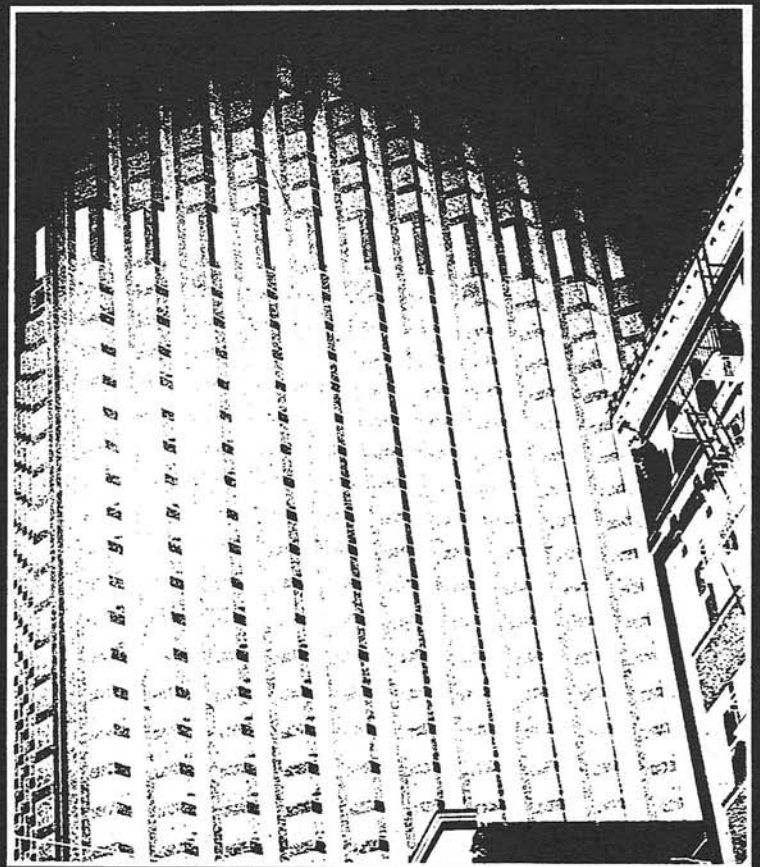


# CYBERPUNK

*The Roleplaying Game of the  
Dark Future*



*Welcome to Night City: A  
Sourcebook for 2013*

**R. TALSORIAN  
GAMES INC.**

# CYBERPUNK

## Welcome to Night City: A Sourcebook for 2013

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# Timeline for the 2000's

**1989-** A period of unprecedented corruption, as "Gang of Four" (CIA, NSC, FBI and DEA) combine to effectively run government behind President's back.

**1990-** Central American Conflict. Organization of Central American States unilaterally condemns US for interventionist actions in Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador. The Panama Canal treaty expires, and the Canal reverts to the Panamanian government. The US sends military forces to Panama to retake the Canal, citing national defense issues. The *Guardia Nacional* takes to the hills, fighting a running guerrilla war from over the Honduras and Nicaraguan borders. By 1994, US troops have intervened in these nations as well, and a full scale war is underway. Much like Vietnam, it is a conflict which pits natives against outsiders--in this case, the US's newly developed, elite Mechanical Light Infantry Battalions. These are cybersoldiers using the best of the newtech developed in the early 90's.

Fall of South Africa. There is little or no communication from Southern Africa for the next four years, although terrible atrocities and genocidal wars are rumored.

Riots in London between rival Labour and racial extremist factions.

**1991-** Eurospace Agency's Hermes spaceplane launched.

Gorborev regime purges last of old Soviet hardliners.

CHOOH<sup>2</sup> developed by Biotechnica.

First Arcology built on the ruins of Jersey City, New Jersey. Sixteen "Arcos" begin construction over the next 5 years, until the Collapse of 1997, leaving the huge structures half completed, but filled with squatters and homeless.

Artificial muscle fibres developed at Stanford Research Center.

**1992-** With the entry of Japan into the Common market, a new entity, the *Euro-market*, is formed. Zones of control and protective tariffs regulate the activities of the member nations of France, Britain, Germany, Italy. A common currency unit, the *Euro-dollar*, is also established, based

on the current average value in gold of all currencies combined (franc, yen, pound, mark, kroner). Still trapped in the paranoid isolationism of the Gang of Four, the US declines to enter.

U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency develops and spreads several designer plagues worldwide, targeting cacao and opium plants. Governments of Chile, Ecuador, collapse. A savage drug war between dealers and DEA breaks out all over the Americas.

First use of high-energy laser array lift systems. Simple massdriver is established on the Canary islands by the eight member Eurospace Combine.

**1993-** First TRC biologic interface chips developed in Munich, West Germany.

AV-4 Assault vehicle developed to deal with increasing riots in US urban zones.

**1994-** World Stock Crash of '94. U.S. economy teeters, then collapses.

**1995-** Kilimanjaro Massdriver begins construction, under joint agreement between Eurospace Agency and the Pan African Alliance.

**1996-** This is the generally agreed upon start of the Collapse. Weakened by the losses of the World Stock Crisis in '94, and overwhelmed by the unemployment and homelessness throughout the US, many city governments collapse or go bankrupt. Snarled in the chaos left by the Gang of Four, the federal government is totally ineffective.

Nomad Riots: By now, 1 in 6 Americans is homeless. Hundreds of thousands riot for living space throughout the US. Nomad packs begin on the West Coast, spread rapidly throughout the nation. First appearance of boostergangs.

Lawyer Purge: irate citizen lynches hundreds of criminal defense attorneys.

Martial Law established in U.S.

**1997-** Mideast Meltdown. Tensions in the Middle East escalate to nuclear exchange. Iran, Iraq, Libya, Chad and the Arab Emirates reduced to radioactive slag. World oil supply reduced by half.

**1999-** Federal Weapons Statute established.

Luna Colony established. A massdriver is

constructed to provide raw materials for orbital platforms.

Martial Law ends in U.S. Uniform Civilian Justice Code established.

**2000-** Crystal Palace space station begun at L-5.

Wasting Plague hits the U.S., Europe, killing hundreds of thousands.

**2001-** The framework for the Net is now firmly in place with the construction of the World Sat Network.

**2002-** Food Crash: Mutated plant virus wipes out Canadian, Soviet crops. U.S. crops survive due to new biological counter agent.

**2003-** Second Central American War. U.S. invades Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela. The War is a disaster which costs thousands of American lives. Eventually, the remainder of the Gang of 4 is swept away on a wave of reform.

**2004-** First cloned tissue growth in vitro. Microsutures, sterilizer fields developed.

First Corporate War: Eighteen multinationals, including EBM and Orbital Air battle for control of failing Trans-World Air.

**2005-** Cybermodem invented.

**2006-** First clone grown in vitro. It is mindless and only lives for a few hours, but this technology allows organs and limbs to be grown and stored without tissue rejection.

**2007-** Second Corporate War: Involving a number of larger firms including Petro-Chem, the dispute is over oilfields off the Southeast Asian coast.

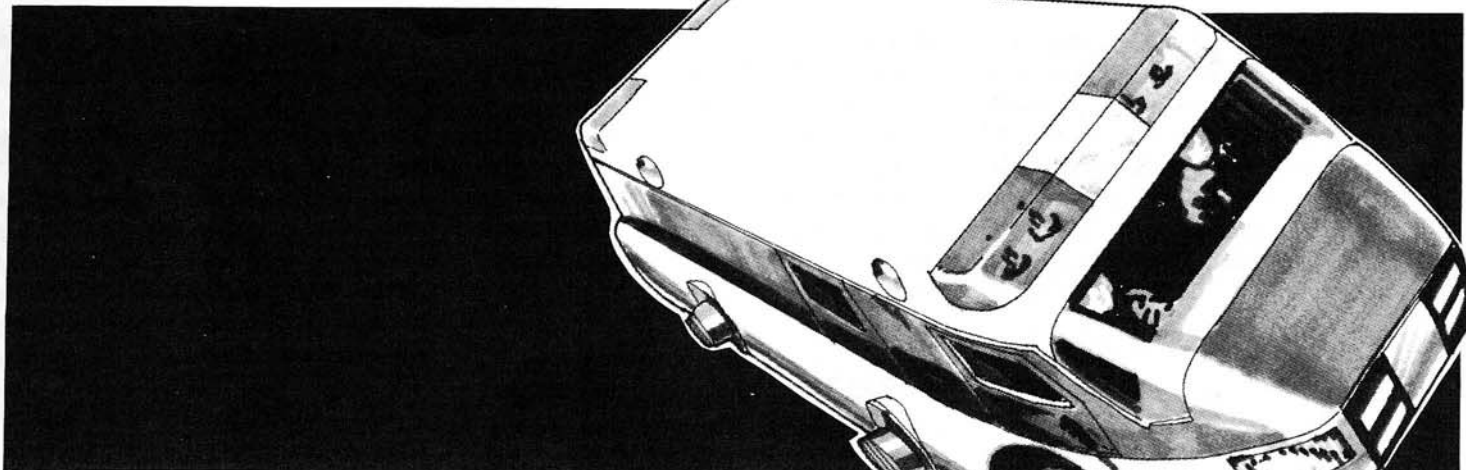
**2008-** US assault on Soviet weapons platform MIR XIII. EuroSpace agency intervenes. An orbital war begins between "Euros" and "Yanks", until Luna Colony massdriver drops a rock on Colorado Springs. An uneasy peace is reached.

**2009-** Joint Euro-Soviet-mission to Mars departs.

**2010-** End of Second Central American Conflict.

**2011-** Crystal Palace is completed. EuroSpace Agency now has a permanent hold in high orbit.

**2013-** Present



# Flashforward 2013

In the United States, twenty five years of corrupt government and economic destabilization have resulted in a nation divided--- by class, by race and by economics. By the end of the 1980's, it was evident that the nation was in trouble. Most social norms had dissolved under an all engulfing wave of competing special interest groups, media fueled fads, and an overall "me first" worldview. By 1992, the number of homeless on the streets had skyrocketed to 21 million. The technical revolution had further torn the economy apart, creating two radically divergent classes--a wealthy, technically oriented, materially acquisitive group of corporate professionals, and a down class of homeless, unskilled, blue-collar workers. The middle class was nearly eradicated. It was this dismal beginning that led to the current American landscape of 2013.

In large cities, business areas are clean, neat, well lit showcases, free of crime and poverty, controlled by powerful corporations. Ringing the central areas are the Combat Zones--decrepit, squalid suburbs and burned out ghettos teeming with booster-gangs and other violent sociopaths. The outer suburbs are also corporate-controlled zones; safe, well-guarded tracts where executives raise their families in relative security.

Throughout the Midwestern states, many small towns have been abandoned, as local farms, businesses and

banks collapsed in the wake of drought, famine and economic chaos. The farms have been bought up by huge agricorporations, and are maintained with hired workers, machine labor, and well-equipped guards. The open freeways are battlegrounds, as armed packs of Nomads travel from city to city, looting and pillaging like mechanized Visigoths.

In this bleak landscape is a bright light of hope. The upheavals of the last twenty five years have unified the poor, oppressed and angry of the nation. There are signs that the gang mentality of the early 2000s is giving way to a new movement, as *Rockers*, *Nomads*, *Solos* and *Medias* take to the streets to fight authority and oppression. Far from being finished, the United States seems to be, against all odds, coming back. But only time will tell if the so-called *Cyberpunk* revolution will succeed.

In the Eurotheatre, things are considerably better. The World Stock Exchange and the Common Market have created a stable, profitable economy in which most of the European nations participate --the exceptions are Italy, Spain and Greece--all of which suffer chronic political upheavals. Here, the international corporations also have a great deal of power, but various Euro-governments have skillfully managed to keep these business barons

under control. Only Great Britain has suffered major economic trouble--swamped by massive immigration and an antiquated technological base, it's streets are almost as explosively dangerous as the United States'.

With the massive reforms of the early 1990's (and the subsequent purge of hardliners in 1991), the Soviet Union has emerged as a strong partner in the expanding Eurotheatre. Most of Eastern Europe now enjoys an autonomy unthinkable during the days of the Cold War. Where the Soviet State is weakest is in food production. It still cannot feed it's hungry population, and it's technology lags far behind most other nations in the Eurotheatre. With continuing failure of the Party's economic and social reforms, the hardliners are once again gaining strength and a showdown between the surviving cold warriors and the liberal reformers is coming fast.

The Middle East is silent--ominously so. The Meltdown has left vast areas of Iran, Libya, Iraq, Chad and the Arab Emirates as radioactive fields of glass. Only Egypt, Syria and Israel survived intact; their aircraft were able to down the incoming suicide bombers. The majority of regional peoples have been reduced to mob rule, clustered in their blasted cities or cowering under the tyranny of a local warlord. Many have fled into the desert, to reap-

pear as warrior-tribes. Others have embraced religious fanaticism, sweeping out of the ruined Mid-East to avenge themselves with acts of terrorism and murder. Rumors of *ji-had*--the Holy War---are on the radioactive wind, although it is still unclear what form the coming war with the infidel will take this time.

From the bloodbaths of Capetown, New Africa emerged as a fractured continent of warring countries under a bewildering array of dictators, democracies and socialist states. Eventually, as the Euro-nations negotiated with Kenya to build the Kilomonjaro massdriver, many of the African nations began to see their place in the 21st century. Bargaining with manpower, raw materials, and valuable land on the critical Equatorial orbital belt, the African states established their footholds in space--nearly one third of all space construction workers are African, and the majority of spaceport facilities and construction areas are on African soil. Technology has joined Africa under one government, and the last petty dictators and tribalisms are falling fast before the lure of the stars.

In the Far East, Japan faces an age of new challenges. Out from the protective shadow of the United States, it must not only cope with its own defense in a nuclear age, but also rising competition with Korea, China and the re-organized New Phillipines. In recent years, the Japanese have changed from economic rivals and robber barons to economic supporters of the U.S. economy. But old scars from the trade wars of the 1990s die hard, and true mutual cooperation between the U.S. and Japan is a long time coming. This is further aggravated by the fact that China, a newly emerging power in its own right, has further strengthened its relations with the U.S. through the Mutual Defense Treaty of 2009.

After a lengthy war with the United States, Central America has emerged as a strong union of independent states, working under a pact of

mutual cooperation. The U.S. has been expelled from all but the Panama Canal Zone, which it holds by sheer military force against ongoing guerilla aggression. South America is a warzone of juntas, secret police, drug lords and military oppression, torn by periodic combat and revolution.

## Legal Background

The police of the 2000's are organized much as they were during the 20th century with Homicide, Vice, Burglary and Traffic Squads; about 5 men each. The most recent addition to police organization has been the addition of the Cyberpsycho Squad (also known as the Psycho Squad), whose main job is to deal with cybernetic criminals. While the average beat cop hits the Street in an armored squad car, wearing an armor jacket, helmet and carrying a smart-chipped Beretta sidearm, the Psycho Squad detail employs airogyros, AV-4's, miniguns, assault weapons and Stinger missile launchers.

City cops can patrol all areas of the city. Corporate Cops are deputized to patrol only corporate facilities. However, in areas where a large number of office areas are side by side, this effectively can turn an entire downtown region into Corporate Cop territory. Corporate cops usually are better armed and armored, and often have full Trauma Team medical coverage. They are also more vicious, sadistic and likely to shoot first--after all, they know the Corporation can cover the incident up.

### The Civilian Justice Code

Skyrocketing crime rates in the 1990's, proved that the existing legal structure was falling apart. Following the Purge of 1996, (when citizen's groups lynched hundreds of criminal defense lawyers), the Government declared martial law throughout the U.S., for a period of three years. During this time, justice was dispensed by local military courts. The amazing thing is, it worked. A death penalty for looting

brings a wonderful element of stability to a rioting neighborhood.

During this period, the Military Justice Code was the main rule of U.S. law. Its draconian standards of crime and punishment served so well that when martial law was suspended in 1999, the Government established a Uniform Civilian Criminal Justice Code in its place. Although the law is now administered by civilian governments, the Code is the guideline for all criminal procedure in the United States of 2013.

Plea bargaining (pleading guilty to a lesser charge to speed up a trial) has been eliminated. Probation is almost unheard of. The death penalty is standard for murder cases---there is a 3 month appeal process during which new evidence can be produced. Most felonies have mandatory prison terms of 5 to 10 years. Lesser crimes are covered by exile or personality adjustment.

Self defense is defined as "any instance in which the assailant can show just cause that his/her life, or the life of another party was threatened, in circumstances where a duly appointed officer of the law could not be summoned, or where it was impossible to restrain the injured party by any other means.

Theoretically, narcotics may not be possessed within the premises of the United States. However bioengineered plant diseases developed through the 1990's by the Drug Enforcement Agency wiped out 96% of the coca and opium plants in existence, making the point moot. The law also does not cover "designer drugs" such as endorphins, which are defined as medicinal.

### Punishment

The punishment for criminal actions under the Uniform Justice Code of 1997 are swift, certain and draconian. The simplest is *personality adjustment*--a process which implants an aversion to committing the crime ever again. Adjustment has some nasty side effects. including exaggerated

fears of situations and events related to the crime (such as a terror of money based on an anti-robbery adjustment).

*Exile* implants are keyed to a transmission signal broadcast thru the city phone Net. If the offender enters the city, the implant causes excruciating pain. The offender is effectively exiled from ever entering that specific city again. Repeat offenses in other cities simply cause additional city codes to be added to the implant. After enough crimes in enough cities, the offender will be unable to enter civilization again.

Prisons of the 2000's are horrendously overcrowded and deadly. After the riots of the 90's, prison authorities couldn't care less about rehabilitation--they are mostly interested in penning up society's "mad dogs" and keeping the streets clear. To cope with overcrowding, many prisons force inmates into "braindance"--they are placed in cryo tanks, wired to interface loop programs, and "shut down" for periods of two or three years. Continuous braindance creates a nightmare of unending, bland horror, making it the thing cons fear most.

The simplest method of punishment is still execution. Most states have a State Executioner who administers justice with one well placed .44 slug at point blank range. He is also empowered to hunt down escapees from Death Row.

## Weapons 2000

By 1997, even the most well-intentioned gun control statutes were buried under a wave of public protest as crime rates made America a siege state. Self-defense soon became an American lifestyle, and there was an explosive increase in light personal protection weapons.

By 1999, most gun control statutes involved 1) filling out a "carry application" allowing you to carry a concealed handgun; 2) waiting 4 days for an extensive background check

and approval, which could be refused on the basis of a criminal record or history of mental illness; and 3) paying the \$25.00 fee and having a serial number laser etched into the butt of the gun. This number is cataloged with the ballistics firing pattern of your weapon at FBI Headquarters in Washington D.C.

The Federal Weapons Statute of 1999 states that if a gun with your ID number is used in the commission of a crime, you are liable for that crime, unless you have previously reported the weapon as lost or stolen, and have had this report filed with your local police agency.

Under the provisions of the Federal Weapons Statute, it is not legal to carry submachineguns and other fully automatic weapons--possession carries a stiff 5 to 7 year mandatory prison sentence. Not that this stops anyone.

While there's a certain style in using an old model sidearm like a Colt .357 or .45, the sensible cyberpunk knows that a modern pistol makes a good backup. Since the introduction of the Glock 17 automatic in the mid-1980's, most major handgun manufacturers now produce polymer resin pistols in a variety of calibers.

The most ubiquitous of these is the Federated Arms X-22 and X-38 series, a line of polymer plastic handguns\*. Manufactured in a variety of bright, designer colors, the so-called "Polymer One-shot" carries an easy to load 6 round clip of either .22 long or .38 ammunition, retails at \$50.00, and is available in most sporting goods stores. It combines practicality, durability and style in a potent little package. The new *Cyberteem*<sup>TM</sup> line includes airbrushed casings with colorful shapes and artwork molded right in--the perfect gift for the young consumer interested in personal defense.

\*use stats for Glock 17

## Transportation

Surprise, surprise. Contrary to expectations, the year 2000 has not yield-

ed any staggering new developments in transportation. Years of economic strife and civil unrest have discouraged research into new ways to travel--in fact, the very act of travel has become very restricted. Expect the world of 2013 to be much like the 20th century--a network of crowded freeways, packed trains, and swarming airports.

**Automobile** (manufactured by Ford-Nissan, New American Motor, Toyo-Chevrolet, Yugo-Marakovka, BMW, Mercedes, etc.)

**Powerplant:** Alcohol or methane fueled internal combustion

**Groundspeed:** 100 to 160mph

**Structural Damage Points:** 50. Armored cars may have up to 30 SP of armor on all surfaces including windows.

There haven't been any major changes in automobiles since the 1980's--externally. Most cars are still basically a box on wheels, with smooth or hard edges. The *Cyberpunk* ethos being, "if it works, keep it till it doesn't work." In the cash poor environment of the 2000's, auto manufacturers have kept to conservative, unimaginative designs, so that by today, the average family car is little changed from its practically antique Ford or Toyota roots.

