Hit Location

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Back in 1995, around this time of year, I began working on a program called "Hitloc" which, appropriately enough, determines hit location.[1] I'm sure many of you remember hit location. Several early RPGs which included combat systems involving guns (such as Boot Hill and Top Secret) often included a hit location chart. Just to jog your memory, here's the one from Top Secret:

Dice Result	Location
01-09	Head/neck
10-16	Right arm
17-18	Right hand
19-25	Left arm
26-27	Left hand
28-46	Chest (or upper back)
47-64	Abdomen (or lower back)
65-79	Right leg
80-82	Right foot
83-97	Left leg
98-00	Left foot

How did the designers know to use these percentages? Well, they shot guns at each other, of course! Unfortunately, workers compensation premiums got so far out of hand that they decided to stop that practice, and hence we no longer see these nifty little charts in RPGs.

d20 Modern didn't contain one. Nor did Spycraft. Why have these sorts of charts fallen out of fashion? Aside from the loss of up-and-coming game designers to multiple gunshot injuries, I think there are several reasons:

- Using a hit location chart adds an extra step in the combat sequence, meaning that it slows down the game, thus making combat inherently less cinematic.
- For the most part, a hit location chart, by itself, doesn't really add anything substantive to the game. To give it a real purpose, you'd have to:
  - Include all sorts of rules for different types of wounds, again slowing down the game.
  - Increase the realism of combat, hence making it much more deadly. This, of course, would be detrimental to long-term character stories (at least where violence is a feature of the plot).
- Gun combat itself is a highly chaotic process which involves so many variables that to model it precisely would likely be an exercise in futility.

Nonetheless, there was an interesting product which came out back in the early 1990s called Killer Crosshairs. It contained a clear plastic overlay along with a variety of target silhouettes and a fairly detailed injury effects table (I *really* feel sorry for these designers ☺).

I think I started writing Hitloc before I obtained a copy of Killer Crosshairs, however, at some point after the program went into hibernation, it occurred to me that with some work, Hitloc could be adapted to work in a manner similar to the system this book provides. In other words, the program could determine if a hit occurs, it could determine where the hit occurs, and it could determine all the messy wound-effects, all with a single keystroke.

The question, of course, is would anyone use it? I don't know, but it would be interesting to work on Hitloc some more and find out. Right now, all it does it hit location, but expanding it to do the rest shouldn't be too terribly difficult.

Version 0.2 of the program can be found at **http://www.elektrasystems.net/~jimv/hitloc.htm**

Comments welcome, and if anyone is interested in helping with medical terminology and realistic wound-effects, please drop me an email.

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[1] This month's igtheme reminded me about the program, so I decided to spruce up the interface just a tad before releasing a highly preliminary version to you guys for comments. Why the eight-year wait? Well, like nearly all the projects I undertake, this one found its way to the back-burner when things got busy. I never forgot about it, however, and this seemed like a good opportunity to stage a resurrection.