Whether you're a Game Master building a gang of NPCs for your campaign or a group of players crafting characters as members of an outlaw adventuring company (see Iron Kingdoms Full Metal Fantasy Roleplaying Game: Core Rules, p. 152), you'll want to give some thought to what roles you'll need to fill. Not every gang is identical. Small-time bands of pickpockets and thieves have a dramatically different roster than an organized crime family with influence over an entire city.

As you begin to flesh out your characters or NPCs, consider what kinds of crime your gang usually commits. In last week’s Full Metal Fridays installment, we explored common criminal pursuits and rackets, some of which have more specialized needs than others. Since most criminal gangs dabble in a number of illicit pursuits, however, you can expect to fill certain roles no matter your gang’s specialty. The roles described here are given titles for convenience, but many gangs dispense with formal labels altogether, and not every gang utilizes every role.

BOSS

Every criminal outfit needs a boss, a leader the gang looks to for the final word on all matters. The most effective bosses delegate minor responsibilities, but the most important decisions for the gang fall to the boss: matters of life and death, or at the least, the difference between freedom and incarceration.

Bosses are called by different names depending on the gang’s nation and city of residence, its preferred criminal pursuits, and the idiosyncrasies of its members. Bosses are rarely elected but instead rise to the top through cleverness or a proclivity for violence. Depending on the gang’s preferred criminal activities, the boss might be a mastermind or simply the toughest, and often loudest, member of the gang.

It is the boss’ responsibility to ensure the success of the gang in its endeavors. In its simplest form, this means he must make sure his followers are successful criminals who
anatomy of a gang

of a city. These men and women are proficient at winning
someone the gang can rely on for quick thinking and social

Rarely holding an official position within a gang, the fixer is
sometimes fill this role even in primarily human gangs.

out on loot or betraying the gang. Ogrun and trollkin
rivals or punish other members of the gang for holding
heavies. The boss looks to these members to intimidate
engaged in theft or robbery and serve as the gang's resident
around. These members usually spend most of their time
almost every criminal organization keeps a few enforcers
in the Iron Kingdoms.

a watchful eye on their seconds. The maxim “keep your
decisions are his to make, and his word is final. Successful
bosses do not tolerate insolence, and crossing a gang boss
almost certainly results in a death sentence.

Some underbosses are chosen out of simple cronyism,
but shrewd bosses choose a second-in-command who complements their own strengths and weaknesses. Bosses
who rule through brute force often pick the gang’s newest
member for his foresight and silver tongue. Alternatively,
bosses who lead through cunning employ the most violent
and thuggish member of the gang to enforce their will.

Some underbosses long for the day when they will rule
the gang themselves, and accordingly, wise bosses keep
a watchful eye on their seconds. The maxim “keep your
friends close and your enemies closer” is even more
applicable in the criminal underworld than anywhere else
in the Iron Kingdoms.

ENFORCER

Few gangs specialize in making a living from violence, but
almost every criminal organization keeps a few enforcers
around. These members usually spend most of their time
engaged in theft or robbery and serve as the gang’s resident
heavies. The boss looks to these members to intimidate
rivals or punish other members of the gang for holding
out on loot or betraying the gang. Ogrun and trollkin
sometimes fill this role even in primarily human gangs.

FIXER

Rarely holding an official position within a gang, the fixer is
someone the gang can rely on for quick thinking and social
connections. Fixers maintain contacts across the criminal
underworld and sometimes beyond. For instance, larger
gangs employ fixers who can influence the political structure
of a city. These men and women are proficient at winning
over members of a city’s power structure through activities
such as extravagant events where politicians can expect to
eat and drink the finest delicacies the gang can afford. Fixers
with proficiency in the legal systems of the Iron Kingdoms
are particularly prized, as they know how closely they can
skirt the line of legality without stepping over it.

When plans go awry, gang members turn to their resident
fixer. Whether it's a matter of springing a compatriot from
the city jail, disposing of an inconvenient body, or finding a
specifically configured laborjack in a hurry, the fixer knows
how to resolve a dicey situation quickly.

LOOKOUT

Lookouts are often new members of a gang who spend
much of their time keeping an eye on city watchmen or rival
gang members while their more experienced colleagues
commit crimes. Sometimes considered a punishment duty,
standing watch is still an important aspect of almost any
criminal undertaking.

SOLDIERS

A gang’s rank-and-file members are called soldiers.
Discharged military men, desperate refugees, and members
of poor families are often drawn to the life of a gang soldier.
Membership in a gang can offer a measure of protection
and potential earnings that such individuals could hardly
attain otherwise.

The talents and abilities of soldiers can vary wildly from
member to member, but they are all expected to follow the
orders of their superiors without question. Large gangs
often structure soldiers into cells each led by a captain, a
trusted veteran of the gang. Gang captains are given a piece
of territory and tasked with protecting the gang’s holdings
and generating profit from it. Eventually every gang must
fight to defend its territory, against either armed members
of the city watch or rival gangs seeking to expand their
borders. Soldiers make up a gang’s primary force during
these conflicts.

SPECIALIST

Specialists fall outside the normal structure of a gang, often
reporting only to a boss and his most trusted lieutenants.
These individuals, such as mechanical engineers, physicians,
or arcanists, possess rare or prized skills and
are therefore invaluable to their gang. Bosses are careful
not to endanger their specialists and rarely send them
on jobs that do not require their unique talents. Though
they share similarities with fixers, specialists differ in
one important way: a fixer is expected to perform many
different tasks, whereas a specialist focuses all his abilities
in one particular field.

Some specialists do not swear allegiance to a single gang
but rather work as freelance operators who sell their skills
to all the different gangs of a city. For other roles this kind of
behavior would be met with violence, but skilled specialists
are afforded special consideration.