With the extremely high price of petroleum, almost all cars of the 2000's are powered by tanks of liquified methane or meta-alcohol fuels such as "CHOOH-2." Electric cars are very rare. Control systems are roughly like those of the late 20th century employing a few more digital displays and pushbutton controls.

The biggest change has come with the introduction of cybernetic control systems. These employ servos at the wheels, throttle and transmission, which are controlled by a modified cybermodem in the dash. The driver simply "studs" into the cybermodem and thinks the car through the motions. Cybervehicles are relatively uncommon--the upgrading price is steep, and the lack of external controls renders the vehicle useless to

anyone but a cybered driver. So far, no major manufacturer has produced a purely cyber-driven automobile, although there are several after-market firms which will convert a standard car to cyber control.

#### **Bell Boeing V-22B Osprey**

Powerplant: Allison 937 Gas Turbine

Performance: Max speed=275 knots.

Range=600 miles

Structural Damage Points: 200 (Ospreys are not armored).

The Osprey mounts two large, wide propped engine nacelles at the ends of a long, high lift wing. The engines can be tilted from a forward facing direction to a vertical position, allowing the aircraft to take off and hover vertically. The wings can be

hicles between city centers and hub airports, or as corporate aircraft operating from rooftop pads atop headquarters skyscrapers. Small versions such as Cessna's AE-800 Featherlite are popular light aircraft throughout the world, allowing flight operations in even the most remote and unprepared sites.

#### **Light Rail Lev Train**

Numerous Manufacturers

Powerplant: Electric third rail inductance field.

Groundspeed: 200 mph.

Structural Damage Points: 80 per car of train.

Superconductor magnets have made it possible to build extremely cheap and durable "levitation trains." Rid-

50¢ per station passed; a trip passing through three stations, for example, would cost \$1.50. Tickets may be purchased from automatic ticket machines, using credit cards or cash. These machines are located in the stations themselves and in local convenience store outlets.

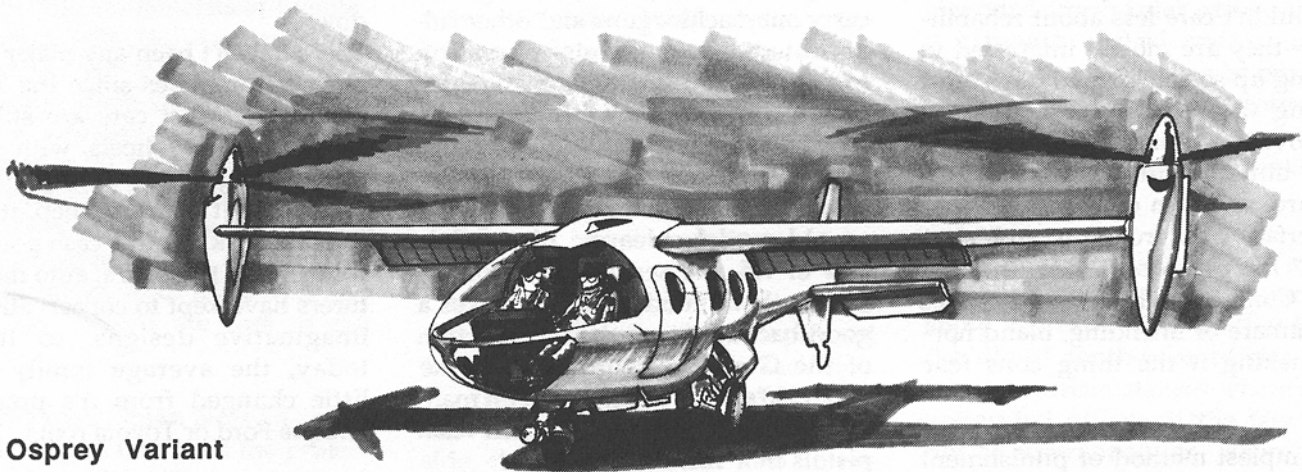
#### **Bell F-152 Airogyro**

Powerplant: one Bell-Mazda 2600 rotary aircraft engine.

Performance: Max airspeed: 300 mph. Operational radius: 50 miles.

Structural Damage Points: 40

The riots of the late 90's required new tactics for operating in urban areas. Chief among these was the introduction of light, one man helicopters or airogyros. The F-152 is



**Osprey Variant**

folded back along the body for easy storage, making the Osprey a perfect vehicle to work from rooftop airpads and unprepared airstrips.

A revolutionary concept when it was unveiled in 1988, the Osprey tilt rotor aircraft has become a standard vehicle throughout the 2000's. The military version served with distinction throughout the riots of the 90's and the Central American Conflicts. Various civilian manufacturers (Cessna, Lear, Avionica) have licensed the original Boeing design and applied it to smaller commercial and business applications. The Lear Tiltjet even applies the Osprey principles to a tiltwinged turbojet version.

Ospreys can be found as commuter ve-

ing on magnetic cushions, these "levs" have become one of the major transportation resources in the 2000's. Financed by Corporations or city governments, they are present in most major cities.

Levs are usually underground within the city limits, running on high pillars out in the suburbs. Usually one line, headed out to the Corporate suburbs, is sealed off and requires an entry code or pass to get into that station. Corporate lev stations are always clean, well lit, and well guarded by corporate security. City lev-stations are usually not up to these standards, although most cities run police patrols on the line to control crime and vandalism.

Lev-tickets are charged at a rate of

currently used by police units, Corporate defense teams, Solo assault operations teams and drug-running gangs. An unarmed version, known as the Bell-15, is a popular recreational vehicle.

#### **McDonnell-Douglas AV-4 Tactical Urban Assault Vehicle**

Powerplant: one Rolls-Royce Pegasus II Vectored Thrust Turbofan (21,180 lbs thrust)

Performance: Max airspeed: 350 mph. Operational radius: 400 miles.

Structural Damage Points: 100. Most AV-4s are armored to an SP of 40.

The nearest thing to a science fiction jet-car, the AV-4 Tac Vehicle was developed as a light assault aircraft

capable of operation in close urban areas where rotary and tiltwing aircraft cannot penetrate. Short, bulbous, and equipped with only rudimentary maneuver wings, the AV-4 has the aerodynamic characteristics of a rock, relying on the brute force of its huge jet engine to keep it aloft (the original Pegasus engine lifted a 19,550 lb Harrier jumpjet, while a fully loaded AV-4 weighs about 8,600 lbs).

The AV-4 is used by police or corporate troops for urban assaults (using 2 belly mounted GAU-12U minigun pods). They are also used as emergency vehicles--specifically by the Trauma Team organizations--or as corporate vehicles for special deliveries and meetings.

## Communications

### Letters

A stamp in 2013 costs 75¢. There are usually two deliveries--once in the morning at 10:00 a.m. and once in the afternoon at 3:00 p.m. Letters are normally used for personal correspondence, or in regions where Fax machines are not available.

### Fax

This is the letterwriting mode of the future. Fax terminals are located in most corporate offices, post offices, computer shops, malls and convenience stores. You may type your letter in using the keyboard provided, have it scanned from your own laser disk, or use the built in scanner to "read" any typed letter. The faxed copy is then transmitted by wire to a local post office in your destination area, where it is automatically typed off, inserted into an envelope, and delivered by letter carrier to the mailbox. Fax copies may also be sent directly to a Fax receiver at your destination. Fax letters costs \$1.00 per page.

### Cellular Phones

The phone of the future is mobile and cordless, allowing the cyberpunk on the go to talk from his car, office, or even on the street. These "cellular" phones operate by using a

series of stationary transceivers which pick up your phone signal and relay it into the regular phone Net. Calls can be made not only from within the city, but also long distance (with a Long Distance service of your choice) all over the world and even into orbit.

Cellular phones come in a variety of brands and styles, although most are about the size of a hand held walky-talky. They operate on rechargeable batteries good for about 12 hours, recharging from a wall socket in 6 hours. Brand names include Magnavox, NEC, Okidata, GE and Radio Shack. Prices range from \$400.00 for an inexpensive model, to \$3,000.00 for models with multiple lines, built in hold-buttons and memory-autodial.



Like other phones, you must pay a monthly service charge. Baseline rates are \$40.00 per month plus 20¢ per minute for local calls. Long Distance varies--a call from Los Angeles to New York might cost @\$2.00 per minute during daylight business hours, \$1.50 for evening hours.

Cell phones cannot transmit cybermodem signals, making them the one area of the Net unreachable by Netrunning. Cell phones also have a limit on how far they can operate outside of the city limits; about 20 miles.

### Screamsheets (newspapers)

To stay competitive with television, most newspapers now use Fax technology. Entire pages are typeset and laid out by computer, photos scanned into places, and the entire newspaper reduced to digital code. This code is transmitted to hundreds of newspaper boxes all over the area. The newsboxes reassemble the code and print the paper (using high speed xer-

ography) on the spot. The result is a slick, flimsy newspaper known in streetslang as a *screamsheet*.

Screamsheets have many advantages over previous newspapers. You can dial the newsbox to print only the sections of the paper you want, paying 1¢ per page printed. New editions can be compiled in hours, allowing the public to keep abreast of a story even as it happens (although most screamsheets are updated at 6:00 a.m., 12:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.).

### Television & Radio

An all pervasive force in 2013, television has moved into the realm of total entertainment. One hundred and eighty one channels now crowd the airwaves, as well as various cable and subscriber channels. These cover everything from sports, news, music video, old movies, foreign shows, religious programming, debate, erotic and adult programming, business news and weather. In addition, there are at least 200,000 radio stations throughout the Western world.

In the Euro and Asian theaters, most programming is state-controlled; the BBC in Great Britain, and NGK TV in Japan, for example. In the United States, three privately owned entertainment networks predominate: 21st Century Broadcasting Network (TBN), World Broadcasting Network (WBN) and Network News 54. These networks are the broadcast divisions of three massive entertainment conglomerates, each producing records, tapes, videos, movies and books for the masses. The product is bland, mindless, and caters to the lowest possible denominator.

In addition to network programming, there are satellite feeds, featuring programming from around the world. There are also a large number of "pirate" TV stations, operating out of hidden stations and through cable and satellite patchups. These are often a major source of news and information untainted by corporate and government interference.



# Getting Cyberpunk

## Assorted Tips and tricks for doing the Cyberpunk Genre

*So how do I run this game?*

Glad you asked. *Cyberpunk* is a challenge for even an experienced Referee, in that you must create the right atmosphere of grunginess, sleek technology and pervasive paranoia throughout your entire game. The *Cyberpunk* environment is almost always exclusively urban. It's landscape is a maze of towering skyscrapers, burned out ruins, dingy tenements and dangerous alleyways. In short, any major city in the world at about 2:30 in the morning when the lowlives come out in force.

The urban environment is critical to your *Cyberpunk* world. Whether you use our Night City or create your own, remember that your setting has to have all the right elements. There should be garbage-strewn alleyways. There should be bodies lying in the gutters. There should be wild-eyed lunatics, staggering through pre-dawn streets, muttering darkly and clutching sharp knives. Taxis won't stop in the Combat Zones. There are firefights at the streetcorner as the local gangs slug it out. Players should find their apartments regularly broken into, their cars vandalized, their property stolen. Crossing town should be like crossing a battlefield, filled with looters, riots, crazies and muggers.

And it always rains. Every day should be grim, gloomy and overcast. The stars never come out. The sun never shines. There are no singing birds, laughing children. The last bird died in 2008 and the kids are grown in vats. The ozone layer decayed, the greenhouse effect took over, the sky is full of hydrocarbons and the ocean full of sludge. Nice place.

Paranoia is important in a *Cyberpunk* run. Players shouldn't be able to tell who are the good guys and who are the bad just by looking at them. Choices between sides should be ambiguous--there should be no clear cut sense of good and evil, much like real life. Sworn enemies may be thrown together without notice or preparation. Heroes may have to do something illegal or distasteful to accomplish something good; villains may have to do a little good once in a while. It's the breaks.

Your world should have staggering contrasts. In the glittering citadels of the rich, there should be fine food, expensive vices, and beautiful scenery. On the Street,

things should be cold, hungry and desperate. There's no middle ground between the haves and have nots. It's all or nothing.

First trick to running *Cyberpunk*: **Immerse yourself in the genre.** We've given you a start with the story *Never Fade Away*--it should give you the style of speech, the urban feel, and the hard edged realities of the *Cyberpunk* world. But you should also hit the local video-store, the library and the record shops for source material. We've included a bibliography of places to start.

Second trick to running *Cyberpunk*: **Play hard and fast.** You should not be afraid to kill off player characters. You should constantly be getting them into fights, traps, betrayals and other soap operas. There should be no one they can trust entirely, no place that's absolutely safe. Never let 'em rest. This doesn't mean you shouldn't play fair. But you should always play for keeps. If they cache weapons somewhere, steal them. If they stop for a rest, mug them. If they can't handle the pressure, they shouldn't be playing *Cyberpunk*. Send them back to that nice roleplaying game with the happy elves and the singing birds. We've given you a great encounters table which we suggest you use everytime the action drags.

Third trick to running *Cyberpunk*: **Atmosphere.** Get out your heaviest rock tapes and play them during your run. Encourage your players to wear leather and mirrorshades. Adopt the slang and invent your own. Replace all the lights in your room with dim blue bulbs. This is the dark future here; and it can't be accurately portrayed in a brightly lit room with milk and cookies on the table.

Fourth and last trick to running *Cyberpunk*: **Teams.** First thing, you'll notice--*Cyberpunk* groups are not social. The players will have no reason to trust anyone, and the conventional reasons (stop evil, kill monsters) for an adventuring party won't work. A bar isn't a place to meet new adventurers--it's a place to scope out potential victims. Parties are more likely to kill each other in a firefight than divide the spoils fairly.

For this reason, you'll need a more solid "hook" on which to hang a *Cyberpunk* adventure. Our hook is the Team. A Team is a group of people who are already

thrown together by Fate in some way which forces them to co-operate. They don't have to like each other, but they have to work together. Besides giving the party a springboard from which to work, the Team also makes the adventure easier to run. Players can be given assignments from a "higher power", or the entire group can be faced with a problem which requires co-operation to solve. The group stays together or it dies. Simple.

We've given you a number of Teams which might naturally evolve in the *Cyberpunk* world of 2013. Each proposes a good mix of character roles and offers many ways in which all the players can become equally involved.

#### **Corporate Teams**

Corporate teams are groups that are oriented around a specific corporation, working together to accomplish the company's goals. The main base of operations are the corporation's offices or security areas. A good corporate team might consist of one or more Corps (an executive and an assistant), a Netrunner (who runs the teams intrusion and computer systems), a Fixer (who deals with the team's Street contacts), a Tech (either medical or mechanical), and two to three Solos (who handle the combat).

#### **Bands**

Bands are any group of Rockerboys who have gotten together to play music. The band travels from place to place, getting into trouble at each new gig, holding concerts and raising hell. The main base of operations can be a practice hall, a club, or a road bus. There may be any number of Rockers in the band itself (although three to four is considered best). In addition, there will be at least one Fixer (who acts as manager), a possible Techie (to handle equipment needs), and several Solos (who are both bodyguards and roadies). Various other slots such as groupies and tour personnel can be Nomads, Corporates (playing record execs), and Medias (as rock-reporters or reviewers).

#### **Trauma Teams**

Trauma Teams are groups of licenced paramedics who patrol the city looking for accident victims. They operate from an AV-4 Urban Assault Vehicle, redesigned into an ambulance configuration and armed with a belly mounted minigun. A typical Trauma Team would include a driver (Corporate, Fixer or Solo, although Nomad is best), one or more Medtechies, and two or more Solos acting as "security". The team may also have a Dispatcher (Corp or Fixer) in charge of sending them on their missions. A Media might also tag along with the team, writing stories about their adventures.

#### **Mercenaries**

Mercs are often hired throughout the *Cyberpunk* world. A typical merc group could include at least one Fixer (to handle contracts), one Netrunner (to handle security systems, computer assault, etc.), one Techie (for weapons), one Medtechie (for wounded), and any combination of Solos or Nomads (as grunt soldiers). It wouldn't be out of line to have a Media there, writing as a war correspondent. A merc group could operate out of a club, a bar, or a well-hidden paramilitary basecamp.

#### **Gangs**

Gangs and countergangs are usually the enemy in *Cyberpunk*. But why not turn the tables? Gangs can also be created

for positive purposes--neighborhood defense, to stop other more violent gangs, or to resist a major invasion by Government or the Corps. In this context, you could look at Robin Hood or the WWII Resistance as gangs. A typical Gang would have lots of Solos, Nomads and Fixers. There might be a Medtechie or Techie around, and possibly even a Corporate if the gang is one of those controlled by a covert organization. A Media could be covering the gang from the "Street" angle. Gangs operate out of clubs, bars and deserted buildings.

#### **Nomad Packs**

Nomad packs are natural Teams---they are already together in one group, and everyone knows each other. A good Nomad Pack could include a few Fixers (to handle in-town negotiations), a Netrunner (who handles the Pack's intelligence work), a mixture of Techies and Medtechies, and any number of Nomads and Solos. The Pack operates from the Caravan--an assemblage of RV's, trailers, busses and cars moving across the blasted landscape of freeway America. The Pack members could travel with the main Caravan, or as Scouts travelling ahead in their own vehicles.

#### **Cops**

The Cop team operates out of a seedy, heavily-fortified police station. They might include a few Fixers on the Vice Squad, a Netrunner on Counter Intelligence, a Captain (Corporate) who handles connections with the City Government, and a large number of grunt Cops. Don't forget a few maddened Solos on the Psycho Squad. Cop teams are better than most, as they allow the Referee to break the team into smaller groups of "partners" if needed. A Media might also choose to follow the Cop team, looking for hot stories on the crime beat.

#### **Media Teams**

Media teams go anywhere, do anything to get the story. A Media team can operate out of a TV or radio station, a newspaper office, or even a major network news bureau. A good Media team might include two or three Medias (as hard-hitting reporters), a Netrunner (running communications, information gathering, and computer snooping), a Techie for the equipment, and a couple Solos or Nomads to provide muscle and protection. A good newsroom also will have at least one harried Corporate who has to cover the team with the bosses upstairs.

**Don't give up your day job:** Any one of these Teams can fit a character role that isn't described. A low level Rockerboy could moonlight as a Trauma Teamer while waiting for that big score. A Netrunner might do a little time with a Corporate team, while sneaking into the Company mainframe at night. A Nomad might do almost anything to earn money while his Pack is in town. In these cases, the main character role should be treated as an interest, which may become more important to the team as time passes.

