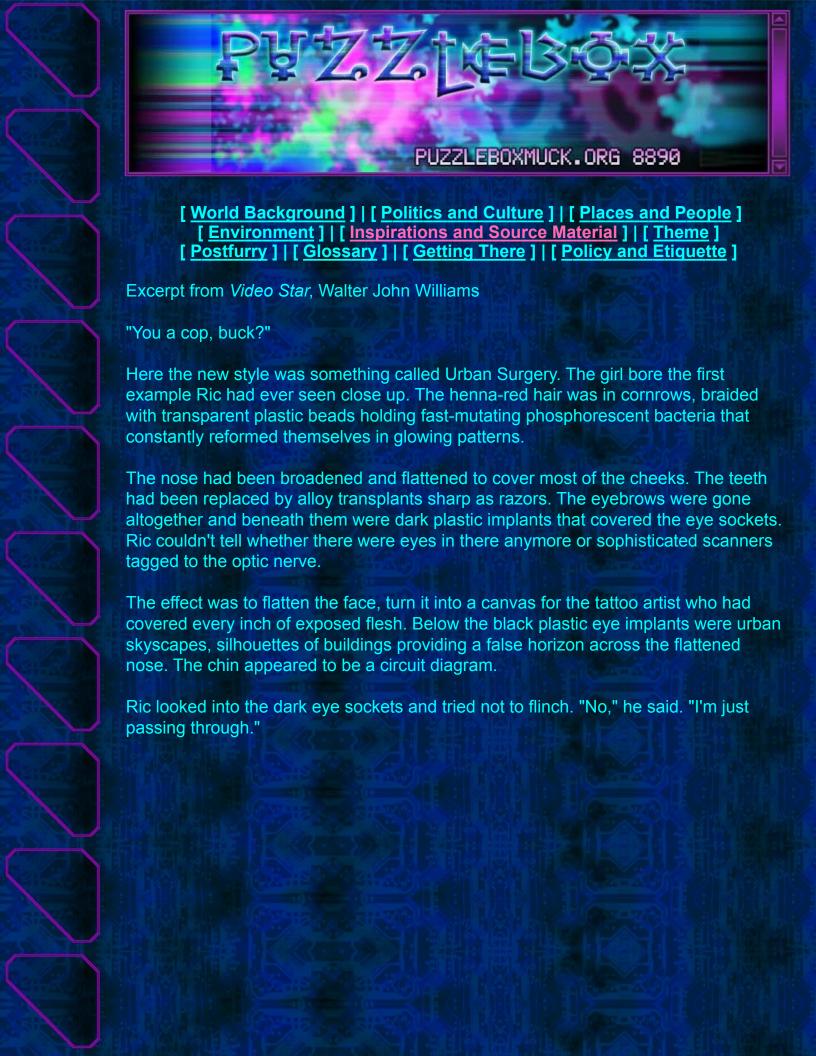
Some Selected Quotes:

Pleasure Cruise, Richard Kadrey

It was Spring, the time of the annual Wagner festival, so he found himself on the Ammon Ra, a gilt airship drifting luxuriously from Cairo towards Berlin. The seats in the First Class observation car were upholstered in the hides of pandas and Tasmanian tigers, and stuffed with dodo bird feathers. A group of laughing Americans -- loud, nouveau riche corporate psychics -- were shooting angels off the starboard side of the craft. Burning cherubim fell screaming along the banks of the Suez, all the way from El Giza to Port Said at the coast. It was all too clamorous and tiresome for him.

Arab pearl and memory merchants were clogging the club car, debating prices in obscure hand signs and offering him small fluted vials of swirling green and pink vapor. "The memories of Casanova. A great lover and poet. I make you a good price-" He shook his head, but the offers kept coming. Alexander the Great. Roy Rogers. Madonna. He mumbled Persian obscenities and wandered to the Dream car. Unfortunately, the only sleepers on the airship at that time of day were children and their dozing nannies. The dreams they presented were full of cartoonishly menacing stuffed animals or long lost loves. Walking back to his private cabin, he mused that travel used to be more interesting when it was restricted to a certain quality of person.

Reading a fashion magazine on his aluminum divan, he recalled that in his rush to catch the airship he had neglected to have his eyes done. Cataracts were all the rage in Europe that Spring. It was his good fortune that the ship's plastic surgeons had a cancellation in the afternoon.

He awoke after a long post-surgical nap just as the Ammon Ra was lowering itself to the ground at the Berlin Aerodrome. Refreshed and thrilled to finally be back in Germany, he was led off the ship by one of the attendants assigned just to the stylishly blind. He was part of a small group that included a couple of ex-astronauts and the deposed head of some Balkan state or other. They laughed and traded business stories. Blindness created a certain chumminess among its fashion victims, he observed. He found it charming in such a cosmopolitan city.

Excerpt from *Video Star*, Walter John Williams

"You a cop, buck?"

Here the new style was something called Urban Surgery. The girl bore the first example Ric had ever seen close up. The henna-red hair was in cornrows, braided with transparent plastic beads holding fast-mutating phosphorescent bacteria that constantly reformed themselves in glowing patterns.

The nose had been broadened and flattened to cover most of the cheeks. The teeth had been replaced by alloy transplants sharp as razors. The eyebrows were gone altogether and beneath them were dark plastic implants that covered the eye sockets. Ric couldn't tell whether there were eyes in there anymore or sophisticated scanners tagged to the optic nerve.

The effect was to flatten the face, turn it into a canvas for the tattoo artist who had covered every inch of exposed flesh. Below the black plastic eye implants were urban skyscapes, silhouettes of buildings providing a false horizon across the flattened nose. The chin appeared to be a circuit diagram.

Ric looked into the dark eye sockets and tried not to flinch. "No," he said. "I'm just passing through."

Excerpt from *Flatline*, Walter John Williams

Gustav is a dwarf. No-one has to be a dwarf these days, not unless he wants to be, so Gustav is a dwarf by way of making a statement. He has stunted his body as a metaphor for what he believes society has done to his soul. Gustav is a dedicated revolutionary and wants to wean people away from their technology.

Because he does things that are illegal, Gustav makes it hard for people to find him. He has no fixed abode, and changes his appearance regularly. Little molecular machines beneath his skin alter the shape of his face every few days.

Molecular machines are the principal technology that Gustav wants to wean people away from. Dedicated revolutionaries, you suspect, learn to live with these sorts of contradictions.

Excerpt from *The Gene Drain*, Lewis Shiner

JSN reached up to the row of glowing buttons across his forehead and changed his mind with an audible click.

Nothing helped. He couldn't shake the sense of disaster hovering over him like an avalanche in progress. In a last, desperate attempt to salvage his mood, he worked up an autonomous search program and sent it spiraling back through his core memory.

Up on the dais, the alien who identified himself as Brother Simon droned on: "...And... uh... we, that is, bein' as how we all are brothers in Johnny, we'd really, uh, like to find us a place in y'all's hearts, praise Johnny, and maybe even someplace we can stay for awhile."

Somebody behind JSN said, "This is pathetic." The assembled UN delegates, representing the 2,873,261 free and independent nations of Earth began to boo. Some were standing up and shouting; others clawed loose bits of wiring from appendages and hurled them at the dais.
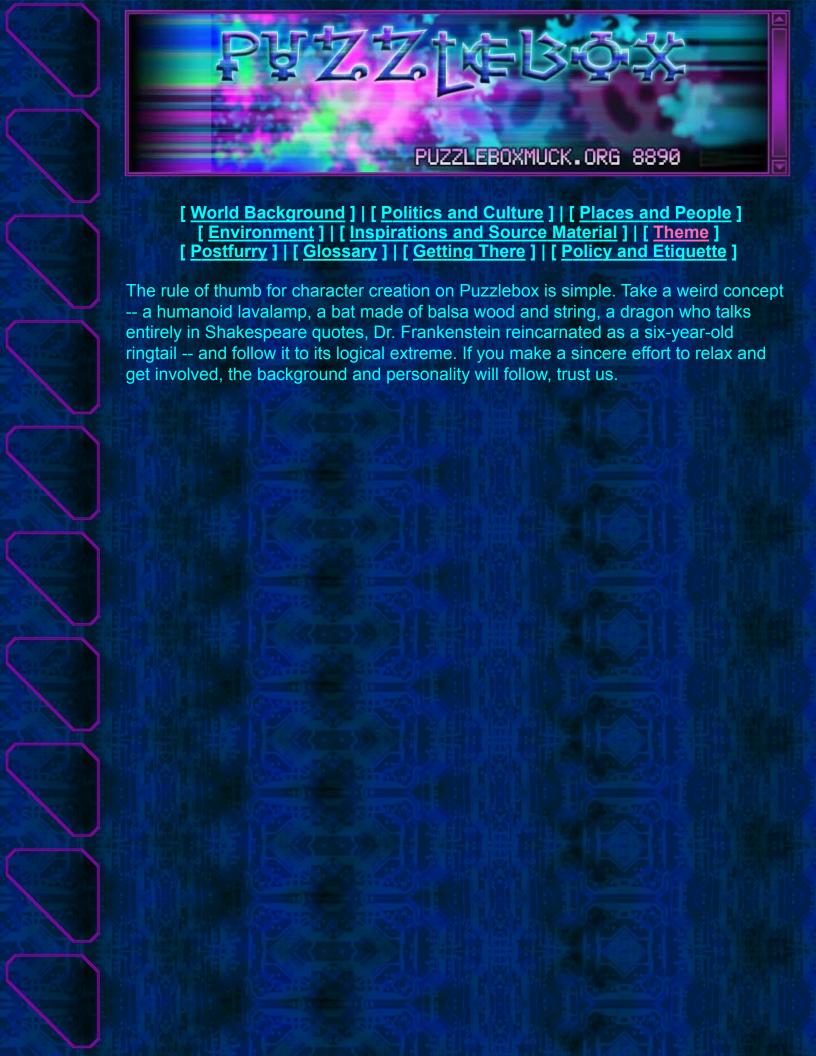
[...]

[**World Background**] | [**Politics and Culture**] | [**Places and People**]
[**Environment**] | [**Inspirations and Source Material**] | [**Theme**]
[**Postfurry**] | [**Glossary**] | [**Getting There**] | [**Policy and Etiquette**]

He had seen her a couple of times before at state parties or concerts, but never had a chance to talk to her. Now he found himself quite infatuated. Her skull was sleek and hairless, her prosthetic arm and leg -- on opposite sides, of course -- were polished beryllium alloy, perfect complements to her skeletally thin naturals. Two bright neon'd veins ran up her neck for a splash of color. I'd sure like to network with that, he thought crudely.

"It still has a few bugs in the flexors," LNR said, "But on the whole..."

[...]

The orgone generator refused to come up to speed, and for a few helpless, frustrated moments, JSN wondered if DNS had been right. Nothing seemed to work anymore. Then LNR found a way to patch around it, and JSN became promptly and thoroughly distracted. But a little less than an hour later, a shrill alarm interrupted them.

"Shit," JSN said, yanking cables out of various orifices...

Theme:

Puzzlebox is a "postfurry" themed MUCK. You aren't required to play an anthropomorphic animal character. What's important is to create a character that doesn't take the biological, social, or technological rules of 21st century humanity for granted. Puzzleboxers don't have to make a living. They can make whatever they want out of thin air. They don't have to worry if their hobbies will shorten their lifespan. These are people with nothing better to do than turn their strangest ideas into reality. In short, being a Puzzleboxer is a lot like being a MUCK character. Once you've wrapped your mind around that, you'll be ready for us.

That said, just because anything can happen doesn't mean that everything does. We want to maintain a certain mood on Puzzlebox: surreal, sensual, literate, futuristic, artsy, fanciful, romantic... Roleplaying on Puzzlebox isn't about who has the biggest phaser rifle or shapeshifts into the biggest monster. It's about playing around with bodies and minds and thoughts in a world that's very, very safe and very, very pretty, but also very chaotic and confusing.

That doesn't mean that everybody always gets along -- just that it's very hard to force anyone to do anything they don't want to, so conflicts are usually resolved with seduction or subterfuge. It's a leisure society, and its inhabitants have driven themselves to some bizarre extremes to keep themselves amused. Some of them have become so caught up in their strange notions of fun that they've gone a little crazy.

We don't want Puzzlebox to become a Star Wars or Star Trek MUCK. We don't want fighter pilots or street samurai, unless they otherwise fit in with the postfurry aesthetic. Violent conflict isn't really part of Puzzlebox society -- at most, it's a game that a few of its jaded citizens play at to amuse themselves. Similarly, a character based on wealth or political authority might not work out here, since those structures really don't exist. We're not going to say outright that you can't play such a character... but the background you submit to us would have to be something absolutely incredible. So we encourage people not to try playing "mundane" characters until they're pretty experienced with Puzzlebox. Yes, we realize how ironic this is. :)

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The rule of thumb for character creation on Puzzlebox is simple. Take a weird concept -- a humanoid lavalamp, a bat made of balsa wood and string, a dragon who talks entirely in Shakespeare quotes, Dr. Frankenstein reincarnated as a six-year-old ringtail -- and follow it to its logical extreme. If you make a sincere effort to relax and get involved, the background and personality will follow, trust us.

Postfurry is...

...futuristic.

Postfurry's futuristic streak is about more than just giving your FurryMUCK character cyberimplants and plastic clothes. That might not be a bad start, but Puzzlebox is not just an ordinary sci-fi adventure MUCK. You won't find many space battles there, and you won't need a plasma cannon mounted in your forearm. Postfurry is more interested in the "soft" side of the future, in the way technology shapes people and their societies. It's about unpredictable change, culture shock, self-creation, and alienation. It's about new possibilities, good and bad -- but especially, alien. Postfurry has little to do with Star Wars and Star Trek, and has more in common the "transhumanist" sci-fi of Bruce Sterling and Rudy Rucker. In short, postfurry is about using technology to make furries weird.