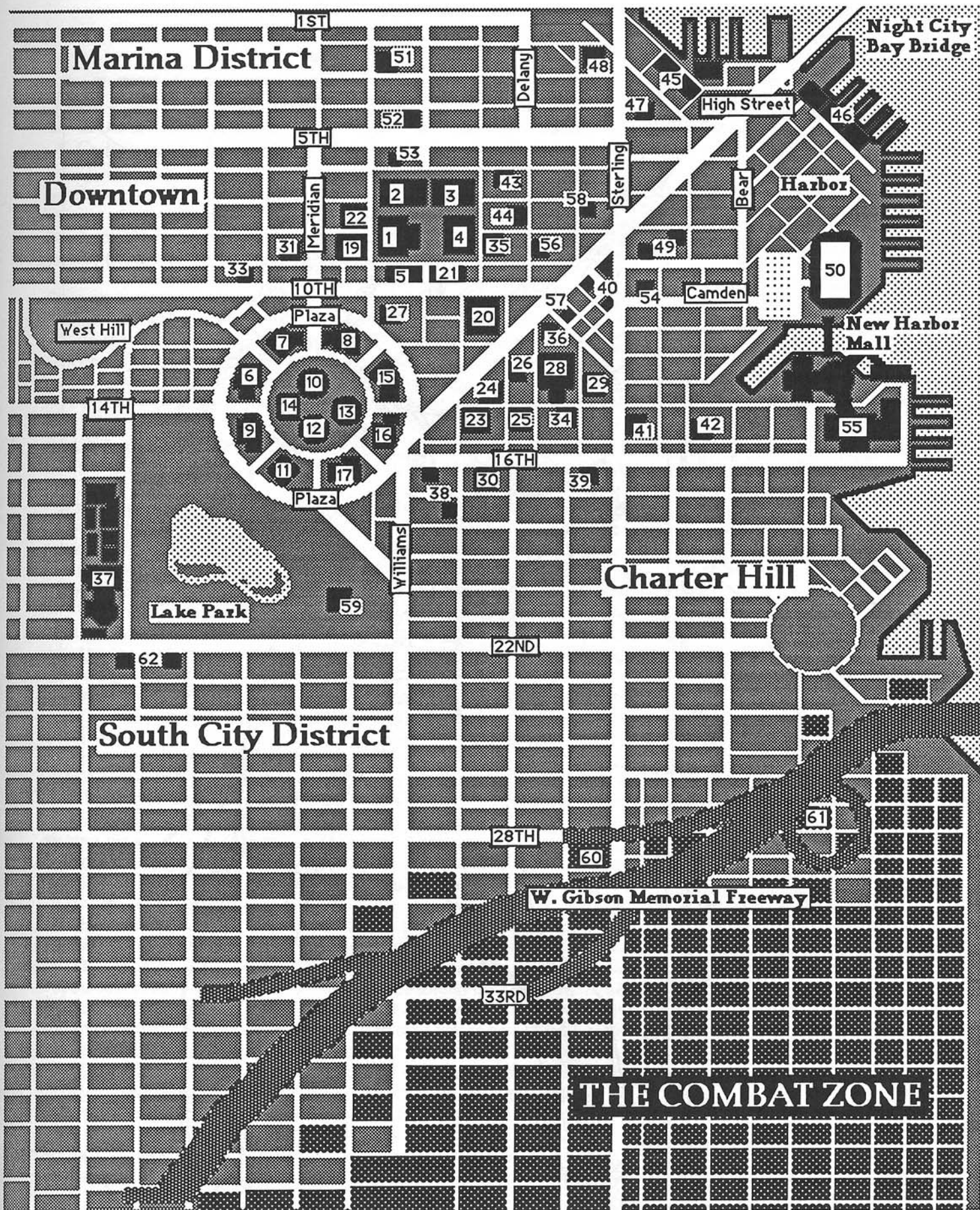
## **Night City**

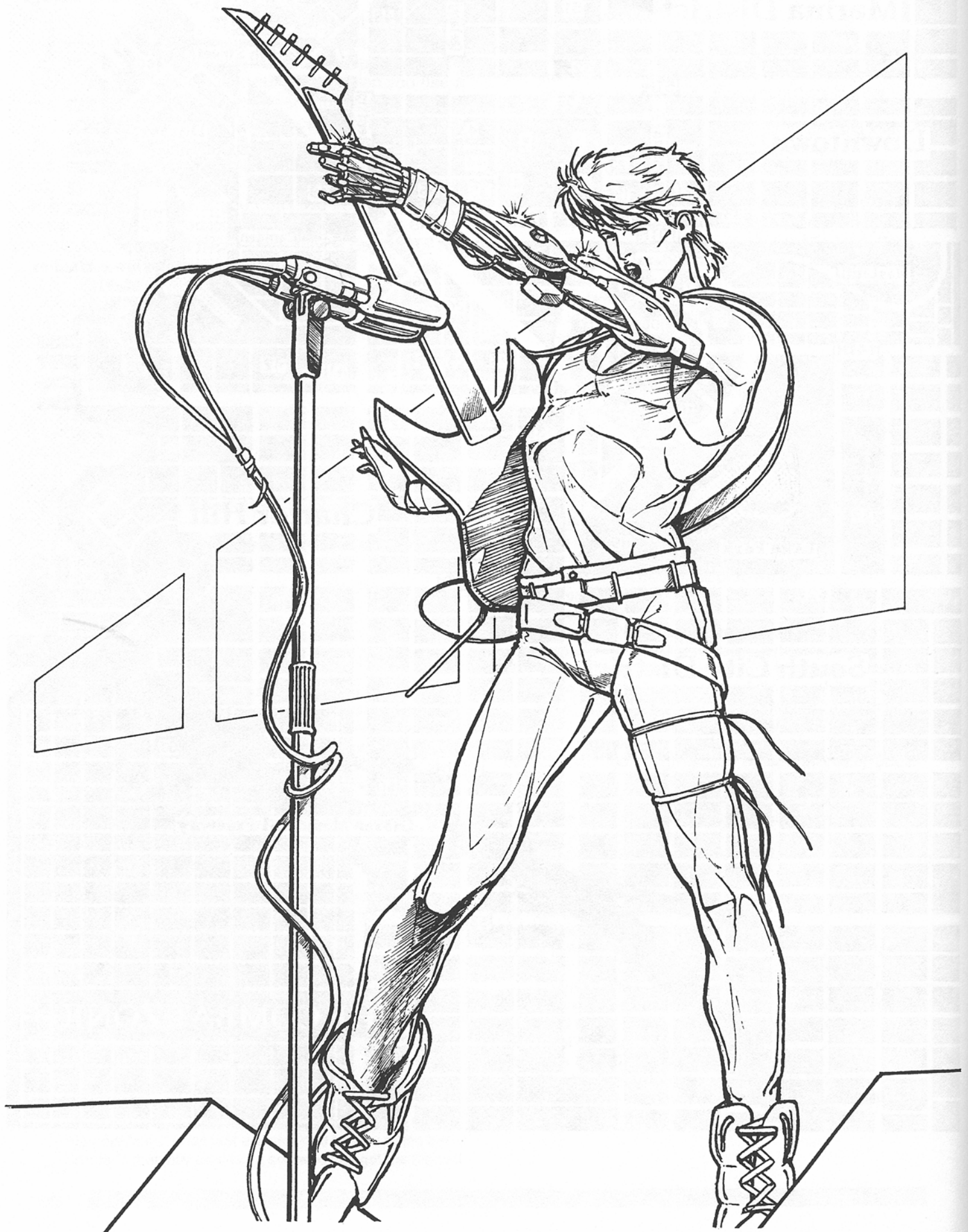
Night City is a modern urban environment, complete with dark streets, filthy alleys and rowdy clubs. Where is it located? What's its real name? Not important. Night City is any big city in the world--it could be yours--late night and up against the wall. The important thing about

Night City is the *feel*, not the substance. It should be a place that the Referee has an immediate grasp of, allowing him to give his descriptions the proper "you are there" ambiance. Night City plays best when you use a city that the players are somewhat familiar with; the recognition of street names and places juxtaposed with boostergangs and hovering assault vehicles will make the 21st century even stranger than fiction.

But we realize some of you don't live in a major urban area. For those of you who can't just use a map of your home town, here's a micro Night City to begin your adventures.

- 1 City Hall
- 2 City Library
- 3 City Museum
- 4 Hall of Justice
- 5 Marcini's: A large, expensive department store where you can find almost any luxury item.
- 6 Raven Microcyb
- 7 Microtech
- 8 Arasaka Tower
- 9 Eurobusiness Machines
- 10 Petrochem
- 11 Network 54 offices
- 12 Plaza Business Tower (96 stories of assorted businesses)
- 13 West City Tower (88 stories of assorted businesses)
- 14 Infocomp
- 15 WNS offices
- 16 Orbital Air offices
- 17 Merrill, Asukaga & Finch
- 18 The Twilight Zone
- 19 1st CitiBank
- 20 Euro-Worldbank
- 21 Grandmill's (large, expensive department store)
- 22 Totentanz: When the owner of this bar named his bar Deathdance, he didn't know how right he would be. A dance hall/bar housed on the top floor of an old skyscraper, this bar is well known for a place to find boostergangs. They all seem to congregate here, but they don't come to dance for the pleasure of it. It's considered a bad night if the body count is under twenty.
- 23 WorldSat Communications
- 24 Hotel Hamilton: A fairly modern hotel, known for its excellent security.
- 25 Highcourt Plaza Hotel: A very classy hotel featuring glass elevators, excellent service, and a 1920's decor.
- 26 Trauma Team™ Offices
- 27 Industrial Park
- 28 City Medical Center
- 29 REO Meatwagon Offices
- 30 Atlantis: A classic "fern bar", known as a hangout for Corporates and Solos looking for jobs.
- 31 Jesse James' Non-Kosher Deli: While this may sound like an ideal place to eat, no food is ever served here. The "Deli" is a bar that was constructed in an old police station. Due to several "unforseen" accidents, you must register your personal weapons at the door and use the "safe" ones that are provided for you at the bar. There is a nightly contest to see who can get the highest
- body count in five minutes.
- 32 The Outer Limits
- 33 Rainbow Nights: Rainbow Nights is more of a dance club than a bar. Its main attraction is a big dance floor that is almost always crowded. Every night there is a live band, usually a bunch of no names, but they occasionally draw big names like Johnny Silverhand and Kerry Eurodyne, but only under different names.
- 34 Medical Technologies (a body bank)
- 35 City Police Precinct #1
- 36 Short Circuit: The Short Circuit is one of many bars in Night City. Like most of them, this bar has its regulars, who seem to mostly be Netrunners and Techies. Unbeknownst to most of the city, however, Livewire, one of the most renowned Netrunners, has a shop in a back room of the bar where he buys and sells programs for use in the Net. In addition to his trading of programs, Livewire is also adept at creating his own programs, or ones that other people order.
- 37 City College
- 38 Savage Doc's (a ripperdoc joint)
- 39 City Police Precinct #3
- 40 Night Owl: One of the few bars that is open all night. This is a heavy security, no-nonsense bar. You come here to drink when nothing else is open.
- 41 West City Bank
- 42 Crisis Medical Center: a no-questions-asked medical center for fast patchups.
- 43 Café Chrome: a favorite Rocker hangout, complete with 50's retro decor and jukebox.
- 44 MetalStrom: A dangerous Chromer bar
- 45 Warehouses
- 46 Warehouses
- 47 Medicross Preservation : an illicit body bank, not too particular about I.D.'s or death certificates.
- 48 The Slammer: Well known among boostergangs as a place to settle disputes peacefully. If that doesn't work, the arena is there to settle them violently. The owner, Suds Joliet, also runs betting booths and occasionally rents out the arena for other events.
- 49 Camden Court: High security condos favored by Solos, Corps. Rent is \$3,000.00 a month.
- 50 McCartney Field Stadium: main concert venue and home of the Night City Rangers, the local football team.
- 51 City Police Precinct #2
- 52 Wing Chang: exclusive chinese restaurant.
- 53 Le Baguette: very trendy French cuisine.
- 54 Hari Kiri Sushi Bar
- 55 New Harbor Shopping Mall
- 56 Grand Illusion (dance club)
- 57 The Afterlife: This bar is located in an old mortuary in Night City. Consisting of three rooms, The Ante-Chamber, the Crypt, and Hades, this bar is a favorite among solos that are currently between jobs. If you need to find armed help, this is the place to go.
- 58 Night City Fire Station #1
- 59 Lake Park Bandstand
- 60 28th St. Park (contested Boostergang turf)
- 61 28th Street Underpass (a Boostergang meeting spot)
- 62 Night City Fire Station #2





# NEVER FADE AWAY

## A Cyberpunk Adventure

He's coming out of the Hammer, about midnight, and he sees them. Three punks, mohawks bright and bristly with reflected neon, wearing high-collared jackets; gang colors. "Yo! Rockerboy!" one of them yells, "Good show! Good noise!" Johnny Silverhand waves absently. Fans. They're right; the gig was good. He'd rarely been better. But the shows over.

They start walking towards him. One waves a bottle; the light strikes oily yellow tequila sloshing to and fro. "Yo, Silver-rocker!" he says. The smaller one, with the face scarred in African tribal tattoos. "Join us! Share some! Fair price for a good gig, eh?" The distance is closing; Johnny steers Alt, his girlfriend, to his bad side. The one without the Hand. "Hey, Icebrothers," he says, noting the gang's colors and speaking in a temporizing tone. "Your offer's solid, but it's been a long gig. I'm nearly flatlined as it is. How 'bout a replay, next night?" By that time, they're almost on him. He lets the 9mm Walther drop from the spring holster, settling into the Hand. Probably nothing, he thinks.

"Yeah. Replay next night!," the big one says enthusiastically, and that's when they hit him. This fast, they're a blur. The Walther booms in the close confines of the alley; whines as spent rounds ricochet off into nowhere. There is a metallic "snick" as the smaller punk brings up his arm--light reflects off the fistfull of razors that pretends to be a hand; then an excruciating impact lifts Johnny off the ground. Blood sprays over wet concrete. Silverhand hits with a bone wrenching impact. His pale eyes stare blankly at the sky. Alt's terrified screams recede swiftly into the dark. Sixty to zero in eight seconds flat.

Johnny comes to. There's something like broken glass in his guts. Red fire blots out the cool blue neon. He rolls over in a pool of something greasy. Blood. His.

A cat topples off the dumpster, picking a cautious pattern around his body. No fool, this cat. A survivor. Not going to get involved. It's eyes are tiny red LEDs moving upalley; Johnny watches it. Smug SOB, he thinks. And closes his eyes. *Alt...*he thinks, fading out.

Behind his eyelids, red digitals feebly clock out his remaining moments. Bio-clock running down. Cars whispering past on the filthy, rain-wet street beyond. A Trauma Team ambulance in the distance, siren screaming. But not for him. He's checking out.

He stares blankly up at the flat black ceiling of the city. Overhead, there's the shimmer of distant heat lightning interacting with the pink actinic glow of the City lights. The stars look painted in. A VTOL passes overhead, giant propblades thrashing the night. Johnny tries reaching up to it. He can see the Hand etched against the sky; slick, superchrome winking back at him. He balls the Hand that is his trademark into a chromed fist, servos clicking in one by one. He thrusts it into the gaping belly wound, gasping at the shocking pain. Somehow, he gets to his feet; staggers to the alleyway. He leans his feverish face against the cool, wet bricks. He makes a decision. He's not going to die. *They're* going to die. Closing his eyes, he pitches forward into the streak of passing traffic blur.

Something stops him. Hands firmly grapple him, holding him up. Silverhand has just enough strength to open his eyes. There's a face looking intently at him, thin, bearded. "Lord Almighty", the face says. "They really *did* you, didn't they?"

Fade to black.

*Never Fade Away* is the story of twenty four hours in the life of Johnny Silverhand, a famous Rockerboy suddenly catapulted into a deadly cat and mouse game with a sinister Corporate foe. As the *Cyberpunk* genre is mostly literary, it seems fitting that we introduce you to *Cyberpunk* roleplaying the same way.

*Never Fade Away* is primarily a story; however, we've made it easy to actually run it as an adventure as well. In these side-bars, you'll find notes on key characters in the story, maps of most important locations, data on weapons and combat, and ideas for using the story as a springboard to the adventure.

We suggest you begin your players as characters in the upcoming scene in the Atlantis bar, hired by Johnny and his friends to help them get his girlfriend Alt back. Or your players may want to play one of the NPC's from the story.

Other Hot Cyberpunk sources you might want to check out for ideas include:

### Books

Neuromancer by William Gibson  
Count Zero by William Gibson  
Burning Chrome by William Gibson  
Hardwired by Walter J. Williams  
Voice of the Whirlwind by Walter J. Williams  
The Artificial Kid by Bruce Sterling  
Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology by Bruce Sterling  
Shockwave Rider by John Brunner  
When Gravity Fails by G. Alex Effinger  
Eclipse by John Shirley

### Movies & TV

Blade Runner  
Terminator  
Repo Man  
Max Headroom  
Mad Max  
Alien/Aliens  
Liquid Sky  
Overdrawn at the Memory Bank



### Johnny Silverhand Rockerboy

Johnny is the leader of the top band Samurai. He's known for his musical skill, his compelling songs, and a history of trashed relationships. As well as being a Rockerboy, Johnny fought as a cybergrunt in the War.

INT=7 REF=8 CL=8 MA=7

BODY= Average

Cybernetics: Chromed cyberarm with recorder. 2 cyberoptics with IR, Low Lite, Enhancement. Boosted Reflexes.

**Important Skills:** Charismatic Leader +10, Pistol +6, Rifle +4, Guitar +9, Sing +7, Compose +10, Athletics +6, Notice +6, Seduction +8.

## TRAUMA WARD

Something is screaming when Johnny wakes up. Fine. Just as long as it isn't him. He must have missed the ambulance ride to the hospital, but here in the trauma ward he can hear the sound of jet engines. That's the screaming. It mounts higher and higher, while the ward fills with warm air and the smell of ozone. From his stretcher, he can see the bulky AV-4 vehicle spin on it's fans and hurtle upwards. The din dies down and he can hear screaming for real all around him; casualties of the regular firefights around the City.

The doctor puts him back together. The same doctor who did his transparent Kiroshi eyes; his trademark silver hand. The same doctor who "plugged" him for interface and installed the software chips in the back of his skull. Johnny considers taking out a service contract.

Microsurgical waldoes ripcut through the perforated guts, swabbing, tying off, prepping. The doctor stitches in three feet of glistening wet, tank-grown intestine; plugs the punch holes with synthetic skin and muscle. Airhypoos inject the area with speeddrugs, fasthealers, endorphins and antibacterials. Microscopic stitches hum off the serrated teeth of a mini-closer, bonding flesh together almost as well as the original. In a month or two, there won't even be a scar. Let's hear it for newtech.

The doctor's hands are quick and sure. He has done this a thousand times. He has a German accent. "Ach...Johnny..Johnny" he says, over and over as he works. Over his head, the sterilizer lamps glitter like a an insect's multifaceted eyes. "Johnny...When are you going to give this up?" says the doctor.

When it ends, thinks Silverhand, from the fog of the dorpha and general anesthetics. "Johnny," says the doctor sadly. Silverhand is a second son to him. His first son was Johnny's best friend. His first son was killed in an intercorporate war eight years ago. No man should lose more than one son in a lifetime.

Thanks, thinks Johnny. I owe you one, again.

His alleyway benefactor is named Thompson; a thin, reedy type, wearing an armor jack trenchcoat three sizes too large. He packs no visible hardware. But a minicam mount straddles his head like an oversized headphone; a mike loops in front of his mouth, the camera itself coming around the right side of his skull and hardwiring into a startlingly bright green cyberoptic. He's a Media; a one man team of cameraman and reporter, direct feeding to some mediacorp downline. "Hey, Rocker", he says, leaning over the table as Silverhand recovers under the sterilizer beams.

"Ready for a little vengeance?"

## THE NAMING OF NAMES

Johnny pulls on a red T-shirt. The shirt has the logo of his lastest band, *Samurai*. The shirt drags over the freshly stapled wound; hangs up on the bandages. He curses in Japanese. He pulls an armor jacket over his shoulders. He pulls the autoshotgun out of his battered bedroom dresser, checking the load and weight. He slips it carefully into the worn under-arm holster, under the jacket. He stuffs shiriken into pockets on the outside of the jacket. He picks up the heavy H & K smartgun and slides it into his back holster. There is a fury behind glittering pale eyes. "So," he says. "Tell me."

Thompson leans back into the wall, body bracing against Johnny's intensity. He grins; takes a slug of Silverhand's tequila. "They didn't want you. They wanted her. She's an extraction. Business as usual."

Johnny stops. With a surge of relief, he realizes that Alt probably *isn't* dead in an alley somewhere. He gathers up a ragged handful of shells and begins to stuff-load the H&K's spare clip. Only the trembling of his hand--the meat hand-- betrays any emotion. "So why'd they do me?" he asks.

"You was home", grins Thompson. It's an old line. They both smile like

friendly sharks. Thompson stops smiling. "They wanted you flatlined so it'd look like a gang job. Boostergang sees the high and mighty Mister John Silverhand out strolling with his input; decides to slash him a bit. You go down, they grab her; they're gone like vapor. Real convenient when the cops find her body in an alley 'bout a week later. They'll have motives--lots of ugly motives, but they'll be those of high-powered boosters, not pros."

"Pros." Silverhand finishes loading the second clip. He stuffs the remaining shells in the armorjack's pockets. You can never have enough ammo.

"Yeah, pros." repeats Thompson. "You got shredded for fine, bro. At least a clean ten thousand Eurobucks of hardware on those boys. The speed they hit you with took maybe a seventy percent reflex boost, and those were custom rippers. The type that fold out along the fists. That sort of hardware isn't something you pick up on the Street."

"You saw them on me?"

Thompson's eyes are cold, slate-like. You could write anything you wanted in them. "Get real," he grates. "These were pros. If I'd jumped in, we'd both be dead." The eyes appraise him. "You've been off the Street too long, Rocker. You think everyone has a nice agent, a couple Solos covering their butts, and a comfy apartment like this somewhere. I let you take it, because I knew it would take at least five minutes for you to bleed yourself dry. I waited for them to move on, then used my Trauma Card." There is a longish silence.

Then, "Look, Rocker. You want to guilt-loop, or you want to get your girl back?"

"So name names," says Johnny. He sits down on the edge of the bed, favoring his stapled side. He reaches out for the tequila and takes a slug.

"Good news/bad news," says Thompson. He's unlimbered the cybercam unit from around his head and set it down on the table between them--the only indication of hardware is the silvermounted skull plug drilled through his right temple. The cam's cellular link through the NET is off. "Good news is, it isn't one of the really big guys, like Eurobusiness Machines. "Fair enough." says Silverhand, taking another swig from the bottle.

"Bad news is, it's Arasaka."

"Arasaka!" explodes Johnny. The Hand, resting on the edge of the table, convulses. There's a rending noise and splinters fly in all directions.

"Your input was playing with hotdeck materials, rocker. You know she ran for ITS, right?"