...postmodern.

For those of you who don't know, postmodernism is a philosophy which believes that all perception reality is shaped by language, and all value judgements are only meaningful in the context of a culture. Postmodern art and fashion tend to take ideas from many different eras and cultures and mix them together in ironic, untraditional ways that draw attention to their arbitrariness. This "mix-and-match" attitude is a major part of postfurry. Since Puzzlebox is just a shared textual fantasy, not intended to match up to reality, species can be mixed together without regard to biology, mythology, or geography. Give your talking koala some tiger stripes and a Rasta cap. Play a ninja sphinx that's part ocelot and part sugar glider. It doesn't matter, as long as you do it with sophistication and style.

...psychedelic.

We'd be lying if we said postfurry wasn't influenced by the drug culture. After all, it was founded by a pill-smuggling spacerat and a lava lamp vixen. It's not required that your character be walking around in a blissed-out dreamworld, though Puzzlebox might make more sense if they are... (On Puzzlebox, VR and consciousness-altering technology is so common, it can be hard to draw the line between reality and fantasy.) Like the acidhead and raver subcultures, postfurry is all about the eye candy. Bright glowy colors are favored, though shiny black and chrome are always acceptable -- this goes for the people as well as the clothing. On a deeper level, postfurry is romantic and emotional like psychedelic culture, more interested in experience than in reason. A really good postfurry roleplaying scene should be surreal, shiny, and pretty, like a robot's wet dream. If something you just saw is impossible, don't nitpick it -- just dig it and move on.

...transpecies.

This is probably the most visible difference between furry and postfurry. Postfurry starts with the theme of mixing human and animal characteristics explored by furry fandom and takes it a step further, throwing alien physiologies, mythological beasts, and beings of pure imagination into the mix. Some literal-minded furryfans invest great time and energy in deciding "what's really furry" and what isn't. But postfurries like the borderline cases even better. Insectoids, quasi-sentients, hybrids, centaurs, chimeras, hexipeds, aliens, hermaphrodites, robots, shapeshifters, giant amoebas, angels, demons, drug-induced hallucinations, 12' tall foxes, nine-tailed weasels, plexiglass mice, and all such freaks are welcome. Postfurry breaks furry down into its raw elements: fanciful physiology, the creation of alter egos, and... er... perverted sex. :)

...political.

Like the transhumanist science fiction that inspired it, postfurry leans towards left-libertarian and anarchosocialist political themes: acceptance of unconventional lifestyles and economic systems, distrust of authority and tradition, belief in equality, freedom, and social responsibility, and a love of cities and urban environments.

Since MU*'s in general are post-scarcity communities where even violence is usually consensual, they're a good place to explore new ideas about power and economics. Puzzlebox makes these conditions part of the in-game background, too. It takes place in a world where basic necessities like food and shelter are too plentiful to compete over, physical violence is obsolete as a means of getting your way, and hundreds of cultures co-exist fairly peacefully. It's next to impossible to make somebody do something they don't want to, so onflicts are resolved through "art war": a combination of propaganda, hi-tech graffiti, public debate, media manipulation, meme warfare, intrigue, and psychotronic brainwashing to persuade other people of your views. It's an anarchist paradise, but it's got enough problems to make life interesting.

...theatrical.

Let's be frank: postfurry was founded by some pretty pretentious people. :) But online roleplaying is a lot like improvisational theater, so there's no reason it can't be treated like an art form. That doesn't mean everything people do on Puzzlebox is expected to be brilliant, but it will be more interesting in the long run if people at least take it sincerely. We want you to have a sense of humor, but don't just be random and goofy. Try to make your @desc, dialogue, and poses carry some real emotion and imagination behind them. Don't be afraid to get involved. Better yet, don't be afraid to get caught up in what your character is doing. You are not the audience. You are a featured performer. Stand up and perform. We're all just as scared as you are, but it's less scary for everybody if you give us something interesting to play off of!

...literary.

By the same token, if roleplaying is an art, the same things that make for good art should make for good roleplaying. Remember, art is not reality, and it's not always obliged to resemble it. (Do you really want to see James Bond stuck in London traffic for an hour on the way to work?) Puzzlebox players are encouraged to treat their RP like a novel or a movie, and take advantage of devices like flashbacks, narration, metaphor, editing tricks, and cultural allusions. Feel free to incorporate the unrealness of the MUCK into your roleplaying. (For instance, my character on TapestriesMUCK believed in the "Playerist" religion, where everybody's actions were manipulated by fallible dieties who could be communicated with, and occasionally bribed. :)) Postfurry is about taking the habits and traditions that furry writers, artists, and roleplayers take for granted (e.g. adopting fan names, distinguishing IC and OOC states, creating stereotypes around certain species) and playing with them in imaginative ways.

...fetishistic.

Like it or not, furry is loaded with sublimated sexuality. Postfurry is no different, except that it finds eroticism in things even further removed from reality. Robophilia, inflation fetishes, unnatural genders, xenophilia, mindplay, transformations, BDSM, costumes -- postfurry looks for sensuality not just in the bio-reproductive act, but in manipulations of the body and mind in general. In the wilds of textual space, there's room for fetishes that could never exist in real life. This doesn't mean Puzzlebox players are obliged to be openly sexual. It just means that sensuality permeates postfurry style and culture -- after all, it's about latent sexuality, anyhow. Hedonism and passion abound, showing through in the shiny clothing, ornamented bodies, and general obsession with style.

...elitist.

Both the Dionysian Scream and Puzzlebox were founded on the principle that the average fan, when you get right down to it, isn't all that interesting, especially in a large and noisy room. The bad manners, powergaming, pick-up lines, atrocious spelling, video-game chatter, and all-around lack of effort made it really hard to do the sort of crazy high-concept RP we wanted to do in public. We noticed the really cool people, the sexy, smart, mature ones, tended to hide out alone in private rooms while the public areas were left to the Unwashed Masses. It's the explicit purpose of postfurry to be a sort of underground for those who want to push the envelope of furry fandom and expand its artistic and intellectual boundaries. Anybody is welcome to participate -- as long as they show emotional depth, a sense of humor, empathy, imagination, and intellectual curiosity. There's no single piece of knowledge needed to be a postfurry, or to play on Puzzlebox, as long as you're willing to learn. If you don't understand some of the concepts in this article, that doesn't mean you're not welcome -- but it might be in your best interests to ask someone to explain them.

...irrational.

The last thing a postfurry wants is for a fact to get in the way of a neat idea. In postfurry, not only does science usually take a backseat to metaphor, it's lucky if we don't make it ride in the trunk. In general, postfurry is science fantasy, not "hard" sci-fi. Images like vulpine lavalamps, 4-cylinder minkcycles, and liquid metal jaguars come straight from the subconscious. They're more important for their symbolism and their storytelling potential than for the little details of how they live and work. Yes, Puzzlebox characters should fit the MUCK background and be internally consistent. But everything else can be explained away with large enough doses of dream logic, faerie dust, nanotech, VR, aerosol hallucinogens, retroactive continuity, and/or charm.