"Yeah. So you gotta work somewhere. Alt didn't talk much about her work."

"True. But Alt was ITS's pet netrunner. She moved info up and down the Net and handled their security as well. She made a lot of classy software just for them." Long pause. "She built *Soulkiller*, you know. Or maybe you didn't. Like you said, she didn't talk much about her work."

Johnny sits back on the couch, the bottle halfway to his lips. Even the normally disconnected Silverhand has heard of *Soulkiller*, the legendary black program that sucks the very soul from it's Netrunner victims. *Soulkiller*. What a joke. *Soulkiller* is a 2,000,000 meg AI superroutine that can track an intruding Netrunners's cyberlink faster than a boostergang snorts drugs. It tears out the cyberpirate's brain with brutal force, recreating it in a frozen storage matrix inside the mainframe. The word is on the Street that *Soulkiller* may be the closest thing to Hell on earth, and in these days, that's saying a lot.

And Alt made that? Johnny bites down a momentary wave of revulsion, superimposed over Alts's big green eyes, tousled mane of hair. "No wonder she didn't talk about her work," he says finally.

"I was following her, Rocker." says Thompson. "Word's out that Arasaka is working on it's own version of *Soulkiller*. Something that can walk the NET freely, getting upclose and personal with people Arasaka doesn't like."

"A black program assassin for a security company?" Johnny is up and pacing now. He knows where this is going, and he doesn't like it.

## Thompson Media

As a top reporter for World News Service, Thompson has a running feud with the infamous Arasaka Corp., whom he suspects of having murdered his wife. He will do anything to get the elusive security firm-- anything. Thompson also served in the Wars as a correspondent, and is fond of heavy weapons.

INT=8 REF=8 CL=7 MA=8

BODY= Strong

Cybernetics: 1 cyberoptic with IR, Low Lite, Enhancement. Cyberaudio with radio splice, scrambler, micro recorder.

Important Skills: Credibility +8, Rifle +6, Interview +9, Write +7, Athletics +6, Notice +6, Intimidate +5.





## Rogue Solo

Rogue (and her partner Santiago) are hitmen and bodyguards. The word is on the Street that they're the best. Rogue's one weak spot is Johnny Silverhand, who is her ex-lover. Their violent, passionate relationship disintegrated in a massive blowup a year ago, but the scars haven't healed yet for this hardbitten Solo.

INT=7 REF=10 CL=9 MA=10  
BODY= Strong

**Cybernetics:** 2 cyberoptics with IR, Low Lite, Enhancement. Boosted Reflexes. Chipped for Martial Arts +3

**Important Skills:** Combat Sense +9  
Pistol +10, Brawling +9, Drive +7, Rifle +10, Melee +6, Athletics +9, Notice +8, Seduction +8.

"You probably believe in Santa Claus too," says Thompson, reclaiming the dregs of the bottle. "Your Alt is the missing link. I figured they'd have to recruit her sooner or later, whether free or forced. *Soulkiller's* main programming is buried in her head somewhere. So I followed her."

"You just let them take her."

"You don't get it, Rockerboy. I want Arasaka. I want them bad. I'll put anyone and anything on the line to get them. If I can uncover kidnapping, murder and black programs--the bad press alone will wreck them for years. You get in my way, you're flatlined. You go with me..." Thompson lets it trail out.

Johnny stops pacing. The room goes still. Only the Hand moves, like something alive; silver metal joints clicking, takeup reels whirring, tiny pistons shooting in and out in simulation of a pulse. The Hand turns Johnny to face the mediaman. It makes him say, "How long do we have?"

Thompson smiles lopsided. "How long will it take your input to rewrite *Soulkiller*? A day? Two?"

"Yeah." Johnny turns, scoops up the keys to the Porsche. "You chipped for a smartgun?" he says. Thompson reaches down to his feet; draws up a long black, nylon bag. "FN-FAL assault," he says, standing up. "I was in the War. I like lead. Lots of lead."

Rain runs down the front of the speeder. A wall of Corporate glass and steel looms to either side as they pull out into the downtown traffic. The Porsche whistles slightly in the chill air, it's methanol powerplant throwing it against the City night. "So where are we going, Rocker?" says Thompson.

Johnny grits his teeth. "I've got a marker I have to pull in," he says bleakly.

## ROGUE/SANTIAGO

Rogue hates the Atlantis. But she goes there because the contacts are good, and the pickings easy. Corporates looking for a fast freelance assassination. Medias and 'Runners looking to trade information. Fixers with guns, armor and smuggling jobs. But the place has bad memories. She only comes here because Santiago insists on it. "You don't let personal caca get in the way of business," he says. A lot he knows.

Her back is to the wall of the booth--her mirror shaded eyes scan the room like monitor cameras. What she can't see is covered by her partner, Santiago, from the opposite side of the booth. His burly shoulders bulk the heavy armor jacket--he looks like a scowling mountain. He's not her type. But he wants her. Somehow, they've managed to work this out--the way they worked out a combat style; the division of spoils. But he keeps hoping. Stupid Nomad.

Then she finds herself facing what she's dreaded for the last two years; the reason she hates this crummy bar; hates this crummy town. Johnny Silverhand walks into the Atlantis. Just like in the old days.

He still has the moves, she thinks, as he strides through the big brass doors. Head held high, a cocky light in his pale glass eyes. After all this time, Rogue still can't decide whether she wants him, or just wants to kill him. He looks like he owns the place as he crosses the room towards her; a comment to an old friend here, smiling at a fan there, a narrowed glance at a potential troublemaker; then he's standing in front of her. "Rogue," he says. Like nothing'd ever happened between them. "I need your help, Rogue." His voice is urgent, magnetic.

"You can go to hell," she replies levelly. On the other side of the booth, there's a faint sound as Santiago slides one hand over the Mac 10 in his lap.

Johnny leans closer. "Look," he says, "I'm sorry. I know how you feel. I wouldn't do this if I had any other choice. He pulls up a chair and straddles it, staring at her. "Tough." she shoots back acidly. She hopes her voice sounds steadier than she feels.

"You owe me one," he says, his voice taking an edge. "For Chicago. You

owe me one at least. And it's not like I won't pay you. I've got euro."

"How much?" interjects Santiago. Johnny turns to face him. "Word on the Street is you're pulling five grand a night. I'll match and double it."

Santiago's eyes grin in his swarthy face. He scratches his chin with his free hand. His partner has a real mad on about this guy. But he's a Face--he's got credit; that pulls weight in Santiago's world. "How long?"

"Two days max. I need an extraction. I won't haze you---it's Arasaka." A long pause. "I'll understand if you think it's too much for you."

Santiago's eyes narrow. On the Street, their team is known as the best. Who does this choob think he is? Then the nomad realizes he's being baited. Silverhand's already figured the score between the two partners. If Santiago backs up on this, it'll be all over the Street tomorrow. If he goes with it, Rogue's going to have to back his play. No problem. Santiago grins. He can take this punk with one hand behind his back. "It's going to cost you thirty thou, Rocker."

"Done."

Santiago grins and raises the stakes. "And you come with us," he finishes. From her side of the booth, Rogue's eyes smolder at her partner. She'd object, but the rule of the game is, "You don't let personal caca get in the way of business". When Johnny pulled out his wallet, as far as Santiago was concerned, it became business.

"Done" says Johnny. He is reaching out across the table to match grips with the big Nomad when one long shadow falls over the table, then another.

"Ah, Mister Silverhand," the bigger shadow says, leaning close. You can see red LED light scrolling behind his optics, forming crosshairs as he brings the smartgun up.

Rogue reacts, her chipped reflexes kicking into overdrive. Her hand is a blur as it stabs up off the table, the bunched knuckles smashing the Solo's nose back into his face. He's dead before he hits the floor, but spasmed muscles tighten on the trigger of the big Beretta. There's a deafening BOOM! in a very small space, but Johnny's boosted reflexes have already thrown him up and over. There's a scream as the slug rips through the back of the booth and blows through the chest of a Corp sitting on the other side of the thin wall. Rogue's other hand fires the silenced Automag from under the table, ripping the smaller solo in half.

Santiago rolls, hitting the floor. Over by the bar, three figures in armorjackets stand up, weapons in hand; Santiago's MAC 10 hammers a short burst. The figures go flat; one is blown back into the window and falls through in a shattering sound like a hundred dropped chandeliers. Thompson brings up the FN-FAL with studied nonchalance, covering the two remaining, prone figures. "Gotcha," he says.

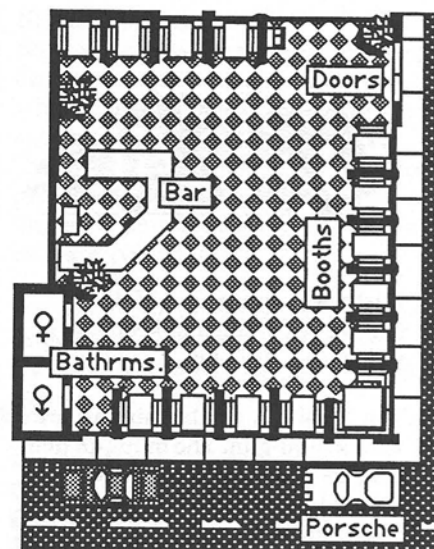
Johnny hits the bar floor; gun high and eyes scanning the corners. Patrons keep their hands away from weapons--everyone plays cool. The disemboweled Solo on the floor whimpers. Back to back, the four of them edge out of the bar.

## RUNAWAY

"We are seriously tagged," gasps Rogue as they hit the sidewalk. "They must have tracked my Trauma Card," grunts Thompson. "Guess they wanted to finish the job. You know some nice people, Rocker."

They reach the Porsche just in time to see the shadow of an unmarked AV-4 sweep over it. Garbage, oil, and filthy water explode into steam as the jet exhausts hit the pavement. Rogue is already down, drawing a bead on the cockpit with her .44. Above her head, Santiago's MAC 10 roars in deafening staccatto. The tiny red spot of her laser scope pinpoints the AV-4 pilot's forehead, even as she sees the minigun sweep around towards them. She's

## The Atlantis



### The Atlantis Fire Fight.

So you think the firefight should come out differently, eh? Here's a mini-version of the combat to try out. In this simplified version, we've pre-calculated the modifiers for each participant, and have given them damage points rather than using the Friday Night Firefight™ wound charts. If you are running this as a full adventure, you'll want to use the entire Friday Night Firefight™ rules instead.

**Johnny:** Add +17 to attack rolls, +17 to defense rolls. His H&K does 1D6+3 damage. Johnny can take up to 16 points before he dies.

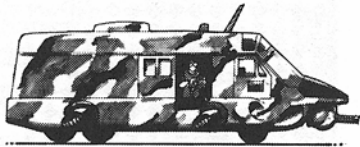
**Thompson:** Add +14 to attack rolls, +18 to defense rolls. His FN-FAL does 11D6+2 damage. Thompson can take up to 16 points before he dies.

**Rogue:** Add +24 to attack rolls, +22 to defense rolls. Her .44 Automag does 4D6 damage. Rogue can take up to 20 points before she dies.

**Santiago:** Add +21 to attack rolls, +21 to defense rolls. His Mac-10 does 2D6+1 damage. Santiago can take up to 22 points before he dies.

**The Arasaka Solos (5):** Add +22 to attack rolls, +18 to defense rolls. Their .45 automatics do 2D6+1 damage. The Solos can take up to 20 points before they die

**Resolving Combat:** Each turn, all players may make one attack. Attackers roll 1D10 and add their attack modifier; Defenders roll 1D10 and add their defense modifier. The higher total wins. If there is a tie, Defender wins.



### Did we forget the AV-4?

No, we just wanted to keep you in suspense a little bit.

The AV-4 is a combat aircraft armed with a mini-gun. The minigun delivers 7D6+3 points of damage, each time it hits, but it can aim at everyone at once.

The AV can take up to 100 points of damage before it's destroyed, but it will only take 30 points to knock out the cockpit. A grenade does 10D6 when used against a large target (like a building or vehicle). Thompson must roll a total greater than 20 to hit the AV-4.

What is he misses and hits a car (a 1 in 6 chance)? A car can only take 50 points of damage. But don't worry--Thompson has three grenades!

### Santiago

#### Nomad

Santiago is a Nomad, usually running with the Aldecaldo Pack; displaced farmers thrown off their land by the Corporations. Santiago is a simple guy--he likes girls, guns and fast bikes. He teams with Rogue mostly because she's the one girl he hasn't been able to score with yet.

INT=5 REF=9 CL=9 MA=10

BODY= Very Strong

Cybernetics: 2 cyberoptics with IR, Low Lite, Enhancement. Boosted Reflexes. Cyberarm with Kevlar Armor, 9mm mini Uzi. Cyberleg with 9mm pistol in thigh.

Important Skills: Family +8, Pistol +9, Martial Arts +6, Drive +7, Rifle+9, Melee +9, Athletics +9, Notice +8, Seduction +8.

not going to make it. The canopy's got to be armored. She doesn't even have time to watch her life flash before her eyes.

Then the laserdot is eclipsed by a screaming *WHHHHHOOOOOMMMMPPPP!* as something slams into the AV-4. The entire canopy--the entire front of the aircraft bells out in a horrible slow-mo inferno--a rancid smell of hot metal, melted plastic and seared flesh gusts against her, as the AV tilts to one side and drunkenly impacts the street. A fireball shatters the night. "Love those grenade launchers," smirks Thompson, lowering his steaming FN-FAL.

"We gotta get out of here," grits Johnny from behind a parked car. Rogue looks into his eyes--she can see the faint red etching of a targeting pattern flickering in their pale depths. "Right," she says, already up and moving. Her breath catches ragged in her throat as they run back into the shadows.

Santiago takes point; he knows all the best boltholes in the area. Thompson is next, the big FN-FAL sweeping their way like a flashlight. Johnny keeps his H&K close to his body; his nerves are tingling with booster effects; he's running like he's on speed. Rogue is covering the rear, and he can hear her breathing behind him. He says over his shoulder to the breathing dark shadow, "I'm sorry, Rache."

Her voice is flat. "Never call me that," she says. "Never again." He keeps running. "Okay," he says finally. "fair enough." There's a long silence. He says, "Look...I'm sorry about what happened. It just wasn't working. You had your work, I had mine--we were just hurting each other. It just wasn't there for us anymore."

"And what about this girlfriend of yours. Is it there for her?"

"I don't know ..." he replies. "These days, I don't know about anything."

"Why, Johnny? Couldn't you gotten anyone else?"

"I needed the best. And you're still the best, Rogue."

The best. Damn him.

### ALT

She wakes with her mouth full of cotton wool. She's smart enough to keep her eyes closed; to stifle any urge to scream. Boosterboys like it when you scream. They like it so much, they'll do anything to make you scream over and over again.

Alt silently triggers commands to redline her senses to maximum. She's relieved to find herself still clothed and relatively unharmed. Not typical Booster, but she won't complain. Her enhanced hearing picks up breathing nearby; the click of glasses and ice, computer terminals. Definitely not Boosters. Alt takes a chance and opens her eyes, spits out the gag.

A slender, Asian-looking man is watching her. Neat, well-tailored suit. A glass of real Scotch in one hand, which he offers towards her. "Welcome, Ms. Cunningham", he says, his mouth smiling and his eyes frozen. "I am Toshiro." He gestures towards another man; a hulking presence lounging by the bar. "This is Akira", he says.

Alt sits up slowly, cautiously, her boosted senses giving her clues. The comforting weight of her .38 plastic autogun is missing. But she still has her cybered arm. "Can I get a drink of that?" she says, gesturing towards the glass in Toshiro's hand. "Certainly" he says. A gesture to Akira, and the hulk turns obediently to mix a drink. Alt is surprised at the grace of the big man's hands. He moves like an athlete. He moves like a professional killer. Akira brings her the drink, and Alt doesn't even think about making a break for it.

"Thanks." The drink cools the pounding flame in her head.

"Certainly. It is the least we can do for a promising new associate."

*Bingo!* she thinks. She's been grabbed by corporate headhunters. Fine. Great. She can deal with it. Just learn the rules, play the game, and go to work. After a week, it'll be just like checking into work at the ITS offices. "So..." she says cautiously. "What kind of work do you have lined up for your

new...um...employee?"

Toshiro leans forward, setting the drink down on the couch. He says, "So." He says, smiling, "Ms. Cunningham. I wish you to tell me all about the program you call...*Soulkiller*."

Her blood freezes like a silenced scream.

## A GATHERING OF HOSTS

Johnny, Santiago, Thompson and Rogue. They are perched two hundred feet in the air on a rusting fire escape. From their vantage point on the blackened brick side of the old Mark Luxor Hilton, they can see ten blocks in any direction. Rogue's eyes are switched to infrared, scanning for AV's and airogyros. Johnny is watching the street below. Thompson is scanning the radio chatter and Santiago is talking. "We go in," he says. It's been two hours since the firefight.

"Fair enough," replies Rogue. "But we do it ASAP." Santiago grins. "You got a reason?"

"Getting shot at always makes me mad," she grins back. "Besides, I figure they're combing the Street right now, looking for us. They'll expect us to be trying to ditch them--they'll be putting their best out to find us. Meanwhile, the second stringers are guarding the offices."

"How you figure they're holding her in the Arasaka office complex?" says Johnny. The Hand is in standby mode, running a test routine. Servos click and whirr and silver fingers spasm and flex of their own volition. Thompson speaks up. "Makes sense. The only mainframe big enough to run *Soulkiller* is in the main Arasaka building. Either that, or in Tokyo. We're not a big enough problem to rate flying her all the way back to Japan."

"Thanks."

"So this means we've gotta punch into the main offices of the most rabidly paranoid security company in the universe." considers Santiago. "Homeboy, you pick some great places to lose your women."

"Stuff it," cuts in Rogue. "Here's the plan."

## INTERFACE THE MUSIC

Headfirst in the NET, Alt weaves magic.

They've studded her into the Arasaka mainframe, given her room to run, hemmed in only by three Arasaka netrunners who watch her every move. Her body lies comatose on a contour couch, linked by cables to a cybermodem. She running with a Tronnic interface, pulling down subroutines, crunching the compilers, getting comfy with the CPU's. From memory and notes, she's recreating *Soulkiller*, the eater of minds.

*Soulkiller* is a stationary program, locked to a part of the system architecture. The challenge Toshiro has given her is to give it movement--the ability to navigate the Net on it's own. It's a subtle problem--navigation data and decision subroutines take up a huge amount of memory; the reason freeroaming programs are so limited in scope. *Soulkiller* already eats a lot of megabytes, to make it freerunning will take more memory than any normal computer can handle. The problem excites her professionalism even as the creation revolts her humanity.

God, they know her so well.

The original *Soulkiller* started as a matrix to contain artificial personalities. She'd studied the concept, worked out the parameters for creating a storage matrix. She'd been fascinated and awed to discover that the same matrix could contain living engrams; transfer them from computer to body and even back again. It was immortality.

ITS had taken it from her to build a killer. And she hadn't known how to stop them. That was then.

Now Alt looks over her options. If she doesn't build Arasaka's monster,

## Black Programs

Black programs are types of software designed to kill or maim intruders who try to illegally enter a computer system. They are able to reach the "hacker" through his or her interface plugs, reaching out with electronic fingers to stop hearts, burn out brains or erase personalities.

We don't recommend using something like *Soulkiller* as part of your Cyberpunk campaigns, but if you insist...

## Soulkiller

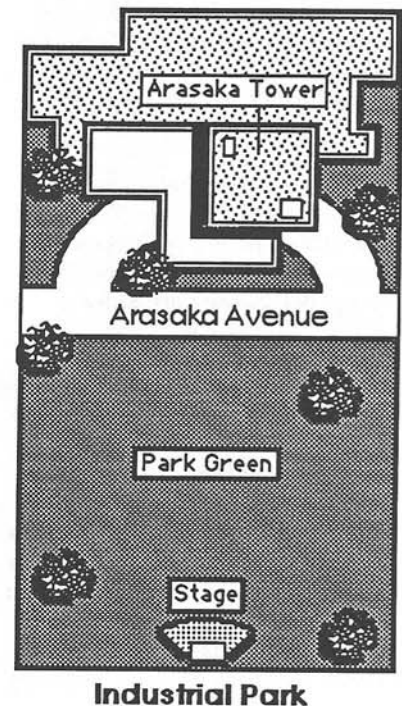
**Class:** Free Roaming

**Black Program**

**Strength:** 4

*Soulkiller* uses an advanced matrix recorder to copy the entire personality of an intruder, storing it in a huge database. It then wipes the original personality away, leaving a mindless husk that eventually dies. In all interfaces, it appears as a swirling, glittering nimbus of energy, shot through with tiny stars, and singing in a high, crystalline voice

Cost: \$10,000.00



# ARASAKA



## What You can Throw Against Arasaka:

All the weapons you had before, plus four explosive charges, each causing 10D6 in damage to anything within 20 feet. Two charges will destroy the stairwell completely and kill anyone inside. One charge will destroy an elevator or an office, killing anyone within.

## What Arasaka can throw against YOU:

A lot. There are 20 combat ready guards in the lobby. Santiago can shoot at one guard per turn, adding +25 to his attack roll. He cannot be seen by the guards, who canonically add +10 to their defense rolls. Guards can take up to 18 points of damage--the WA-2000 causes 4D6+3.

In addition, there are three strike teams of 5 men each. At the moment, you can distribute them on any floor of the Arasaka Tower you wish, except the Lobby and the Executive Office floor.

Guards have a 60% of not knowing where the team is at any given time. (roll 1D10--on 6 or below, the guards will not be on that floor when the team arrives there).

Guards add +15 to their attack rolls, +19 to their defense rolls. Their Uzis cause 1D6+2 points of damage. Guards can take up to 18 points of damage before they are killed.

Akira is a very powerful Solo. He adds +22 to his attacks, and +22 to his defense rolls. His .357 Desert Eagle does 2D6+2. Akira can take up to 22 points before dying.

Toshiro Arasaka is a mere corporate. He adds +13 to his attacks, +13 to his defenses. However, he is armed with a shotgun built into his right arm. This causes 5D6 damage. Toshiro can take 16 points damage before dying.

they'll torture or kill her. If she builds their horror, they'll keep her alive. But. But once it's built, they'll put her into it.

## WAR PARTY

Rogue leaves their motel bolthole at nine. She moves fast, travels light, moving from place to place. Here, she picks up five pounds of plastic explosives; there, flashbombs, timers and tripwires. Santiago covers her. He picks up more explosives, a combat assault cyberdeck, and a long, bulky black sniper rifle.

Johnny's on the cellular, working the connections. He pulls his bandmates in from around the City, carefully dodging the phone taps, shadows and snoops. He sets the time and place and the gig is on.

Thompson is on the Street, working hard. A phone call here, a tip to the screamsheets there. A Fixer picks up a little euro on the side, and passes the word down. By ten a.m., the Street knows there's going to be a party. By noon, the word is all over the Street--the band is Samurai, the time is sun-down, and the beer is free.

By one, the Street knows the party is going to be at Industrial Park. Arasaka's twenty two story office compound faces Industrial Park.

Like a single, hungry thing, the mob converges.

## SORCEROR'S APPRENTICE

7.29 p.m.

The twisting construct spins, a blazing pillar of white fire, sparkshowers of stars. A glowing DNA chain, a whirling dervish takes shape, form, in the construct reality of the interface, towering above her, looming like fear itself. Dazzling, it exudes the palpable scent of terror. It speaks in a voice like crystal, and momentarily Alt's breath is taken by its perfect, murderous beauty. "I am." it sings triumphantly to the cold stars.

"I am your Controller." Alt replies. "You will follow my commands." A slight hesitation in her voice.

"As always," it says, as though doubt had never existed in the universe. "What is your bidding, Mistress?"

Alt lets out a long, exhausted breath. She's gotten the Controller override past her watchdogs. Now she has a chance.

"This is what I want you to do," she begins.

## PARTY HARD

Seicho Harada is second in command of Security for the Arasaka complex at Industrial Park. Seicho is afraid. Since early afternoon, the people have been pouring into the large, grassy park opposite his guard position; at first, a trickle, then a stream, then a torrent. He can't figure it out. They don't do things like this in Tokyo. In Tokyo, people are consistent. They make sense. Here, people are animals. He thinks about calling the City Cops, but that would reflect badly on Arasaka. The world's largest security corporation calling for help? What a loss of face. But there are six thousand people crammed into the tableau in front of him.

Up on the makeshift stage, acting as though invulnerable, struts Johnny Silverhand, working the crowd up. Seicho wants him. He wants him dead. But Silverhand might as well be on Luna as far as Arasaka is concerned. A single gunshot could trigger a riot of unbelievable proportions. Seicho can feel the tension building. So can Johnny. An invisible thread binds them as adversaries, eye to eye over a battlefield of unwitting bodies.

Johnny smiles. He's got them, so far. The crowd is paranoid--they expect to be thrown out at any minute. He's been pumping them for the last hour with chromatic and metal rock, getting them edgy and irritable; in a party mood to

scream and shout, kick some tail. The first uniformed bozo who interrupts their party is going to get himself hosed.

*Got the chrome in the bloodstream*

*Got a metal soul,*

*I'm out looking for action,*

*Guess I'm on a roll*

It's like driving the freeway at two hundred miles per hour. The crowd swells and breathes as the first verse goes down, taking on the cohesiveness of a living thing. The bass player picks up the back beat and the two of them slam into the next turn of the song, dragging the crowd with them.

*Got the old mega violence,*

*When I boost, it's for real,*

*The capacitors roarin' inside my brain*

*You know just how I feel*

*Cold chrome, molten lead*

*Can't be hurt cuz I'm already dead*

*Ain't no time as real as realtime*

*I'm chipping in*

*Chippin in.*

Johnny's eyes scan the perimeter of the park. To one edge, he can see Santiago in position on the rooftop opposite of the Arasaka complex. Deep in the crowd, Thompson and Rogue are poised, ready to make the break. All he has to do is give them the chance; a diversion. Well, six thousand people walking towards Arasaka ought to be a helluva diversion.

*Chippin in (got my head to the wall)*

*Chippin in (can ya hear me call)*

*Chippin in (I'm the man of steel)*

*Chippin in (Is that how ya feel?)*

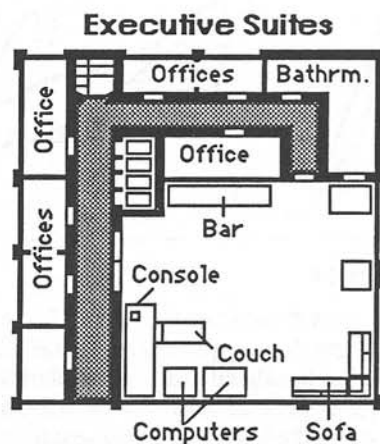
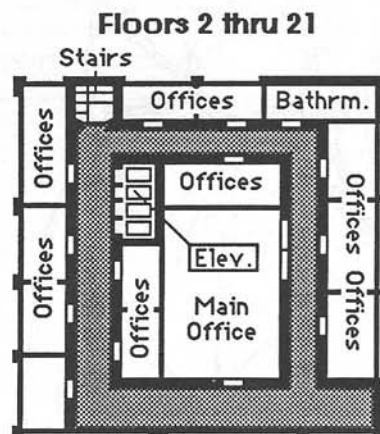
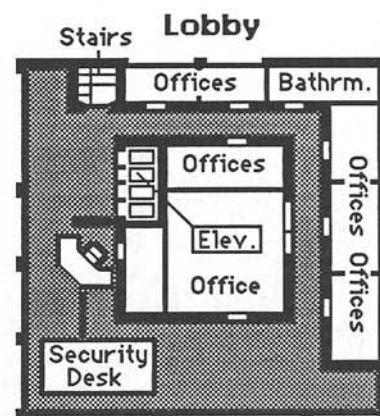
*Well, comon!*

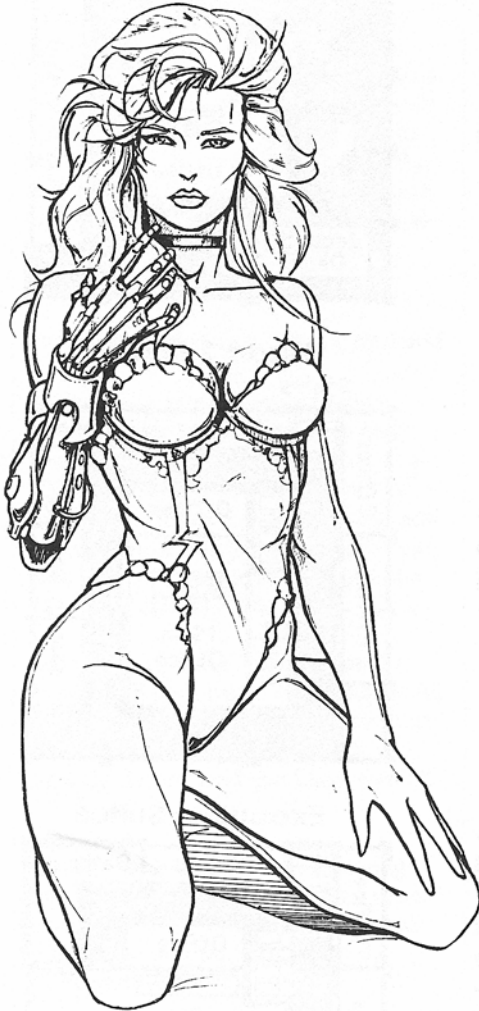
He can hear Santiago's signal beep in his ears. *Now!* Punching his battered Telecaster guitar over to "remote", Johnny leaps off the stage, pushing his way through the crowd. His voice holds solid over the radio mike; powerful, pleading, entreating, seducing, and the huge crowd turns with him; surges around him, swallows him. It's knifeedge balanced---six thousand people teetering on the edge, chanting, singing. At the perimeter of the park, Arasaka police stand guard nervously, their eyes riveted on the mob---twenty guards facing down a wall of humanity, centered on one man whose voice holds them, binds them. The scene is set; the guards distracted, and on the rooftop, Santiago takes aim with his silenced sniper rifle....

Then it goes wrong. One of the faceless guards loses his nerve. The staccato sound of gunfire splits the air. "NO!" screams Johnny, but the mob howls like a wounded thing, then surges forward, shattering like surf against armored bodies, lobby doors, massed vehicles, guns. Screams. Gunfire. The strobe flash of the mob tearing a guard apart with vampire teeth, and ripper claws. The sound of a sniper rifle high above the melee, as Santiago methodically picks out guards and blows them away with his Walther WA-2000 rifle. The lobby doors explode inwards as six thousand bodies slam against it.

Rogue is already in--in when Santiago took out the pair of guards by the main doors. She's on the floor and rolling, a fast dazzle bomb palmed over the top of the security desk to fry the optics of the monitor team, followed by a frag grenade a second later. The deafening explosion goes unnoticed in the typhoon roar of the mob. Thompson's right behind her, his video rig and FN-FAL sweeping everything in his path. Both wear armor jacks with the colors of the infamous Iron Sights boostergang, a known Arasaka hit group.

Rogue skids around the corner towards the elevator bank, moments ahead





## Alt

### Netrunner

Johnny's new girlfriend, Alt has a history he hardly suspects. A hotshot computer programmer and netrunning whiz, she has written an incredibly deadly program that can suck your mind out and eat it. But Alt isn't just another helpless heroine, as Tochiro learns to his undoing.

INT=10 REF=7 CL=9 MA=6

BODY= Average

**Cybernetics:** Interface Plugs. Boosted Senses. Gold-plated cyberarm with hidden compartment. Chipped for Martial Arts +3.

**Important Skills:** Interface +10, Pistol +2, Drive +4, Athletics +5, Notice +8, Seduction +7

of the crowd. Rapidly, she opens each car, spraypaints the monitor lens, punches a destination, then ducks out. The last car in line, she places a shaped charge explosive on the ceiling, wired to a microtransmitter. This one she sends to the twenty-second floor; the executive office suites. Then the rampaging mob hits and carries her along in the swell.

Thompson is waiting for her by the stairwell. Moments later, Johnny shows up, wearing an Arasaka company jacket pulled off a guard's body. The name tag reads Harada. "I blew it," he mutters over and over. But it's too late now.

Akira turns from the security board. "It has started," he announces. "Instructions, Toshiro-sama?" Toshiro considers. It was a masterstroke for Silverhand to raise a literal army of fans against him. Toshiro is checkmated--Arasaka cannot gun down the crowd with impunity. But he does have options. He turns to Akira. "Send teams to the elevators. Guard the top and bottom of the stairwells, and kill anything in the elevator cars." He looks over at Alt's dormant form. "We have the program," he says. "If we do not have her body, there is no evidence."

Seemingly oblivious, the plugged in Alt permits herself a brief smile. A lot he knows.

Elevators chime open on floors ten, eighteen and five. The fire teams on ten and eighteen throw a hail of lead through the doors. The elevators are empty. The team on five is warned, and opens the doors with greater caution. Empty. "It's a trick!" shouts the team leader. "To the stairwell!"

On floor six, a panting Johnny and Thompson reach the stairwell landing, crack open the fire doors and scout the hall. They can hear other doors slamming open as the fire teams converge; they bolt for the elevator bank. Prying the doors open, they can see the top of the car on floor five. They drop down to it's top. Thompson hotwires the motor, and they start up.

Rogue can hear running feet behind her. She pauses from her vantage point on floor seven and fires a quick burst down the stairwell. How much time? she thinks. She judges the breathing; the heavy booted tread, and punches six seconds on the timer, then rolls out of the seventh floor fire door. She is halfway down the hall when the first of the charges go off, collapsing the stairwell in on itself and burying the pursuing fire teams. Jamming open the elevator doors with her gun butt, she drops down onto the rising car.

"Hold her", says Toshiro. Dimly, through the interface, Alt can feel Akira's hands pressing her into the seat. She struggles as the techs strip her plug guards off and hold her wrists. "Can the program be run?" Toshiro demands. His techs nod. Helpless in the grip of the interface, Alt can only sense Toshiro jacking himself into the cyberdeck, giving the command to RUN.

Then her mind is ripped away.

The elevator streaks upwards, the shaft echoing to either side. They can hear explosions; the sound of running feet, the hammer of machinegun fire. They pass the burned out husks of the cars on floors ten and eighteen. At the twentieth floor, the elevator starts to slow. Just above them, they can see the bottom of the express elevator on the twenty second.

"Duck and cover!" yells Rogue. She taps the transmitter button on her collar and the world blows up.

## ANGEL HEAVEN

She floats naked in a sea of stars. Around her swirls the matrix of Soukkiller, towering into measureless space. Alt reaches out with her enhanced mentality, shaping and forming. A brief flare of thought, and she engulfs the minds

of her three guardian techs' interfaces, locking them out of the system.

Riffling through Saburo's personal database, she pulls out the access codes to the mainframe's inner levels. She strips the memory of data, destroying her Soukiller notes, access codes and her personal files. Moving to Accounting, she dumps two hundred thousand dollars from Saburo's account to her personal account in the Eurobank--enough to finance a fast face change and a new identity where Arasaka can't find her. So much for the basics.

Alt activates the room monitor. She can see the three techs slumped senseless in their chairs; her own unconscious body limply sprawled across the central console. Akira moves towards it. Alt triggers the room lasers and burns out his cyberoptics in the crossfire--he staggers and falls screaming.

Toshiro's eyes widen in shock, then narrow as he realizes what has happened. "Congratulations, Ms. Cunningham," he says with mock formality. "It seems you have found a way to escape your demise."

"It's over, Toshiro," she says through the interface, a tiny voice in his ear. "You're going to sit right here with your hands on the table, where I can watch them. You move, and I'll give you what Akira got." She tracks the defense system onto him, locking it to fire at the slightest position change. Then she turns back into the Soukiller construct, wrapping it's power around her, gathering herself to transfer back into her body.

The room staggers; lurches, as five pounds of plastique explosive slams through the ceiling of the elevator, creating an instant fireball. The lasers go wild, spilling a maze of ruby light in every direction. Toshiro throws himself flat, toppling the cyberdeck and breaking Alt's connections. She flails wildly with the Construct--too little, too late.

Three figures burst into the room, smartguns laying down a pattern of fire though the maelstrom. IR suppressed, enhanced vision on, Johnny spots Alt's still form slumped over a contour couch. He bends down to her, taking her in his arms, trembling. Across the room, Rogue looks away.

"Well, well, well," says Thompson, striding across the wrecked room towards the corporate head. "What do we have here? Looks like kidnapping and maybe murder. They're going to put you away for a long, long time, Toshiro-chan." His green cyberoptic winks bright as he transmits live and direct to his news net; his head swivels right to left with practiced ease as he subvocalizes the opening to his story; the story he will use to break Arasaka in Night City.

Johnny stares a long time at Alt's almost lifeless body. There is a feeble pulse. But Alt--Alt is gone; lost in the machine; trapped behind crystal. Lost forever. Gone.

*Maybe he really did love her, he realizes numbly.*

Silverhand stands away from the couch. "Cut transmission," he says to Thompson. The green cyberoptic goes dark. Silverhand's own eyes are featureless white marbles. The Hand convulses in fury by his side, locking onto the H&K in it's lowslung hip rig. The metal fingers lock to the butt, scrabble-clicking along the parkerized grip.

He just doesn't care anymore. He's dead inside.

Silverhand raises the big black gun. A red pinpoint centers on Toshiro's forehead. "Bang." says Johnny. The Hand convulses.

"Bang" says the gun.

Silverhand turns to gather up her still warm body in his arms. Behind the wall of monitors, a disembodied Alt screams to him.

But he can't hear her as he walks away.

END

#### Laser Defense System

Powered by building current, the Laser System can hit any point in the room, adding +15 to it's attack roll. A laser hit causes 3D6 damage. There are 4 lasers, one at each corner--each can take up to 10 points of damage.

Could our Heroes have saved Alt? Sure. Here's how to work it. Say that Alt will be zapped at midnight on the second day. If the team arrives before this time, she's safe; if not, she's history. Even if they arrive too late, there's a 20% chance that one of the group will realize that there is a way to get her back (roll 1D10. 2 or below, the idea of hooking Alt back to the cybermodem occurs to them). They may think of this anyway, if they're really on the ball.





# CORPORATE LIFE

## It's Big Business As Usual in the 2000s

The modern corporations of 2013 are much like the corporations of the late 20th century, only much larger and more fully autonomous. They are very nearly nations in themselves, with their own laws, cities, factories and armies. Most corporations in 2010 are multinational; i.e., they have branches and operations all over the world. These branches may be as small as a research facility or sales office, or as large as a major manufacturing facility and security center.

There are two types of corporations: public and privately held. A public corporation can and does sell stock to the public. The stock is for sale in any of the offices of the **World Stock Exchange**, and anyone with enough money can buy it. Privately held corporations are more like family businesses. All stock (and thus all power) is concentrated in the hands of a very few--usually partners, relatives, or one extremely powerful individual (Howard Hughes would be a good example).

Most corporations are **manufacturers**--they produce some kind of commodity for sale on the open market. Oil, steel, automobiles, aircraft, weapons, computers, cybernetics, biotechnologies; these are only a few of the literally millions of corporate operations. Many corporations have several commodities on the market--they may control chemical plants in Europe, computer factories in Japan, and steelmaking operations in the United States.

### Mediacorporations

One type of corporation that deserves special attention are the mediacorporations. These huge conglomerates grew out of a trend in the late 1980s, in which certain firms bought up TV networks, film companies, record companies, radio stations, book & magazines and even comic publishers; effectively centralizing the media under the control of a very few people.

Entertainment has become generic and bland. Print material has a "sameness" as a hundred magazines are produced by the same companies. Dissenting opinions and independent productions are usually buried under an avalanche of media hype, or worse, co-opted or destroyed by the vicious competitive practices of the major mediacorps. Still worse is the effect on news and information. Political candidates have realized that the right connections to the right mediacorp exec can win elections-- only a short step to where the media corporations actually select, package and sell their own candidates. While no major government is yet directly controlled by a mediacorporation, most socioanalysts suspect that it will be only a matter of time.

### Agricorps

The Age of the Family Farm came to an end somewhere in the 1990s. The biggest break with traditional farming came in the Crash of 1994. The United States has always been the world's foremost producer of raw food stock. Coupled with the increasing

need for grain and bulk crops to create alcohol fuels and organic plastics, agribusiness became one of the most powerful forces of the post-crash United States.

Agricorporations now control (directly or indirectly) nearly 65% of all of the farmland in the United States, feeding roughly a third of the world's population and supplying organic fuels and plastics to nearly two thirds. As the technological world underwent crash conversion from its dwindling petroleum reserves over to advanced forms of methanol, ethanol and meta-alcohol, many of the leading oil producers bought up agricultural lands and shifted their refineries to organic fuel production. As a result, a list of most major agricorps reads like a Who's Who of energy corporations.

### Corporate Powerbrokering

The modern corporation is usually organized as a vast hierarchy, with a President and Board of Directors at the top, and a huge sea of workers at the bottom. In the middle of this, one finds the realm of the **corporate executive**, a struggling middle class overachiever, usually with the singleminded goal of grabbing as much power and privilege as possible. The average corporate begins as a junior executive, "bossing" a particular project or group of people. At the next level, he becomes a Manager, controlling a specific department or production area. The major infighting begins here--only very successful Managers get elevated to the position of Assistant Vice President, where they control entire factories or other operations. They are, in turn, bossed by Vice Presidents, who control entire divisions of the company. Near the top is the Executive Vice President, who effectively runs the corporation. His boss is the President, who answers only to the Board of Directors (major stockholders) and the Chairman of the Board.