Glossary:

Cube Tree: one of the Mess's few pieces of religious iconography, the Cube Tree resides in Puzzlepark and seem to have originated with the Mess; shows signs of autonomous growth and learning, and radiates feelings of well-being and otherworldly gnosis; beings who have meditated near the Tree for long periods have reported an overwhelming sensation that She is trying to point them to something

Faction: Groups of subcultural and ideological affiliation, devoted to spreading their sense of style; factions roughly take the place of ethnicities and nations in the Mess, and levels of participation range from casual fashion affectations to ritualized daily devotions to a faction's lifestyle.

Fashion War: AKA "Art War," "Poetic Terrorism," "Meme War": the predominant form of cultural conflict in the Mess, in which various factions attempt to popularize their ideology through propaganda, psychotronic devices, guerrilla theater, graffiti, performance art, and so forth.

Functions: abstract extradimensional beings which seem to serve as Puzzlebox's caretakers, repair staff, and constables in the Mess; of the six, OR is considered to be the oldest and wisest (or at least, the one with easiest access to the glossary file).

Imipolex: AKA "flickercladding": a putty-like computing medium that can also act as a display.

Imilexene: an nth-generation descendent of rubber and imipolex; an artificial resin seeded with a presentient magic mirror preparation that allows it to reshape itself instantly and respond to the desires of its user via voice command or neural impulse

Instantiator: AKA "matter compiler": a device or system which creates objects on demand from a base material (similar to the replicators from Star Trek); Puzzlebox's instantiator system is built into the atmosphere and allows most sentients to summon material objects of reasonable complexity at will -- item templates of high craftsmanship or very specific function are deliberately disabled, for the sake of the local artisan communities

Magic Mirror: a liquid biocybernetic supercomputing medium of almost magical levels of complexity and flexibility; can also be used to reconstruct matter and energy from a pattern, so it forms the basis of the Mess's transit system as well

The Mess: an anomalous urban development at the outer edges of the Puzzlebox; a six-zoned complex of themed areas, connected by a system of magic mirrors; the first known evidence that Puzzlebox possesses self-awareness, long-term goals, and/or a sense of humor

Oneirochronic: "of the dreamtime," magical; taking place in a surreal environment where rules of reality, history, and causality are entirely subject to the will and desires of sentient beings
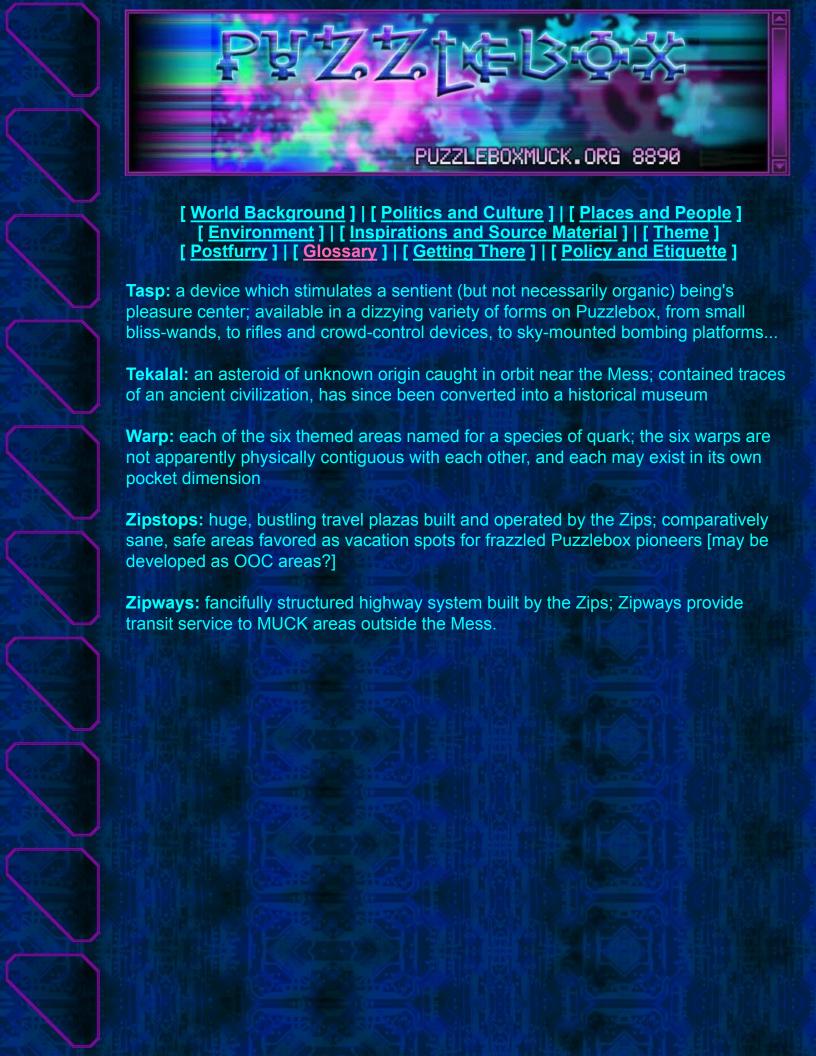
Oneirotronic: a technology, like those of Puzzlebox, powered by dreams or functioning on dreamlike rather than rational causality

Puzzlebox: a massive self-constructing, self-designing, possibly sentient habitat system of unfathomable size; more-than-three dimensional and so convoluted in structure that it may enter and exit several pocket dimensions (the Mess is just one settlement in this much larger structure)

Puzzlepark: central public commons of the Mess; a place of clashing ideologies and culture shock where faction members go to change minds and spread ideas

Shambleau: a race of iridescent silver squid-like beings with hypnotic voices and telepathic abilities; rarely seen in person, the Shambleau typically seduce and capture other beings and "persuade" them via limbic implants to serve as remote units (inspired by Catherine Moore and Trilby Else)

Strangevirus: a mutant strain of magic mirror capable of symbiotic relations with organic beings; beings possessed by the virus have parts of their own personality overwritten by the collect Strange mind -- notably, a predatory sense of morality, a neurotic obsession with grotesque beauty, and a mad-scientist-like fascination with biological processes; in exchange, the infected develop incredibly protean and durable bodies, able to sustain massive modification without shock, death or trauma

Tasp: a device which stimulates a sentient (but not necessarily organic) being's pleasure center; available in a dizzying variety of forms on Puzzlebox, from small bliss-wands, to rifles and crowd-control devices, to sky-mounted bombing platforms...

Tekalal: an asteroid of unknown origin caught in orbit near the Mess; contained traces of an ancient civilization, has since been converted into a historical museum

Warp: each of the six themed areas named for a species of quark; the six warps are not apparently physically contiguous with each other, and each may exist in its own pocket dimension

Zipstops: huge, bustling travel plazas built and operated by the Zips; comparatively sane, safe areas favored as vacation spots for frazzled Puzzlebox pioneers [may be developed as OOC areas?]

Zipways: fancifully structured highway system built by the Zips; Zipways provide transit service to MUCK areas outside the Mess.

Getting There:

Guest access to Puzzlebox can be had by emailing functionxor [at] gmail [dot] com. This may be useful if you're not sure about what kind of character you'd like to play or would just like to see whether Puzzlebox will suit you.

Here's a list of some of our criteria for a good application:

Name:

This isn't a major criterion, but characters with patently ridiculous or incongrous names should raise suspicion. Please refrain from admitting characters named "Stinkybutt" or "xxx4w3x0m3d00dxxx". This is a dreamlike alternate reality, not Livejournal. :)

Communications Skills:

Grammar and spelling are important but need not be flawless. Application reviewers should not reject otherwise good applications based on technical errors. We're more interested in the player's ability to communicate concepts clearly and interestingly. If a player is exceptionally vague, going on for paragraphs without giving any real details, that's a cause for concern. If a player makes good use of figurative language and shows a broad vocabulary, even more serious grammatical and spelling errors can be ignored.

Character Origin

Where does the character come from, in the context of the gameworld? These will generally fall into four categories: characters from the Mess, characters from elsewhere in the Puzzlebox, characters from Terra, characters from other MUCK "realities," and characters from elsewhere.

The Mess

We love seeing characters who are native to the Mess, but realize that new players may not feel comfortable playing somebody from a world they've never seen first-hand! If they express interest in playing a Mess native, consider referring them to the Theme Wizard, who will answer any questions they have and help them fill in any holes in their background. Also consider referring them the XOR for a guest login.

Puzzlebox

We would like to see most new characters be natives of other regions of the Puzzlebox. [We realize why this is a problem currently. Some of the vagueness is a feature, not a bug, but before the beta test is over, we intend to have more guidelines about these regions on the web page.] Most of Puzzlebox is intended to be post-scarcity, but not all of it; its civilizations are diverse to accommodate just about anything anybody would want to play. We think there's more than enough "action" and diversity implied on the rest of Puzzlebox that most players should be able to imagine their character being able to exist out there somewhere.

Outside Puzzlebox

Characters from areas outside the Puzzlebox are technically all right, but we'd prefer to discourage them. The whole concept of Puzzlebox is that it's unfathomably huge and mysterious -- perhaps even larger than three-dimensional space itself. Admitting too many characters from outside the Puzzlebox de-emphasizes the key premise of living on a self-growing, multi-dimensional, possibly-sentient construct. It also raises a lot of questions about space travel and astrophysics; this takes Puzzlebox in a materialist and realist direction which distracts from the "hyperrealist" premise. We're willing to compromise -- we'd rather have an excellent story told their way than a good one told our way, as long as it doesn't detract from other players' concepts. But at the very least, ask them if it would be any trouble to modify their character to accommodate the background we've already provided for them.

Terrans

This is potentially problematic for three reasons. First, is the character from Terra because they're having trouble coming up with a more imaginative background? Is being Terran just the "default"? (see also the "Character Look and Style" section) It's suspicious that, given an entire universe to play with, a character would be from the place most familiar to their player. Of course, there are also many good reasons to play a Terran character, and a character should never be rejected simply for being an Earthling. The key question is, is the player doing anything interesting with the fact their character's Terran? Is it serving any purpose, or is it just kinda there?

Second, we have an awful lot of Terran characters already! Good ones, but it's important to maintain a balance, lest they come to dilute the indigenous culture. (Of course, this could become an interesting plot point, maybe a neo-colonialist satire... How long until the first McDonald's opens in Downwarp?)

Third, if we get many more Terran characters, we're going to have to explain where the hell they're coming from. :) This, of course, is not necessarily bad. The Puzzlebox works in mysterious ways, and it could be interesting to make its occasional intersection with Earth Prime into a plotpoint. But the Functions have enough to worry about already, both IC and OOC. :)

ElseMU*

This one is also problematic, for similar reasons to the Terrans. Again, is it a deliberate choice or just a default? Additionally, since most MU*'s are less heavily IC than Puzzlebox, it raises questions of whether the player understands that they may have to play their character very differently than they did elseMU*. It's not a big concern in an otherwise well-developed application, but watch out for applications that boil down to "GenericFoxy opened up a magical portal on YiffyMUCK and here he is, completely unchanged, except he can strut around in a full body harness all he wants!" We get even more of those apps than you'd expect. :) (Many can be rehabilitated once they get over the culture shock and know that's not what we're looking for.)

Thematic Interest:

Puzzlebox is founded upon certain themes, including but not limited to: the romanticism of technology and urban environments; retrofuturism and the recontextualization of Terran history in an alien post-scarcity environment; postmodern subjectivity and the coexistence of multiple realities; the sensuality of "unnaturalness" and physical and mental transformation; and the literalization of the rules of virtual existence. No single Puzzlebox character needs to fit into every one of these themes, but characters and players should at least not be entirely disinterested in these themes. (In-character conflict with these themes, on the other hand, is fine, if the player is willing to make that conflict a source of good stories. For instance, a character who is terrified of, or morally opposed to, body modification could contribute a lot of desirable dramatic tension to Puzzlebox.)

Literary Awareness:

Each character also has a set of themes and subtexts -- recurring ideas that give focus and meaning to a character. We admire players who feel strongly about the things their characters represent; we especially admire players who see their characters as expressions of ideas rather than mere game pawns. Players should ideally show some awareness of their characters' themes and use them to communicate. Does the application give you a sense that the player had specific unifying character concepts, or that they just strung a bunch of ideas together that sounded cool? If it's unclear, feel free to ask them outright what they consider their character's themes to be.

Civics Skills:

Is the applicant reasonably polite and friendly? Is this somebody with whom you feel you could have an interesting conversation out-of-character? If there's any doubt, try flushing them out on a topic that seems to interest them. Shy people are utterly welcome on Puzzlebox, of course, as long as they seem willing to participate. Argumentative people and people prone to splitting hairs should probably be discouraged; at the very least, try to politely draw their attention to behavior guidelines.

Background Detail:

This is actually not a major criterion, but many applications understandably mistake it for such. Though the MUCK themes are comparatively fixed, the details of the Puzzlebox background are meant to be very flexible. As long as a character is well-thought out and fits in with the general mood and style, the player is not expect to display foreknowledge of the finer details of the Puzzlebox world. We hope that new players will come with their own ideas of what the Mess will be like. In fact, in the case of an good application that directly conflicts with an existing premise of Puzzlebox, don't hesitate to contact the Theme Function so a compromise can be reached -- we'll try to err on the side of the player, even if it means rewriting an official but unexplored part of the world background.