Theoretically, corporate advancement is based on merit. In reality, the corporate world is rife with nepotism, deal making, brown nosing, cheating, lying and credit stealing. Extortion, blackmail and frameups are common.

One of the most disturbing factors in this web of corporate powerbrokering is the role of organized crime. Realizing in the early '90s that the new megacorps represented an unprecedented new field of opportunity, the powerful families of the Mafia and other crime groups began to offer their services as bodyguards, hitmen, and general corporate enforcers. This pattern had previously been established among the *zaibatsu* (corporate families) of Japan, who routinely hired both *ninja* (assassin) and *yakuza* (gangster) clans for their covert operations. In some cases, the retainers remain faithful--at least to the people who pay the most. In other more unfortunate cases, the hired guns have taken direct control of the corporations themselves, leading to a new age of intercorporate infighting unchecked by even a sham of legality.

## Employment Contracts

In the savage world of Big Business, it's not unusual for an executive to jump from firm to firm, looking for a big success. To prevent this, most Corporations require their employees to sign Employment Contracts, specifying how long they must work for the firm until they can quit. Contracts may run from a year for a low-level executive, to an entire lifetime for a key researcher or company president.

The penalties for breaking Employment contracts are extremely severe; ranging from garnishment of wages, lawsuits, and loss of licences (in the case of lawyers or physicians). Corporations have also been known to use sabotage software and deadly booby traps to ensure loyalty. Blackmail is common. Assassination and kidnapping are expected.

This makes Corporate "headhunting" (hiring one company's staff away from them for your own company) a deadly game of cat and mouse. Most Corporations have their own "extraction teams" of Solos, who, like the KGB or CIA, arrange "defections" of key personnel from one side to the other. Headhunting can be especially lethal, as most corporations will use any and all means to stop a rival extraction team.

## Corporation & Governments

Since the Crash of 93, the governments of the world have been in the uncomfortable position of having to let the multinational corporations do pretty much as they please. Paying lip service to pollution control, product safety and minimum wage rules, the modern multinational usually strikes a bargain with the local government. Sometimes this may be as simple as a bribe to the right places, or military support for the local dictator. In the more sophisticated United States, corporations tread lightly, going out of their way to hide their more illegal operations, and making sure to toe the line in their more visible ones. On the local level it's often a case of trading power, influence or money with the right leaders; a judge or police chief here, a senator or congressman there.

One major exception to corporate domination is the Soviet Union. Already suspicious of anything having to do with "decadent capitalism", the Soviet state has successfully kept most corporations from gaining any foothold within it's borders--or even the borders of it's client and satellite states. However, the corporations are constantly assailing the walls of the Communist monolith, whether beaming highpower TV transmissions into Soviet territory (advertising products and services), or occasionally smuggling large quantities of luxury products behind the Iron Curtain (where they create destabilization and unrest).

Most corporate offices now hold a status roughly equivalent to a national embassy, with employees carrying corporate-issued international passports and identification cards (better, by far, than almost anything national governments can produce). Since the unfortunate *Yasubisu Affair* of 1997 (in which guards of Tokyo-based Arasaka Corp killed 24 French policemen who attempted to storm Arasaka's Paris offices to arrest an executive charged with rape), most corporate foreign branches maintain a policy of shipping criminal employees back to the company's home office

Company negotiators then arrange to extradite the felon back to the nation where the crime took place.

## The World Stock Exchange

The modern corporation rests on it's stock. Stock is essentially a "share" in the company's assets, which can be traded and sold much like property cards in Monopoly. Corporations sell stock to outsiders in exchange for hard cash, which the corporation can then use to finance it's activities. As a stockholder, you are gambling that the stock you hold (which is a percentage of the total value of the company) will increase in value as the company's assets increase in value. For example, if in 1975, Cyber Computer was worth a grand total of \$100.00, and you owned 20% of this, your stock would be worth \$20.00. Eight years later, when Cyber is worth two million dollars, that same 20% is now worth \$400,000.00! On the other hand, if Cyber goes bust, that stock is worth nothing.

The more stock you have, the more control you have over the assets and activities of the corporation. One reason for this is that each share you hold is equal to a vote concerning what is done with the company. As a general rule, if you own more than 50 percent of the stock of a corporation, you have the majority vote. This vote can be used to fire or choose the leadership of the corporation, direct corporate decisions, and even force the corporation to merge with another company.

The basic form of corporate stock holding is little changed from the early stock exchanges (places where people go to buy, sell or trade stock in companies) of the 20th century. What has changed is the scale of operations. The stock exchanges of London, Tokyo, New York and other major cities were merged into a gigantic World Stock Exchange late in the 1990's. A generic exchange rate (known as the Eurodollar) was established, and a system of trading imposed over the various subexchanges worldwide.

While there are stockbrokerages all over the world, the major Exchange offices are located in London, Paris, Zurich, Tokyo, New York, Cairo, Rome and San Francisco. However, with the creation of the Net--the vast web of communications that blankets the planet--the ability to buy, sell and trade shares has been extended to almost anyone. Investors can now use their phone nets to contact their brokers at any time or from any place, even in the remotest jungles. Never before has the business of making millions on the "market" been so universal. And never before has the Market been balanced on such a razor's edge between incredible wealth and worldwide economic disaster.

## Corporate Espionage & Covert Activity

In the 2000's, almost every corporation employs at least one force of highly trained covert operatives, specializing in espionage, counter-espionage, sabotage, and counter-terrorism. In extreme cases, measures such as assassination and terrorism are not unknown, whether against other corporations or within the corporate structure itself.

This is not an entirely new phenomenon. For many years, the powerful Japanese industrial combines, or *zaibatsu*, were known to secretly employ ninja clans in many of their covert opera-

tions. These connections stretched back into the distant past, when many of the same clans served the feudal ancestors of the zaibatsu rulers. Less covert operations requiring muscle and a lack of subtlety were often delegated to various Japanese gangster mobs, many of whom had full or partial interests in the corporations themselves. As Western corporations began to adopt various methods of Japanese management and production, it was an simple step for these companies to adopt or create their own "ninja" forces. This historical reference may be one reason why hired corporate killers and spies are known on the street by colorful terms such as *ninja*, *samurai*, *ronin* and *yakuza*.

A corporate covert operations arm usually is made up of weapons specialists, computer technicians, and various "hired guns". Almost all of these covert forces are cyberenhanced with the best technology available. Covert actions arms frequently search the deadzones and arcologies for promising young criminals to recruit, promising them high pay, the best enhancements, and a life of glamor and adventure.

### Corporate Wars

While most aspects of corporate competition remain on the economic level, there are instances where it moves into the arena of actual warfare. While these are not declared wars, per-se, they have all the aspects of the real thing, as missiles, armored vehicles, jet aircraft and cyberenhanced ground troops are brought into play.

By it's very nature, a corporate war must be covert--very few nations are willing to allow two companies to "duke it out" on their soil. Early on, most corporations hired actual terrorist groups to strike at enemy targets. As these groups became more undependable, the companies began to actually create battle forces disguised to resemble terrorists. Many terrorist groups such as the infamous *Red Flag Army* and the *New Aryan Sons* are actually fully equipped corporate strike forces, whose seemingly random attacks on rival offices and strongholds are part of larger covert warfare actions.

A corporate war never lasts longer than necessary--if combat activity becomes noticeable, there is too great a chance of government intervention. While no corporate army is yet powerful enough to challenge a major government directly, there are already reports of smaller nations who have capitulated to the power of the business armies.

### The Corporate City

In the 1960's thru '70s, social unrest and upheaval tore through the central cities of America, leaving burned out tenements, deserted factories, and dying businesses in it's wake. Most major corporations soon moved their operations to safer suburban business parks and malls.

But as real estate prices began to rise, and the suburbs became more crowded, the major companies began to reconsider their strategies. By the middle 1980's, corporations working with city governments, began to rehabilitate the inner city. The corporations provided the money for new buildings, shopping malls and model community areas, while the government provided tax in-

centives, inexpensive land, and police protection. By 1989, many inner city areas across the U.S. had undergone this "gentrification" process, including New York, San Francisco, Baltimore and Boston.

The human cost of this restructuring was the displacement of the "undesirables" of the urban dead zone; poor, drug dealers, pimps, gangs and streetpeople, were all pushed out from the city center, creating a region bounded on one side by affluent suburbs and the now showcase central city. This "doughnut" effect had a further impact on the community--by shoving the dead zone inhabitants between the two areas, crime rates on both sides of the line began to skyrocket. Street gangs routinely shuttled between the middle class suburbs and the model inner city to prey on new victims.

By the mid 80's, corporations routinely hired guard patrols to supplement already overloaded city police forces. These corporate police were well paid and had access to the best equipment available. As police services began to collapse throughout the U.S., many cities took to hiring corporate forces outright, deputizing them and turning city law enforcement over to them.

The corporations were equal to the task. Ruthlessly, they equipped their teams with the best weapons and armor. When an arrest was made, they made the best use of their considerable legal talent and influence to ensure the severest penalties. When an arrest wasn't possible, they often resorted to the harshest of policies. Entire gangs would be decimated in a single night by heavy weapons teams and armored vehicles. The bodies would summarily end up in the landfill, and the legal staff would quietly arrange to cover the incident over.

In the 2000's, the corporations usually control both the inner city and a large portion of the company owned suburban developments outside of the city. To facilitate their commuters, many of the megacorps have installed lightrail and underground systems between the showcase innercity and the well-protected suburbs. Patrolled by corporate guards, monitored by cameras and the most sophisticated sensors, these railways are always clean, quiet and ominously crime free.

### Corporate Suburbia

By 1990, a two bedroom house cost a median \$200,000.00; more than most families could hope to raise. As the corporations fought for skilled employees, they realized that an affordable home could easily become one of the many fringe benefits to offer a prospective employee. Soon, in the U.S. and abroad, corporations began building or buying large tracts of housing, which were then offered at drastically reduced prices to company members.

A further stage of development was reached in 1995, when, in the historic *Tennicorp vs Davis* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that while a corporation could not restrict housing sales on the basis of race, creed or color, it did have the right to offer housing to it's *employees* on a preferential basis. As a result, most areas of corporate suburbia are routinely comprised of upper middle-class execs and their families. While made up of widely varying races, religions and national origins, all corporate communities share a common origin--the Company.

# Corporate Profiles

Essential information and breakdown on some of the 21st centuries most prominent and powerful corporations. These profiles are intended to be used by the Ref as guidelines, not as inflexible parameters.

**Head Office** is the location of the firm's board of directors. Usually, but not always, the largest and most important executive facility the corporation has. **Offices** are other manufacturing or executive sites owned by the corporation. Listed sites are major offices. A corporation may have small bureaus worldwide.

**Stock** is the total number of shares in existence for that corporation. Listed in each profile is the name and location of residence of that company's major shareholder. This is the single person who wields the true power behind the company. Any person or organization (such as the board of directors) which holds over 50% of the total stock wield ultimate control over the corporation. **Open Shares** are the shares currently up for sale on the World Stock Exchange. Usually in the neighborhood of ten percent.

**Troops** represents the combined number of combat soldiers available to the corporation. Usually troops are spread among the offices of the corporation, with heavier numbers stationed at potential trouble sites or high security compounds. **Covert Operatives** are industrial and political espionage agents and covert combat operatives. Among other things, troops and covert operatives are used in the dangerous field of corporate extractions, removing valuable personnel from one corporation to another, either by defection or force.

**Equipment and resources** are the vehicles, technology and weapons owned by the corporation, as well as equipment it can commandeer or procure from other sources, such as governments, in an emergency. Most corporations own private helicopters and jets which can be retrofitted for rapid deployment and combat use, as well as dedicated military vehicles...commonly the AV-4 urban assault vehicle and the Osprey II V-STOL aircraft. The Osprey II is also used as a corporate transport in high security situations. Large enough companies maintain a private airlift capability, usually using the Boeing C-25 heavy cargo SST. The C-25 can haul four AV-4s, two dismantled Osprey IIs, three tanks, or three hundred troops depending on how it is fit. Combination loads are also possible due to the aircraft's modular interior design. It can be assumed that such things as armored limosines and high tech site security are standard.

Some corporations have small orbital workstations for specialized zero-g production and research. These workstations consist of a number of pressurized "shacks" with no gravity of their own. The shacks are anchored together by a flexible structural framework that also supports power and

life support pods, and are normally staffed by a few tens of people, and a small contingent of space troops. These stations also maintain weapons systems to repel attack from rival corporations if necessary. Workstations will each have a few small pressurized and unpressurized service and transport vehicles. All corporations, with the exception of Orbital Air Corp. rely on government lifting vehicles, or on Orbital Air to shuttle products and personnel to and from orbit.



**Multitrole computer and electronics manufacturer.**

**Main Office:** Hamburg.

**Regional Offices:** W. Berlin, Rome, Madrid, Paris, Stockholm, Geneva, Oslo, Helsinki, London, Tokyo, Cairo, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, Chicago, Dallas, New York, Ottawa, Cape Town, Mexico City, Vienna, Hong Kong.

**Stock:** 1,236,765 shares.

**Available on Market:** 187,772 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Dr. Rudolf Muller, Bremen, Germany, holding 20.8% of total shares.

**Troops:** 6,354 combat ready.

**Covert Operatives:** 575.

**Equipment and Resources:** Dispersed among the EBM offices as dictated by need are forty-six AV-4s, twenty Osprey II V-STOL attack craft, twenty corporate jets for the use of the executive board and five heavy cargo planes. In addition, each office has two helicopters and a fully staffed clinic and infirmary. EBM's power and stature give them access to the highest levels of military technology in considerable amounts. EBM also has a top secret underground medical and research/training facility hidden in the Alps. EBM has access to almost all levels of military equipment and technology. EBM maintains a small orbital research facility with about thirty researchers and ten soldiers.

**Background:** In the late 1990's, EBM, already the largest computer and high tech manufacturer in the world, and one of the most significant corporations in existence, pulled off the greatest free-market hostile takeover in history. Led by master corporate raider Dr. Kurt Muller, this maneuver caused the merger of EBM with many other prominent computer companies around the world, consolidating EBM's already fearsome market power. Currently, Muller, and his two partners in the Triumvirate, Ulf Grunwalder of Munich and Sir Nathaniel Poole of London comprise the majority vote of EBM, holding 52.1% between the three of them. Their long term goal is to consolidate as much of the world's high-tech manufacturing as possible under their label, by any means possible.



**Wetware and computer hardware and software design.**

**Main Office:** Cupertino, California. (Silicon Valley.)

**Regional Offices:** San Francisco, San Jose.

**Stock:** 281,219 shares.

**Available on Market:** 19,485 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Bob Rosemont, New York, holding 58.8% of total shares.

**Troops:** 150 combat ready, in ten 15 man strike teams.

**Covert Operatives:** 12.

**Equipment and Resources:** Three AV-4 assault vehicles, three helicopters, one private jet based out of San Francisco International Airport. Each office has an emergency first aid infirmary, but only the San Francisco office has a surgery capable trauma center. The military hardware available to Zetatech is only of moderate power. High tech personal arms, armor and vehicular weapons systems are readily available, but only limited amounts of heavier weapons are available, and usually they can not be obtained on short notice. Zetatech has no airlift capability of its own, but could arrange access to heavy lifting aircraft given enough time.

**Background:** Zetatech is a typical up and coming high tech company doing its best to grow and diversify. It has carved itself a small niche in the industry through the traditional methods: quality products, industrial espionage, and strategically applied violence. Having made it over the first hurdle, Zetatech is attempting to build a heavy name for itself by expanding overseas, the assured way towards success, and a high inflow of stable Eurodollars. This means encroaching on markets occupied by other companies which are not inclined to share their profits. Zetatech's position as an established, growing, but small and relatively weak company make it a prime target for hostile takeover, and they must be continually on guard.

## MICROTECH

**Ultra-sophisticated mainframes and workstations.**

**Main Office:** Dallas, Texas.

**Regional offices:** Sunnyvale California, Miami, London, Tokyo.

**Stock:** 487,339 shares.

**Available on Market:** 32,121 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Stephen Lew and family, San Francisco, holding 55.5% of total shares.

**Troops:** 400, combat ready.

**Covert Operatives:** 52.

**Equipment and Resources:** Six AV-4 assault vehicles, ten helicopters, two Osprey IIs and three corporate jets are dispersed among the offices. Microtech has access to sophisticated military hardware on a fairly small scale, with good amounts of personal weaponry and armor including man-portable heavy weapons. It has no heavy mobile armored vehicles (such as tanks), and only limited access to other vehicularly based heavy weapons. With sufficient time, however, Microtech can usually acquire whatever equipment it needs.

Only the Dallas office has a surgery-capable medical center, but all of the other offices have well staffed infirmaries capable of dealing with most non intensive care needs, including trauma and illness. Micro tech has no orbital platform of its own, but it occasionally ships experiments up by Hermes space-plane if zero gravity is required.

**Background:** Microtech does one thing, and they do it well: build full-size computers. They concentrate all of their efforts into improving their mainframe computer systems, without dabbling in cybernetic computers or mini computers. Indeed, they take pride in the fact that their mainframes and workstations are used by other companies to design those types of systems. They are to the 2000s what Cray was to the 1980's and '90s, but on a larger

scale. Microtech is the industry standard. Defense agencies around the world rely on Microtech mainframes, and the Euro Space Agency has several. With its hold on the specialized mainframe industry, Microtech is worried not so much about acquiring proprietary data from other companies through espionage as protecting itself against it. This is where most of its covert and military resources go, as well as a sizable amount of its own computer power. Microtech must be vigilant for external threat as well, however, as there are several larger corporations who would like to acquire Microtech, or see it eliminated in order to further the success of their own products. Accordingly, Microtech is attempting to beef up both its financial and military security.

# network news 54

## NETWORK NEWS 54

**Nationwide broadcasting service.**

**Main Office:** New York.

**Regional offices:** Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, Dallas, Indianapolis, Denver, Arizona, Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Anchorage, Cincinnati, Detroit, Washington, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Dubuque, Las Vegas, Honolulu, Boise, with subsidiary stations in most major cities.

**Stock:** 741,035 shares.

**Available on Market:** 88, 162 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Edwin R. Dreyer Foundation, under control of Michelle Dreyer. Located at Fifty Pines Ranch, near Santa Fe, New Mexico. The estate controls 27.9% of all shares.

**Troops:** 2,518, combat ready, mostly deployed as guards for offices and mobile news crews.

**Covert Operatives:** 178, generally involved in 'uncovering' exclusive news as well as infiltrating other networks to uncover their plans and discredit their stars.

**Equipment and Resources:** Network News 54 owns 42 AV-4s, ostensibly used as mobile news gathering and broadcasting facilities. These vehicles also retain much of their combat function. 54 also owns 30 helicopters used for weather and traffic reporting at each of the network offices, as well as for shuttling company executives, ten corporate jets and five Osprey II aircraft. The network has standard personal equipment for its troops, but little access to military weapons of a non man-portable nature, with the exception of a few vehicles. 54 has no airlift capability of its own.

**Background:** Network News 54 is a wavelength monopolizer, operating on the same frequency across the country. Accordingly, no matter where you go in the country, Network News 54 is on Channel 54. Despite its name, 54 offers many diversions in addition to news. Every regional office offers a slightly different schedule to its district, with syndicated series, non prime-time movies independent local news programs, as long as this is done in a fashion consistent with the Head Office's proscribed protocol. Certain elements of the broadcasting are universal nationwide, such as prime-time series and bi-hourly national and world news shows.



## ORBITAL AIR

**Cargo and passenger transport to Earth orbit, and maintenance of commercial orbital facilities.**

**Main Office:** Nairobi, Kenya.

**Regional Offices:** Anchorage, Vancouver, Montreal, New York, Washington, Miami, Dallas, St. Louis, Chicago, Denver, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Caracas, Rio De Janiero, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, London, Paris, Madrid, Hamburg, Riyadh, Delhi, Cairo, Capetown, Marrakech, Sydney, Singapore, Tokyo, Beijing, Seoul, Honolulu and the Johnson Orbital Facility in low Earth orbit.

**Stock:** 1,185,410 shares.

**Available on Market:** 132,683 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Antoine Du-Bois, Paris, holding 15.2% of total shares.

**Troops:** 10,043 combat ready.

**Covert operatives:** 700, mostly involved in procuring aerospace data from other corporations and governments.

**Equipment and resources:** 35 orbit capable Hermes Scramjet Spaceplanes, 35 corporate jets, two helicopters per office, 70 AV-4 urban assault vehicles, 15 Boeing C-25 heavy cargo jets, and 30 Osprey II V-STOL aircraft. All major offices have surgery capable infirmaries. Orbital Air is well equiped, and has access to

# Orbital Air



almost all levels of military equipment. It is primarily interested in space defense and air-superiority weaponry to protect it's orbital and air-borne resources. In addition to the Johnson Facility, Orbital Air maintains two small maintenance and research workstations, and has a small fleet of orbital vehicles to transport crews between the facilities.