Character Look and Style:

The Mess is a retrofuturistic, xenofetishistic leisure society with access to magical levels of technology. Its inhabitants have the luxury of choosing their forms of dress, physical incarnation, and even neurological architecture based on personal whim instead of physical necessity. Therefore, fashion and personal style are very important on PuzzleboxMUCK. There is no one correct personal style or predominant fashion; the relevant thing is that a character have some strong sense of self-expression or subcultural affiliation conveyed through their appearance. Surreal beauty and flamboyance are definitely appropriate, and the stereotypical colorful rubber-and-biotech look is always in season. Not every character needs to be eye candy, though. Watch out for characters in "default" Terran dress like jeans and T-shirt -- if that's the most imaginative thing they could come up with, that's a serious problem, but if the player or character is making a specific fashion statement, it's not a problem. (e.g.: "This Terran immigrant's a fish out of water here" or "She wears overall to evoke a sense of innocence and simplicity.") In fact, if somebody just takes their character from another MUCK and slaps them into a rubber bodysuit with no embellishments, that might also be a sign to encourage them to try a little harder.

Tastefulness:

Puzzlebox is intended to be a tolerant environment, but we have limits. While the staff has no moral objection to anybody's individual kinks or hobbies, there are some which don't fit so well into the MUCK's IC or OOC culture. Nothing is explicitly forbidden, but if a submitted character centers around a kink that is potentially violent, grotesque, or cruel, warn the applicant that we expect them to pursue their interests with good taste and consideration for other players. We are of the philosophy that any kink, even extreme ones, can potentially be played out in a romantic and appealing fashion (or at least played in a fashion where the distastefulness becomes a thematic strength -- consider asking them to keep it to Strangewarp). The job of the reviewer is to ensure that the applicant is actually interested in doing so.

~~TEH FUNNIE:~~

Likewise, characters that reek of detached irony are discouraged -- we like sincerity and emotional commitment. (For example, "Durrr, I'm playing a twelve-foot tall bong that speaks entirely in Cheech and Chong quotes! He gives people little transhuman fleas that do 12-hour guitar jams!" is admittedly interesting. :p But it should raise some questions about whether it's just being played to annoy or confuse people for a cheap laugh. Still, if they can prove they're really interested in exploring their existence as a gigantic fuming hookah, and you're convinced they'll be polite about it, let 'em!)

Sensuality:

The exploration of pleasure, romance, and positive emotion for their own sakes is a central and indispensible theme of PuzzleboxMUCK. It need not always involve sexuality, but it very often will, and players should be equipped to deal with this. Additionally, players who are allergic to cuteness should be politely warned off.

In particular, we're looking for players whose concept of "sensuality" extends well beyond conventional penetrative sex, into the realm of the psychological and surreal. We also want people who are interested in putting their virtual sex lives into the context of an complete, compelling, meaningful character -- we're looking for erotica (e.g. genuine emotional and aesthetic intimacy), not porn (e.g. simple gratification, to the exclusion of anything but the sexual act).

Cultural References:

We're interested in players who are well-read pop-culture buffs in general. It's certainly not necessary to drop the names of our favorite books, music, art, and movies. But we're not going to claim it doesn't help. :) A working knowledge of surreal "reality-fuck" fiction or allegorical science fantasy is certainly useful in a player. Basic knowledge of artistic, historical, and philosophical movements is also excellent. If something in their application reminds you of one of your favorite texts, go ahead and point it out to them, maybe it'll inspire them further!

Originality:

Duh. :) We're offering our players a chance to be damn near anything. That doesn't mean they can't be a familiar character archetype, but it's definitely a plus if they're exploring new territory. Rule of thumb: if their submission feels like it was gleaned from the character creation section of a roleplaying game, it's a warning sign. Also keep in mind that most of these conventional character types (e.g. space marines, financiers, Yakuza) are predicated upon worlds where violence, wealth, and social authority are still relevant. Again, characters that fit these templates shouldn't be rejected out of hand, but they player needs to explain how and why they're going to end up fitting into the Mess. Also watch for characters who assume that because Puzzlebox is a "science fantasy" environment, that means there are vast unexplored tracts of space. There are, but they're mostly offstage -- most of the action takes place in an urban environment and this is very important to the theme!

Similar Worldview:

Most of the founders of Puzzlebox and many of the players are, well, freaks. The MUCK is full of bisexuals, transsexuals, pagans, furries, polyamorists, Otherkin, BDSM, hippies, goths, ravers, introverts, and other despised fringe groups. ;p Fringe-culture affiliation is certainly not an application criterion in itself, but those are the groups the MUCK is intended to attract first and foremost. Applicants who are substantially freaked out by these groups should probably be gently warned away. Applicants who are known to ridicule these groups should be gently chased away with Swiss pikes and Greek fire. :p

Additionally, the nature of Puzzlebox is substantially different from what many people seem to expect from a "science fiction" MUCK. It's very "right-brained." The emphasis of Puzzlebox tends towards the symbolic, the romantic, the surreal, the subjective, the literary, the metaphysical, the psychological, the mythical... These are the things Puzzlebox was intended to explore, and though nobody should ever be excluded just for having a different worldview, if there is no interest displayed in any of these ideas, it might be worth getting the applicant to clarify just what sort of roleplaying they hoped to find here.

Breaking Stereotypes:

In keeping with the "queer culture" theme of Puzzlebox, we especially love applicants who use their characters to question stereotypes. Military-themed characters who are sweet and sensitive, harmless-looking waifs who are calculating tactical geniuses, penitent black holes, lovable Elder Gods... any character concepts that show awareness of a literary or social category and playfully subvert it are very, very welcome.

Realism

Realism isn't really a concern except when people expect us to have some. :) It has been said that scientific accuracy not only takes a backseat to style here, it's lucky when we don't make it ride in the trunk. :) If an application seems strongly reliant on hard sci-fi tropes or scientific detail, you might want to explain that Puzzlebox is more of a dreamlike, magical, figurative reality and we're more interested in themes and emotions than in technological "sweetness." If they're OK with that, no problem, but they should be warned. (We have admitted a few characters with hard sci-fi premises, and they've done just fine on the premise that if a Puzzlebox resident believes very strongly in a law of physics, they will in fact be limited by it.)

Furriness

Not really a concern. Even humans are quite welcome, although if they have zero trace of body-weirdness and no clear intent of exploring it later (after all, blank templates can be fun), you might want to ask them explicitly what the hell they want to be on Puzzlebox for. :) For chrissake, they could at least put on some eyeshadow.

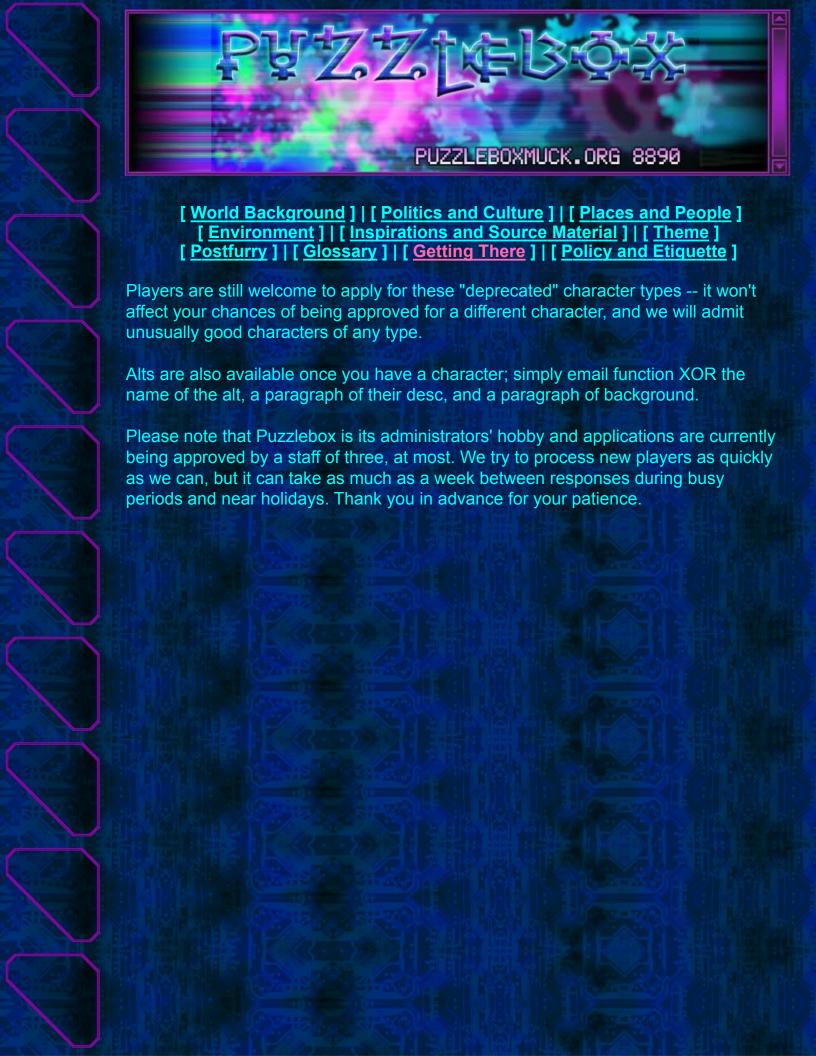If you decide you'd like a character, please e-mail:

your character's name
• at least a paragraph of your character's description
• a paragraph about your character's background
• a paragraph about what interests you about Puzzlebox

to functionxor [at] gmail [dot] com. Don't worry -- the MUCK staff will ask you to refine your character instead of rejecting it outright, and you have infinite chances to apply. We're interested in seeing examples of your ingenuity and descriptive ability, as well as testing your ability to think in terms of theme and subtext.

We also review character applications as a way to keep Puzzlebox's background and storyline flexible -- by giving each character an individual treatment, we can resolve questions of continuity on an individual basis, instead of trying to fit everyone into a single harsh canon.

We do reserve the right to discourage people from certain character concepts in order to maintain the diversity of Puzzlebox. For example, we currently have a large number of immigrants from Earth and worlds with Earth-like cultures, and we are currently limiting the influx of new Terran characters. Characters with a military or paramilitary background may find it difficult to adjust to life on Puzzlebox; their players should be prepared to explain what they're doing in a largely post-violence universe. Players bringing old characters from other MUCK are encouraged to reinvent them as Puzzlebox natives if possible. We also strongly discourage characters taken directly from published media, though homage characters are fine. (You may play a space monk in a robe with weird psychic powers and an energy sword if you like, but you can't play a Jedi and you definitely can't play Mace Windu. :))

[**World Background**] | [**Politics and Culture**] | [**Places and People**]
[**Environment**] | [**Inspirations and Source Material**] | [**Theme**]
[**Postfurry**] | [**Glossary**] | [**Getting There**] | [**Policy and Etiquette**]

Players are still welcome to apply for these "deprecated" character types -- it won't affect your chances of being approved for a different character, and we will admit unusually good characters of any type.

Alts are also available once you have a character; simply email function XOR the name of the alt, a paragraph of their desc, and a paragraph of background.

Please note that Puzzlebox is its administrators' hobby and applications are currently being approved by a staff of three, at most. We try to process new players as quickly as we can, but it can take as much as a week between responses during busy periods and near holidays. Thank you in advance for your patience.

Policy and Etiquette:

Some general guidelines for roleplay.

Respect OOC Consent
We take this rule very seriously. No matter what it is, if somebody asks you out-of-character not to do something to their character, don't do it. This goes especially for sexual acts and violence, but you'd better believe it extends to basic roleplaying. If somebody asks you to stop teasing them, stop, even if the teasing's fully in-character and you consider it harmless. If somebody asks you to leave them alone, leave them alone.

Respect Anonymity
Don't try to find out who a certain player is, except by politely asking them; if they decline, don't bother them further, and don't post speculations about anyone's identity on any public web space. If you know who someone is, ask them before divulging their identity or any information that might reasonably give away that identity. Puzzlebox is a thousand centuries and fifty zillion light years away from 21st century Earth. Let's keep it that way.

No Powergaming
"Powergaming" refers to using some presumed power of your character to force an action upon another character, usually by posing the victim's actions for them or by posing the result. For example, posing "TwinkFox aims a disintegrator ray at you and fires" is fine, because it leaves the other player an opening to dodge. However, posing "TwinkFox zaps you with a disintegrator ray" is powergaming, since it leaves the target no choice in getting zapperd. This is considered extremely rude, since it takes creative control away from other players and makes for boring roleplay for everyone except the powergamer. Puzzlebox is not a competition, and nobody will be impressed if you show off how mighty your character is. Anybody can play at being powerful on a MUCK. Good roleplaying is all about negotiation.

No Baiting

It should go without saying, but we strongly disapprove of players deliberately setting out to annoy or upset other players. This includes in-character activity motivated out-of-character malice. If the purpose of your roleplay is to annoy a character in a way that will entertain both you and that character's player, that's fine! If your purpose is to annoy a player, don't expect a lot of sympathy from the Functions.

Refrain from Public OOCness

Puzzlebox is primarily intended as a roleplaying MUCK. The whole purpose is to get away from reality. Chatting with your friends is just fine, but please refrain from dominating public areas with talk about console games, programming, television, jobs, and the like. This rule will be loosely enforced by the Functions -- but if somebody asks you to take your OOC conversation to whispers, pages, or shout channels, please respect their request!

Participate!

Roleplaying is not a spectator sport, nor is it a game of solitaire. Don't be shy about starting or contributing to scenes. If everybody sits around quietly waiting to happen... then nothing will happen. Sometimes all it takes is one casual pose to start something interesting. (But see the next item!)

Ask First

If you're joining in on an ongoing scene, it may be polite to ask for permission first via whisper or page. This goes double for intimate or intense scenes involving people you don't know. A good rule of thumb is whether you would do it in real life. Striking up a conversation with somebody waiting for a bus is perfectly polite -- asking a stranger a bunch of questions while they're trying to make out with their partner is rude!