**Background:** Orbital Air holds a key position in the twenty-first century; with their large fleet of French made Hermes spaceplanes they monopolize all orbital lifting capability, with the exception of a few governments, none of which offer comparable service. Many corporations rely on Orbital Air for transport of cargo out of the gravity well, and the Euro-Space Agency's Crystal Tower L-5 colony, a massive orbital hotel complex for the ultra-rich, would be out of business without them. With all commercial space bound cargo dependent upon them, Orbital Air is in a lucrative position that it would like very much to maintain. A large part of O.A.'s budget and covert resources is put to use ensuring that they remain the leader in orbital technology, and that the competition does not make it off the ground, literally or figuratively. Currently, their eye is on China, which is improving it's commercial lift capability rapidly. Also, EuroFlight corporation is expanding it's operations, and expecting to bring orbital services on line soon. This has O.A. worried about it's monopoly. The Johnson Orbital Facility is a transfer station for passengers bound for the Crystal Tower, where they switch from the spaceplanes to space transport shuttles assembled at the O.A. orbital workstations, or purchased from the Euro-Space Agency.

# WNS

**World News Service**

**Worldwide news service.**  
**Main Office:** London.  
**Regional Offices:** Anchorage, Seattle, Ottawa,

New York, Washington, Miami, Dallas, St. Louis, Chicago, Denver, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Mexico City, Caracas, Rio De Janiero, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, London, Shannon, Belfast, Paris, Marseilles, Madrid, Hamburg, Bonn, Berlin, Riyadh, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Cairo, Capetown, Nairobi, Sydney, Singapore, Tokyo, Beijing, Seoul, Honolulu, Tangier, Beijing, Shanghai, Crystal Tower, Nairobi.

**Stock:** 836,931 shares.

**Available on Market:** 101,152 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Mahmet Al Hamedi, Riyadh, holding 31.6% of total shares.

**Troops:** 7,005, mostly employed as guards for the protection of regional offices and news teams in sensitive areas.

**Covert Operatives:** 644, involved in procuring news.

**Equipment and Resources:** Dispersed among the regional offices as needed are 65 AV-4 urban assault vehicles, twenty-five Osprey II aircraft, twenty-five corporate jets, and five Boeing C-25 heavy cargo aircraft. Each office has two helicopters and an infirmary. Only the London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Tokyo and Seoul offices have surgical capability. WNS has access to moderate levels of military technology, including personal armor and weapons, light vehicles and aircraft.

**Background:** WNS keeps tabs on the world, by any means possible. Newspapers and news stations around the world pay large amounts of money to receive WNS stories via the WorldSat Network. WNS has more offices than most corporations, but most of these offices are fairly small and limited in function, intended to serve only as bases of operations for the operatives and reporters working in an area. WNS has at least a small office in almost every major city in the world, but these are sometimes no more than rooms with a few provisions, one resident agent and a Telecom-Terminal linked to the nearest regional office. Few competitors can match WNS' information gathering capabilities, and WNS ensures that it remains at the forefront, not only through legitimate means, but also through spying, espionage, sabotage and illegal snooping of all sorts. WNS does not run any stations of it's own, choosing instead to broker it's information to the highest bidder. There is no shortage of buyers, ratings hungry broadcasters will fork over millions for exclusive rights to an especially juicy story, and the included multi-media presentation package containing WNS' videos, write-ups and commentaries on the story.

## INFOCOMP

**Corporate think tank and information brokers.**

**Main Office:** Los Angeles.

**Regional Offices:** San Francisco, New York, Washington, Chicago, Denver, Vancouver, London

**Stock:** 412,935.

**Available on Market:** 27,541.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Robert D. (Bob) Alvarez, Kilauea, Hawaii, holding 19.2% of total shares.

**Troops:** 400.

**Covert Operatives:** 34.

**Equipment and Resources:** Each office has a surgery capable infirmary, an Osprey II aircraft, a private jet, two helicopters, two AV-4 urban assault vehicles, several Microtech Corp. advanced mainframes and an extensive library and information gathering network.

**Background:** Infocomp provides scientific, technical and personal data pertaining to any subject to anyone who can afford to pay for it. The ultimate detectives, they pride themselves on their elite scientific and research staff's ability to unearth, cogitate, formulate and theorize. For the right price, clients can access Infocomp's huge library of existing information, or have them provide information pertaining to a subject not yet explored. Watch out-- the tougher the problem, the higher the bill...



**BIOTECHNICA**

**Genetic engineering, microbiological and biochemical research.**

**Main Office:** Rome.

**Regional Offices:** London, Bonn, Paris, and La Jolla California.

**Stock:** 6,183,264 shares.

**Available on Market:** 44,745 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Nicolo Loggia, Monte Carlo, Monaco, holding 13.8% of total shares.

**Troops:** 1,833, combat ready.

**Covert Operatives:** 124.

**Equipment and Resources:** Biotechnica has ten AV-4 assault vehicles, five corporate jets, three Osprey II aircraft and one Boeing C-25 heavy cargo jet distributed as needed among its offices. In addition, each office has two helicopters and a surgery capable infirmary. Due to the worldwide importance of its developments, Biotechnica has a fair amount of power in the political community, and it can usually obtain whatever military equipment it needs, although some items may take more time to procure than others. Biotechnica has one orbital research workstation.

**Background:** When the fossil fuel crisis really began to affect the industrialized community in the late 1990s, Biotechnica, then a small firm with only one office, came up with the answer: CHOOH2™ (pronounced 'chew two'). CHOOH2™ (not its actual chemical formula) is a complex grain alcohol produced by a genetically engineered yeasts and wheat strains created by Biotechnica. The potential of CHOOH2™ was realized almost immediately after it was introduced, and within a few years all fossil fuel burning vehicles and power plants had converted to the new fuel. Although Biotechnica held worldwide patents, it lacked the production facilities to meet worldwide demand, forcing it to licensed production to several large agribusinesses and petrocorporations. These deals made Biotechnica an extremely wealthy but still not a particularly large company. It is currently expanding, and working on its next big biotechnical breakthrough.

## **MERRILL, ASUKAGA & FINCH**

**Exclusive investment & financial counseling firm.**

**Main Office:** New York.

**Regional Offices:** San Francisco,

Los Angeles, Chicago, Hong Kong, Tokyo, London, Paris, Munich, Rome.

**Stock:** 684,193 shares.

**Available on Market:** 71,823 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Howard Merrill, New York, holding 22.0% of total shares.

**Troops:** 2000, mostly as guards and bodyguards.

**Covert Operatives:**

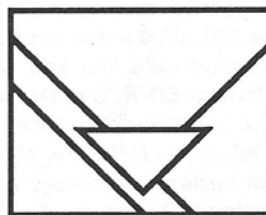
136.

**Equipment and Resources:** Dispersed as needed among the offices are 15 AV-4 assault vehicles, eight corporate jets, two Osprey II aircraft and two Boeing C-25 heavy cargo jets. Each office

also has two helicopters and a non-surgical infirmary. Merrill Asukaga & Finch controls the finances of many powerful people, and even some small nations. Accordingly, they can command a great deal at short notice, including political favors and powerful military equipment.

**Background:** If you have money, and you want more, or you just want it safe, Merrill Asukaga and Finch are the people to talk to. They are without a doubt the top people in investments of all kinds from stock to real estate to frog-farming futures. However, if you don't have a good deal of money in the first place, they aren't interested-- the commission on a \$1000 investment isn't worth their rather expensive time. MA & F's high caliber of service has attracted many of the richest and most powerful people in the world. If, for some reason, they were to go bankrupt, some of the greatest powers in the world, both legal and illegal, would be overturned.

# **MERRILL, ASUKAGA & FINCH**



**PETROCHEM**

## **PETROCHEM**

**Petrochemical products and agribusiness. Worlds' largest CHOOH2 producer.**

**Main Office:** Dallas, Texas.

**Regional Offices:** New York, Washington, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, Tokyo, London, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Riyadh,

Jerusalem, Brasilia. Oil fields in Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf, Texas, Alaska, California and Antarctica. Agricultural areas in California and the Midwest and Southeast.

**Stock:** 1,234,692 shares.

**Available on market:** 97,243 shares.

**Name and Location of major shareholder:** Ellen Trieste, Crystal Tower orbital facility, holding 23.7% of total shares.

**Troops:** 15,261, mostly as fast response combat teams to protect their field interests.

**Covert operatives:** 438.

**Equipment and resources:** Petrochem has vast interests to protect, and is thus fiercely armed. Dispersed among their major offices, oil fields and agricultural areas are 150 AV-4s, forty Osprey II aircraft, ten Boeing C-25 heavy cargo jets and fifteen corporate jets. Each office has three helicopters and a surgery capable infirmary. Petrochem has considerable access to the highest levels of military technology, due to their national and worldwide importance. They also have a large orbital research facility that is well protected, physically and electronically.

**Background:** Petrochem Industries keeps the world running, literally. They are the worlds largest producer of CHOOH 2, and control millions of acres of arable land across the United States. This land is used to grow the genetically altered wheat that is used to make CHOOH2. Surplus grain is shipped across the world as food. Petrochem is also one of the largest remaining oil producers. With the oil supply dwindling, all remaining fossil fuels



are used to make plastics and other synthetics. Petrochem has more fertile oilfields than any other company. All of these assets are huge, and accordingly hard to protect from other companies that would like to usurp Petrochem's wealth. As a result, Petrochem invests huge amounts of money in protecting itself, maintaining an armed force worthy of a small country. Currently, all of the major petrochemical corporations are in a research race to come up with a viable artificial plastic base to entirely replace petroleum products. Consequently, industrial espionage is rife in the industry.

## MILITECH

**Arms manufacturing and distribution.**

**Main Office:** Washington D.C..

**Regional Offices:** New York, Miami, Dallas, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Montreal, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Cairo, Jerusalem, Marrakech, Cape Town, London, Paris, Stuttgart, Geneva, Stockholm, Madrid, Rome.

**Stock:** 1,111,451 shares.

**Available on Market:** 156,213 shares.

**Name and location of major shareholder:** Gen. Donald Landee, USMC (ret.), Annapolis, Maryland, holding 13.9% of total shares.

**Troops:** 21,428 combat ready, but with 50-75% of forces licenced out as mercenaries to other corporations and governments.

**Covert operatives:** 2031, as above.

**Equipment and resources:** Dispersed among it's offices and mercenary forces as needed are 200 AV-4 urban assault vehicles, 75 Osprey II aircraft, twenty corporate jets and twenty Boeing C-25 heavy cargo aircraft. (Usually, 50-75% of this equipment is in the field at any given time.) Additionally, each office has two helicopters, and a surgical infirmary. Naturally, MTI has access to large amounts of the best military technology available. MTI maintains secret training camps in Texas, the California Sierra-Nevada Mountains, and in Florida.

**Background:** MTI is the worlds' largest producer and seller of military weapons of all kinds. From revolvers to tanks to jet fighters, MTI is a major military supplier to the United States, and the United States, in turn, is MTI's largest customer. MTI will deal worldwide with anyone who has money as long as they aren't "commies". MTI's definition of a communist is rather fluid, however, and can be ascribed on a whim. MTI's mercenary forces and in house supply of weaponry make it the most militarily powerful company in the world, if not the most economically. That will come later...

## WORLD SAT COMMUNICATIONS

**Sattelite transmission and communications.**

**Main Office:** Paris.

**Regional Offices:** London, Rome, Madrid, Stockholm, Bohn, Cairo, Nairobi, Brasilia, Washington, Los Angeles, Toronto, Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong.

**Stock:** 868,396 shares.



**Available on Market:** 101,104 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Raymond Rousseau, Menton, French Riviera, holding 15.5% of total shares.

**Troops:** 7,444, combat ready, some space trained.

**Covert operatives:** 658.

**Equipment and Resources:** Dispersed as needed among the offices are thirty AV-4 assault vehicles, twelve Osprey II aircraft, five corporate jets and three Boeing C-25 heavy cargo jets. Each office also has two helicopters and a surgical infirmary. WorldSat's satellites are crucial to many nations communications. Consequently, most high tech military hardware is available to them on short notice. WorldSat has a large, well protected orbital service facility.

**Background:** WorldSat has the monopoly on large scale satellite communications, and are responsible for the dispersion of phone, military, computer and commercial data. These communications are crucial worldwide, and their disruption could be disastrous. WorldSat invests a great deal in making sure this does not happen. The sttelites are even shielded against electro-magnetic pulse, although no one is really sure how well this will work. Although it is not legal, it is also possible for WorldSat to monotor any of the communications it is transmitting.



**Corporate security, corporate police and various corporate suboperations.**

**Main Office:** Tokyo.

**Regional Offices:** Singapore, Hong Kong, Osaka, Kyoto, Bangkok, Baghdad, Sydney, London, Hamburg, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Geneva, Helsinki, The Hague, Rio de Janiero, Montreal, New York, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Honolulu. Suboffices throughout the world.

**Stock:** 1,252,722 shares.

**Available on Market:** 111,923 shares.

**Name and Location of Major Shareholder:** Kenji Arasaka, Tokyo, holding 19.9% of total shares.

**Troops:** 25,222 combat ready, most licenced out as security or mercenary forces to other corporations.

**Covert Operatives:** 2557, mostly working to further Arasaka's political goals.

**Equipment and Resources:** Dispersed among Arasaka's offices are 85 AV-4 assault vehicles, 25 Osprey II aircraft, eleven corporate jets and ten Boeing C-25 heavy cargo jets. Each office also has two helicopters, and a surgical infirmary. Arasaka's wealth gives it access to almost all levels of military technology on fairly short notice. Arasaka has a secret training facility in Hokkaido, where it trains it's security troops and operatives.

**Background:** If you want it protected, Arasaka are the people to speak to. They maintain the largest armed force of any corporation, although they do not maintain a particularly large amount of on-hand heavy military weapons. These troops are mostly licenced out to other firms as corporate security guards, couriers and mercenaries. They are the best trained and hardest in the business, and will follow their contractors orders second only Arasaka's. To the Arasaka corporation, they are loyal to the point of death Arasaka is more interested in fostering it's own political goals, however, than protecting other companies, and they use their position of trust with major corporations around the world to gain inside informations, contacts and advantages that will help them to realize their ultimate goal of political and economic control of Japan.

-William Moss, ©World News Service, 2011



## Just another Friday night.

You pay your two bucks at the door and walk in. Over at the bar there are the usual lines, so you decide to skip the barfront action. Feeling on top of the world, you go out to the main floor, for another night of the club life.

At first glance, the club seems like a mixing place of all types of people. Then you realize that they're all segregated. Posers at the back, trying to get noticed, your average punks in the middle, acting oblivious to their surroundings. There are Chromers bashing their heads against the walls on one side, while the Boosters are on the other, looking for trouble.

And last but not least there are the 'dorph-heads, slamming into each other at the front, next to the stage where the band of the night blares out hits of today and of the past.

They say people like Johnny Silverhand and Kerry Eurodyne got their start in clubs just like this one, but you think it's just propaganda. After all, people like Johnny Silverhand didn't need the clubs to make them larger than life, they were born that way. It's only Rock N' Roll, right?

Out on the Streets of Night City, there's stories going on; Street history being made. Whether it's Boosters in the alleys, Nomads on the Road, Rockers in the clubs, there's action, and trouble everywhere you look. And the Trauma Team hovers overhead, waitin' to pick up the pieces---for a price.

Here comes a taste of the City. In your face.

# "A Cool Metal Fire: "

## Silverhand Still Can Rock

From his humble beginnings in the group Samurai, to his first five solo albums, Johnny Silverhand has become the household word in rock and roll. With his latest release, *A Cool Metal Fire*, Johnny Silverhand is making his push to become a legend.

The album opens up as all of his solo albums have, with a rip roaring instrumental, "Dancing With My Axe," that is guaranteed to set your stereo on fire. This fast paced, no holds barred, display of guitar work is so hot that you'll want to listen to it twice.

And if that isn't enough in itself, you come to track two, "Chippin' In." This piece, like the first, is another fast paced lightning bolt of pure rock and roll. It also makes a statement about today's society that can not be ignored: If we continue on our current trend of replacing our body parts

with metal, what will we have left in the end?

The rest of the album is almost typical Silverhand, with it's energetic guitar playing and thought provoking lyrics. He does, however come up with three other songs that really stand out. The first two, "(Out of) The City" and "Flashing Lights," go so well together, both thematically and musically, that they almost seem to be one song in totality instead of two individual ones. These two songs bring out the ethereal vision of today from a non-partisan outsider that is innocent of our ways. It leaves the listener with a new way of looking at their own life, even as it passes by at the speed of light.

The last song on the album, "Never Fade Away," departs from the mainstream sound of Johnny Sil-

verhand and brings him into a new dimension musically. The basic rhythm is both simplistic and concise. This song makes no pretences about being a song about today, but doesn't leave you with a gritty metal after-taste like most of its peers. Although I'm not sure that this song really belongs with the rest on the album because of its departure musically, I do know that it should have been recorded somewhere, so *A Cool Metal Fire* is as good a place as any.

Overall, I found *A Cool Metal Fire* to be more than just your ordinary, everyday record. With its driving beat and spellbinding lyrics, the album takes us to the heart of our culture and allows us to monitor it's pulse.

## Pretentious or Political: Seattle's Cutthroat

*"The audience seems to consist of the mindless, overpainted, underdressed children that you would find at most Chromatic Metal concerts. Each one of them is so wrapped up in their own image that they often don't seem to even know who the band they are seeing is. Tonight is a night that they will always remember though, because Cutthroat is about to hit the stage."*

So reads the back cover of *Slashing Steel*, the new live album by Cutthroat. Some people think that these kings of Chrome are getting a little too pretentious when referring to themselves, but I had a chance to talk to Knifeedge, the lead singer and bassist for the band, who thinks otherwise.

Jeff Daniel: People often say that you guys are just a little pretentious when talking about yourselves. Why do you think that this is?

Knifeedge: That's easy. Unlike most Chromatic bands today, we take our roots from the old punk bands of the late 1970s and early '80s. It's not the blazing style that used to be called Speed Metal, though we do use that a lot. Politics is the driving force behind our band. It's because we are so political, that we force ourselves onto our listeners. If that is pretentious, then I guess we are.

JD: When you say you are a political band, what do you mean?

K: We view ourselves as messengers. It is our job to open the

eyes of our listeners with our music. The best, eye opening, messages are in political issues and stories.

JD: Like the song "Kalakari"?

K: Exactly. Most people today don't even remember the name Hiram Kalakari, and they certainly don't remember what he did. It's songs about things that have shaped our lives that we play. We try and tell the truth as we see it, not what the public wants to hear.

JD: Then how do you explain the success of "Kalakari"? As of today it is currently number four on the EuroRadio top ten.

K: You got me. If we had known that it would be such a hit, well, I don't know. Maybe we would have done something different to promote the album. Though I suppose it's really not going to matter since I still think that the average person is not going to know who the f\*\*k Kalakari was.

JD: Getting back to your political motivation, how do you justify "Ginsu Lover" as being political?

K: Easy, I said we had our background in politics, not our entire lives motivated by them. But if you listen very closely, you will find out that it is a political song of sorts. "Ginsu Lover" is not about a sexual lover, but rather a member of a Booster Gang who is overenthusiastic about using his Rippers. It's guys like the Ginsu Lover who make our streets unsafe to walk at night.

JD: What's next for Cutthroat? *Slashing Steel* is being called a new innovation in the music industry, how do you intend to follow it up?

K: You got me. When we released a live album of entirely new material, we expected to have our diehard fans buy it and that was it. Now the damn thing's gone and sold over two million copies. I expect we'll decide what's next for us after we tour. --JD

A *Cyberrock* Exclusive

The Destiny Interview

# Still On the Edge; Still Fighting the War

"Fifty years gone by/ Since we heard our nation's cry/ fifty years gone by/ Since we all watched you die."

It is lyrics like these that make Destiny one of the most provoking bands of our time. Their new hit, "Song for John (Fifty Years)," is not only filled with political rhetoric, but is also reminding us of a time when America was still great.

Since their debut album, *Walking the Skies*, Destiny has consistently provided the listening public with songs that hit close to home.

Bandleader Jessie Moore explains, "We didn't always used to be political. In fact, I didn't even care about anything other than making money until ten years ago. All I wanted was the fame, and all the benefits that came with it. Now times are different. It seems all I want now is to get my messages across."

But fame and fortune did elude them for many years until they got their big break opening for the now defunct Cowboy Panzer. It was on that tour that the audience really started to notice their music.

"I think it was the fact that Cowboy Panzer was so big and political. I found out that we were going to open for them on the tour and all of a sudden I knew that our music had to change. I must have written thirty songs on that tour, some of which were eventually worked into our set."