No Lost Puppies

Be sensitive about other people's time. If they don't have time for you, don't take it personally. Don't hound people by constantly paging them or trying to monopolize their time when they're in public. Nobody likes a stalker.

Don't Nitpick

Puzzlebox is science-fantasy, not hard sci-fi. Exact scientific principles aren't nearly as important as narrative and thematic potential here. In other words, it doesn't matter how things work as long as they look and sound cool. If somebody has a pair of wings, for example, there are dozens of possible explanations for how they might work: telekinesis, antigravity, faerie dust, VR simulation... Don't assume they depend on basic aerodynamics and start ranting about hollow bones and drag coefficients. They're wings. They're there because the player wants their character to fly, or because wings are pretty. Even if they're just made of tinsel and wishful thinking, they work because MUCKs are a literary reality, not a physical one, and the limitations of the real world don't necessarily apply here. (Getting clarifications on how things work for the sake of a scene is just fine, of course, as is in-character skepticism. If the other player wants to get into the technical details, it's not really a problem.)

No Angst

If you must be morose and moody in public, at least be entertaining about it. Please try to whatever extent possible to keep your real-life problems to yourself and close confidants. If you absolutely must express your bad feelings, try to channel them into something in-character that will be interesting for other people. A melodramatic roleplaying can be very therapeutic, but only if other people want to participate, too.

No Publicity

Please be discreet about telling others about Puzzlebox. Word of mouth among friends is fine, but if you're going to mention our MUCK to a journalist, researcher, or person working for a similar large organization, please ask for permission from the Functions first.

Empathize

If there's a conflict, try to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. Something which seems friendly to you might seem offensive to them, and vice versa. Be tactful, and try to be the first to offer a compromise. If you're angry, walk away.

No Fair Game

No matter how much somebody annoys you, no matter how much you may dislike their interests, no matter how poor their social skills are, nobody on Puzzlebox is "fair game" for insults or abuse. Please show respect for everybody. If you don't like somebody's attitudes, lead by example. We will not put up with harassment, browbeating, or bullying of any kind.

Be Nice to Strangers

Please at least make an effort to greet new arrivals in public places. We realize that somebody's it's hard to spare time for everybody in the middle of an intense scene. But it's rude to deliberately ignore somebody when you could spare the time to say hello. It's very frustrating for a new player to make multiple attempts to introduce themselves in a public area, only to be ignored by a clique. That's not the kind of atmosphere we want here.

Mind the Theme

Puzzlebox is devoted to the shiny, sexy, and surreal. We're interested in going a little bit beyond the ordinary and exploring things like identity, culture, consciousness and the nature of reality -- but we want to do it in a fun and romantic way. Please try to keep that in mind as you roleplay. Making witty references to 20th/21st century people and cultures is no problem, but try not to take the ideas of the modern world for granted. Almost anything is possible on Puzzlebox. Make the most of it!

Be Nice.

Well, duh. You don't have to like everybody, but you do have to treat them with respect. Trust us, the time you would've spent arguing and sulking will be much better spent roleplaying and having fun.

The following is an incomplete list of factions, taken from the Puzzlebox Wiki. This high entropy page has suffered one of the greatest losses of data, alongside the Denizens page. Nearly every faction possessed a unique article, now missing.

• Architects of the Future: Is this a sentient bureaucracy?
• Astrognostic Society: These stars were written for us.
• Bonobians
• Bubble Dolls: You want to be miserable why, again?
   • Subfaction: [/Asylum of Psychiatry for Mistreated Bubbledolls]?: You didn't see this.
  • Chitin Queens
   • Subfaction: Neke
   • Subfaction: Szjna-cyvani: You intrigue us. Hold this against your head, please.
• Centre for the Study of Infectious Agents: Learning more ways to fight the nanowars
• Cult of the Ten Thousand Guns in One Body: Godlike in his desires, worthy of worship in his prowess.
• Curators: Voice among voices, sing the Song of Creation...
• Data Exchange: What's theirs can be yours, if you want to trade.
• Department of Time Stabilization: All factors nominal, calibration complete. Good morning, Mister E.
   • Subfaction: Department for Parachronotic Research and Retrieval: May the Archivist help you?
• Eisenstimmen: Hands for Labor, minds for Doing, bodies for Action!
• Fever Cathedral: Feel the burn, acid pouring down / Down the back into your spine / And waken!
   • Subfaction: Darkwave: "We hold that acid in our hands and love you with it."
• Fey Brigade: "We do nice things."

• Fraggers: Life as a first person shooter
• [/Free Expressionists]?: An art colony in a reality made of art colonies.
• Glorious Constellation: Structure is how we know so much.
• Gridshamans
• Hemotopians: The beautiful people
• Holotron: We will teach you about archaic but fun principles: "You are property! Everything for sale while quantities last!"
• HsanaTsu: A species, a nanite colony and a frame of mind all in one.
• Hydra: Like, whoa, dude. It just keeps going on and on...
• Imagination Consortium: "We are nice things."
• The Imperative: Have you ever been experienced?
• Infocritters: And what is on your mind today?
• The Lamplighters: Keeping entropy from the lamps
• [/The Laughing]?: Puddles to splash in
• Madmen: Note-sharing for the scientifically crazy.
• Monsters: Your terror is our pleasure...
• Modulari: Bits and pieces
• Neo-Boreals: Listen, listen deeply! Avoid the pollution of other voices...
• Outreach: Bringing sentients together since the 23rd see
• Otissa: We can do that for you.
• PACIFIC: Represent!
• Plurals: E pluribus unum
• The Roma Cycle: In a world so full of differences, wouldn't you like to be the same?

- Snugglebunnies: Living on affection
- The Spikéd Wheel : turn the wheel of horrors
- Star-Lemurs: The sky goes on forever. So can you!
- The Strange Medical Corps: "Don't worry, this won't hurt much."
- The Strangewarp Library Reconstruction Team: Rescuing the mysteries from the madness.
- La [Symphonie Mechanique]?: Making beautiful music... together.
- The Televisionaries: Dance, dance for the camera you've pointed at us.
- Tengu: Arrogance is the only true path to happiness.
- Terrans: "Poor things. They break so easily, too."
- Tesseract Circle: Let it never be said that Up has no culture.
- Tritus Conglomerate: We make the products you desire!
    - Subfaction: Tritus Labs, LLC.: Playing God for fun and profit.
- Toymakers: Cause for change
    - Subfaction: Toys: Make of yourself a thing of pleasure
- Tweener
- The Unveiling: We will know ourselves, or be forgotten trying.
- Victorian Retrotech Collective: Dedicated to dedication
    - Subfaction: The Child's Garden: The beautiful children
    - Subfaction: Stepfield Estates: The last bastion of traditional family values.
- Wardens: Mama keeps baby healthy and clean! And all of baby's friends. And everywhere baby might go. And...
- Wutaikong: It's not about who wins - it's about who's loved.
- Zips: (small boy whispers "soom soom!")