Despite the growing interest that

Jesse was showing in political issues, the band continued to produce other songs as well.

"I can remember the first time we went into the studio after the C.P. tour. I had all these songs that I wanted to record, but the group started right in on this bubblegum tune called, 'Input Out.' I was furious. I mean, here I was with this great message to sing and all these guys wanted to do was talk about bad relationships."

"It was about then when I threatened to quit. Thinking back on it now, I can understand why the band didn't think I was serious. I must have threatened to quit six times in the first nine months of our existence.

And all the time I was using those threats so I could get my own way. I really was a spoiled brat.

"It took me about five months before I convinced them that I was serious. By then we had all ready recorded *My Baby Left Me For A Short Circuit*. Pleading with the band, I convinced them to start over, using the stuff I had written on the tour, instead of stuff like, 'Input Out.' When it was all over, some ten months after we trashed the stuff from *My Baby*, we had recorded, *Dinner With Himmler*."

It was that album that attracted so much attention from the critics. They called it the new political feeling of the 2000's. The fame and fortune that Destiny had been looking forward to had been found.

Their second album after the Cowboy Panzer tour gained them even more notoriety. So much that they were able to tour as a headliner instead of a backup band. Destiny drummer, Timemaster, recalls:



"It was a big change. I mean one day your opening for some big name group. Then you're a big name group.

I can still remember the difference in the fans. One day you're slogging through an old number, listening to the fans yawning, and the next the fans are going wild.

"I remember this one gig we did on the *Cheyenne Mountain* tour when this sleek looking Chromer comes up to me and offers to jack in. This type of thing never happened as an opening band."

After the release of *Cheyenne Mountain* the band drew some flack from the Europeans. In fact, the album was banned for a while in several countries overseas.

"I can remember that", says Timemaster. "Jessie was crushed. She was so into her new political mood that she got depressed that the entire world wasn't hearing her message. But it wasn't the Europeans we had to worry about. Back here in the United States we had several corporations, who shall remain nameless, who wanted our heads on worldwide news.

"More than once on that tour we had our backstage crew and roadies, which included a couple guys who used to be professional wrestlers back in the '90's, toss some people out who wanted to do something other than give us praise."

The band still has some problems with fans. Two times on the last tour there were fans arrested for trying to break into the tour bus. And on more than one occasion there have been young women claiming to have been attacked by band members.

"Yeah, I know all that stuff. But what really gets me is that all our real fans know that the two posers arrested were 'dorped out and looking for a place to recycle. As for those "rape" attempts, those are just corporations trying as best they can to get us out of the spotlight. Our true fans know that we are all involved in permanent interfaces."

Destiny. A band fighting for the truth. In a struggle against corporations that don't want to hear the truth, all they can do is hope to survive.

# Boostergangs

The night streets are an unforgiving world. Posers, Rockers, Solos and Chromes hit the alleys and dives of Night City, fermenting a deadly brew of violence, craziness and the killer instinct. But the worst predators on the Street are the Boosters--cyborged monster-gangs with a savage bloodlust and a twisted Attitude all their own. From Walt Pickering's Pulitzer prize winning column, *NIGHT CITY STREETS*, we take a walk on the wild side with the infamous pack called the *Blood Razors*.

Walter Pickering's Night City Streets

## Street Direct With The Blood Razors

Night City, 2013 - The City's never really dark, not for those who live and die in it. A relentless neon circuit of steel and glass. Night in Night City is a hot pulsing thing. You feel it coursing through the wacked out veins of drugged up dorph heads, high on Lace and Slam. See it in the cookie cutter stares of pale faced posers, just out from under the knife.

But no matter what your kick is, you're probably not experiencing it alone. You *belong* in the City, or you die. People congealing together like spattered blood, moving to a thousand different songs.

You hear the Blood Razor's song only once, and you never forget. I'll never know why a group of Boosters like the Razors let me run a night with their pack; maybe I caught Hack Man, the Booster Chieftan in a good mood. It was party time: Hack's kid brother was getting his claws.

Just a short brief for you folks out there in the burbs; you've probably never heard of these Booster boys before. Here in the City, they're as common as crud on the sidewalk. Gangs like the Razors have fused cyberwear and violence into a deadly form of street fashion that has been claiming the lives of more than forty citizens a week. The average Booster is an amoral technophile. Hardware and Wetware are the meat and drink of the Booster, and they'll do anything to get it. Arson, robbery, muggings, assassinations. If there's money in it, enough for another small boost at a blackmarket

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## Overview 2013: Two Nomad Packs

**The Crazy Quilts:** The Central American War was hard on the soldiers who fought in them. Harder still was coming home. The cities were urban wastelands, unsuited for raising a family. Homes, towns, whole cities had dissappeared off of the maps, victims of progress.

These young soldiers returned to an America in which nothing was sacred, and everything was for sale. Many found that they were unwelcome relics of the past. With nothing else to turn to, many of these dispossessed combat men and women turned to the only support network they had, each other; and the only profession they knew, soldiering.

The Crazy Quilts are one such group, recruited from all over the country. Together, they formed one of the many offshoots of Nomad culture, the mercenary brotherhood. Named for their colorful uniforms, a ragtag collection of fabric scraps roughly forming a camoflauge pattern, they sell the one commodity they have left in a ruined world; their honor and fighting skills.

The Crazy Quilts hire themselves out, whether singly or in small battalions. Many act as bodyguards; others hire out as freelance mercs, corporate extraction forces, or as hit men and assassins. The Crazy Quilts place honor above all else. You can be certain that they will never turn upon their employers, never sell out, never back down, and never desert a comrade.

The Crazy Quilts consider themselves the last bastion of professional integrity in an otherwise chaotic society. It is this uncompromising reputation which has made the Crazy Quilts a powerful and respected force in the *Cyberpunk* world.

**The Huskers:** Bud and Martha McCain tried to hold onto their land, but the Agri-Corps were determined to remove them. Even after the Agri-Corps bought the local bank so they could foreclose on their property, the McCains were steadfast in their resolve to remain on the land that had been in their family for generations. Then came the "bad luck"--their eldest son perished in a "car accident; their daughter made an addict by Corporate drug lords. Then came the plague. Within twelve hours, all of the cattle and the poultry were dead; the crops, withered husks. The McCains left their land, promising to someday retake what was rightfully theirs. It was a dream they shared with many others.

Over years, the McCains have formed a new family, a family of the homeless and the dispossessed. They came on foot, on motorcycles, in fleets of R.V.'s. Under the leadership of Bud McCain, they formed a roving community, known as the Huskers to outsiders, due to their corn belt roots. Travelling the roadways of America, finding work where they can, setting up camp when they are able, moving on when the locals can no longer tolerate them, the Huskers have a common goal--to someday retake their land.

Labelled as terrorists for their bold strikes against the industries which have rendered them homeless, the McCains prefer to think of themselves as honest folk turned freedom fighters. The Huskers have long memories. Those who befriend them have an ally for life; those who anger them have a dangerous foe. Will the McCains retake their stolen homeland? Time will tell. But with every new atrocity committed by the Agri-Corps, their numbers grow.

Continued From Page 34

clinic, the Booster will take to it like chrome on a pair of mirrorshades. It's easier every time, they say. As more and more hardware's grafted, sockets drilled, and chips implanted, the Booster sinks further into his psychoworld machine-altered chaos. The best of them become the ring leaders, the worst are killing machines, riding on the edge of cyberpsychosis, ready to flatline themselves and everyone around them for that last big score.

Worst of all, Boosters travel in packs.

Maybe it was my arm, the one I lost in Lima, that endeared me to the Razors' top brass. It was an old model, military, and the dull steel and chipped plastic put me on their level. They had shackled themselves in an old warehouse, off of the main sprawl. In twos and threes they filtered in, screaming and shouting over deafening hardcore street rock. A few grabbed oiled rags and started cleaning their claws, fresh blood from a bunch of posers looking for action. Hack Man sat on his plastic throne, staring out through gunmetal eyes at the graffiti-covered walls of the nest. Dorphed up, he wasn't in the mood to answer questions. Only when his brother staggered in was there a flicker from behind the stone cut face. Metal arms crossed over armored chest, he popped his claws. A signal for the rest.

They came at Hack Man's Bro from all sides, animal cries tearing from their throats as claws popped from housings in fingers. Steel and flesh monsters, pushed on by drugs music, hardware, and each other. The kid bared his teeth as the first pair made their pass, striking home, rending bloody tears in his flesh with a surgeon's skill. He didn't fight, didn't run, didn't cry out. Soon his arms, legs, chest were covered with thin lacerations. Knees buckling, he fell to the floor. I watched with facinated horror as the pack pounced on their prey, kicking and biting. In minutes, it was over. The dragged the broken kid before his older Bro, thowing him before their chieftan's feet.

"Get up". the Hack Man snarled.

The kid pushed himself up to his knees, stared out into nowhere. "It hurts". he muttered through swollen lips.

The kick sent him sprawling across the floor of the nest. "Life hurts". said Hack Man over the jeers of his gang brothers. "You were born into a world of pain. If you don't like it, just leave now. Go outside in the gutter. Curl up and die. We welcome pain. We are pain. But we armor ourselves. Look around you. We are the city. Use your claws to hurt. Be one of us and pain won't touch you. You become the pain." He rose from his chair. "Are you ready to become the pain?"

He forced himself to stand, blood painting the floor a

greasy red. He turned to the nearest Razor and struck him in the jaw with a leather gloved fist. The Boosters roared their approval. The answer was yes.

They stormed out of the building, claws exposed. They carried the kid on their shoulders. They would work their way across their city, heading towards a waiting ripperdoc, slashing and burning everything in their path. The cops stayed far away; no overtime bonus is worth messing with a Blood Razor initiation.

The hospitals would report thirteen casualties from the mayhem that night, all so that a fifteen year old kid could get his claws and join with his brothers. Before I left the nest, the Hack Man, cooling his jets with Smash, asked me what I thought of his *family*.

I popped the cassette out of my arm and stowed it in my bag. He could read about it on the Net, just like the rest of you.

---Walter Pickering, Net 54 News



### Arasaka Security Corporation

Password Please:

Access Granted

File Desired?: **Symbiotics**

Please wait

#### Symbiotics

Symbiotics is the file name given to updates on Booster gang "Iron Sights" which is financed and controlled by Arasaka Security. Breakdown follows:

Gang members: 43

Enhancements: Varied

Location: Night City

The following report compiled by Rachael Tyroll.

In accordance with my assignment, I met with said Booster gang at designated meeting place. Upon their arrival, they proceeded to scan me for weapons and other noticable cybernetics. When they were assured that I was, in fact, a representative of Arasaka the leader was brought out from a nearby bar where she had most likely been watching the intial encounter.

The first words out of the leader, who calls herself Brandywine, indicated to me that the gang obviously

does not relish the idea of being a pawn for Arasaka, but resigns themselves to this stature because of the money we input into the gang. She then asked my purpose for calling such a meeting. Upon my telling her that Arasaka wished me to accompany the gang for a week to get the full scope of their activities. I was grabbed from behind and someone else threatened my life with several sharp blades protruding from their hands. These weapons, which are illegal, go by the street name of "Rippers," and, judging by their looks, I would estimate that they will do just that to human flesh and bone.

The gang's initial hostility stopped cold when I firmly told them that killing me, or even refusing to let me accompany them, would result in immediate stoppage of funds provided by Arasaka. It is my impression that the members of this gang hate their own humanity as well as other people's. This is further reinforced by my observation that the gang members that are held in the highest esteem are the ones that have the most metal meshed with their bodies. In my judgement, the members of this

gang can easily be controlled by our organization by simply controlling their money supply to buy new cybernetics.

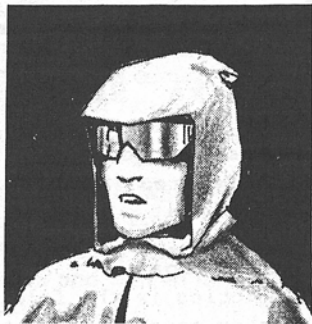
The week I spent with the gang proves to me another theory that I had postulated: The gang not only hates humanity [which, in itself could be reasoning for it's existance], but also likes to hurt, mutilate and kill others for what would seem to be the pure pleasure of it. These two factors lead me to the conclusion that the members of "Iron Sights" are all suffering from cyberpsychosis and terminating our ties with them in the near future may be the best solution for all parties.

- Rachael Tyroll 9/1/13

# Gang Violence Erupts on Night City Streets

By Bes Isis

In the early morning hours seventeen youths were killed in yet another boostergang confrontation. Street sources say that a group of the Iron Sights gang were gathered at a bar known as *Rainbow Nights* when they were confronted by the red robed Inquisitors. After a brief argument, fighting started, and when it was all over there were seven dead Inquisitors and ten dead members of the Iron Sights.



When we finally were able to reach the leader of the Inquisitors, who has asked that his name be withheld, he had several things to say about today's and other related incidents.

"In the midnight hour, when the sound of footsteps on the pavement strikes fear within your heart, the Inquisitors will be there to judge you. Tonight's example, the attack on the heretics known as the Iron Sights, is just the start of a new order that is coming to be. A new order that will be led by the Inquisitors.

"I stand here before the public in general not to preach of impending doom, but rather of judgement. Judgement that will be rendered by the Inquisitors. For most of the public, they have nothing to fear, but there are some out there

that should think about their sins, and how they will soon be punished for them.

"To further the impact of this statement, I need only point out the case of the heretical members of the Iron Sights. They, like anyone else who has molded unnatural machinery into their God-given flesh, will be struck down to the last person by the Inquisitors. If that is not clear enough, then let me rephrase it: If you have no metal infused with your body, you are safe. If you have voluntarily undergone such blasphemous melding, then beware. The Inquisitors are here to judge you."

Although he would not reveal his identity to the public, the head of the Inquisitors is thought to have some older, no longer believed, religious background, which can be seen as the cause for his slightly different views on today's society. Whatever his reason may be, the head of the Inquisitors has given his warning to the people of Night City.

On an ending note, it must be pointed out that the chief of police for Night City was reluctant to answer questions regarding his plans for controlling the Inquisitors, and other gangs that threaten the citizens of this city. In fact the only thing we could get out of him was, "No comment."

Sound familiar?

# One Night with the Trauma Team

Fun Times in Night City with your Favorite Paramedics

Reporting: Rich "Meatball" Cramer M.D.

Date: 8-16-13

Dispatcher: Lifeline Trauma Inc., Night City Branch #23

Transport: P&W modified A.V. 4E impact rated to threat level 7

Crew: 5: 2 Med, 2 Solos, Driver/Gunner

**6:30** : Early call. Responded to warehouse district. Patient victim of Booster skirmish. Open chest. Trauma to liver, pancreas. Two collapsed lungs. Blood PH four over norm. Patient flat-lined. Unable to revive. Removed model K-100 cyberarm with combat options for compensation. Suggest placing half of resale into company Christmas fund as per norm.

**9:47** : Broken card alert at *Hari Kari Sushi* restaurant. Corp patient found choking on piece of sea urchin. Administered swift slap to back and dislodged foreign object. Read patient list of response charges. Patient became hostile and threatened lawsuit. Added surcharges. Patient pulled firearm, forcing Solo to fire in self defense. Patient revived and brought to Med Center. Suggest cancelling account after payment of bills.

**11:23** : Solo down on grounds of *Raven Macrocyb Inc.* Corp security became hostile and refused to allow extraction procedures of patient, claiming first rights due to Corporate Espionage Act of 2009. No one in team had ever heard of the Act, and in accordance with standard procedure, we continued with extraction. Raven Inc's. lawyers should be in contact concerning deaths of six security personal who were in path of AV-4 upon departure. Patient revived and charged extra for ammo costs and company lawyers fees.

**14:15** : Firefight in inner city. Two broken cards. Upon arrival discovered a team from *R.E.O. Meatwagon Inc.* in process of loading carded patients onto their unit. Following company policy on "meat jumping", we warned them off over loudspeaker. R.E.O. team opened up with small arms fire. Team R.N. Chestly Whitestone took the initiative and released napalm canisters. Resulting explosion cost lives of both the patients and the R.E.O. team. However, Nurse Whitestone's quick thinking saved company's and team's reputations. Suggest that we sue R.E.O. Meatwagon for costs of patient accounts and munitions expenses.

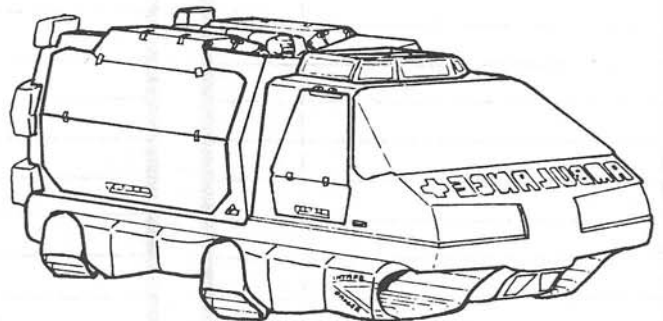
**15:55** : Broken card call at *Grand Illusion Dance Hall and Bar.* Subject patient one Rockerboy, Keri Eurodyne. Patient was in good health, but was under assault of young female fans. Dispensed tear-

gas and waded into the fold. The grateful Mr. Eurodyne billed the cost of extraction and a new set of clothes to his studio's account and gave us a healthy tip. Since the teenyboppers seemed to enjoy the free spirited chaos, I doubt the company need worry about lawsuits from irate parents.

**16:30** : Team members attacked in bar during rest break between calls; shotgun-wielding Booster attempted robbery. Criminal was dispatched by team security leader, Jazz Tobias. Criminal flatlined from small arms fire and set off cybernet Lifeline response. Subject held Lifeline card. Unable to revive. Suggest forfeiting of advance fees on account along with all personal effects. Due to amount of cyberware on patient, it is possible that she was in first stages of cyber psychosis.

**17:40** : Net call to alley behind Night City chapter of Elks Lodge. Patient identified as DMS Vid actress Samantha Horn. Apparent overdose on mixture of 'Dorph and Slam. Patient revived. Dispatcher instructions followed to return patient to DMS studios. Team ambushed while on approach vector to DMS pad by three AV-4s bearing R.E.O. Meatwagon markings. Took evasive action. Main stabilizers holed during fire exchange. DMS anti-air defenses opened up at range of 300 yards scattering R.E.O. Vehicles, one of which crashed over the financial district during retreat. Patient delivered after payment of hazardous duty fees and the promise of a night on the town with the chief surgeon. Have taken the liberty of placing all Lifeline teams on Class I alert. Counter all R.E.O. personnel and vehicles "with extreme prejudice". See supplemental report on incident and vehicle damage.

**19:00** : Finished shift and returned vehicle to pool. Overtime and hazard duty pay logged with dispatcher. Team placed on two day paid layover while repair of vehicle in progress. Heavy weapons issued from Lifeline armory. Fixers contacted to deal with R.E.O. personnel. Team will remain together until incident blows over. For emergencies, contact team via Net passcode "Stitch In Time"....End of Report.....







## NETRUNNER PROGRAMS

### INTERFACES

- \$500 Dungeon
- \$400 Tronnic
- \$600 Mega City
- \$7-900 Custom designed

### SERVICES

- \$1000 Interface Copies
- \$50 Interface Updates
- 20% cost Program Copies

### DEFENSIVE

- \$50 p/lvl Data Wall I thru VI (raw energy barrier)
- \$120 p/lvl Code Wall I thru VI (keyed defense barrier)

### PENETRATION

- \$100 Hammer (breaks down data walls)
- \$200 Jackhammer (breaks down data walls--quietly)
- \$600 Wizard's Book (unlocks complex code walls)
- \$100 p/lvl CodeCracker I thru IV (unlocks basic code walls)
- \$600 Raffles (unlocks complex code walls)
- \$500 Worm (unlocks Data & Code walls)

### STEALTH & OBSCUREMENT

- \$350 Invisibility (hides Netrunner from defenses)
- \$500 Speedtrap (warns of traps in next frame)
- \$200 Replicator (confuses tracking programs)
- \$200 Flack (confuses tracking programs)

### COMBAT PROGRAMS

- \$300 p/lvl Killer I thru VI (kills any program)

### ANTI INTERFACE

- \$600 Flatline (destroys interface)
- \$700 Poison Flatline (destroys modem, interface)

### WARNING & TRACKING

- \$500 Watchdog (alerts masters)
- \$500 Bloodhound (tracks, tells masters)
- \$800 Pit Bull (tracks, cuts line)

### MULTI USE DEMONS

- \$1800 Imp (2 programs)
- \$2000 Afreet (3 programs)
- \$3000 Succubus (4 programs)
- \$4000 Balron (5 programs)
- \$5000 Vampyre (absorbs programs)

### PROGRAM ASSASSINS

- \$1000 Aardvaark (kills Worms)
- \$1500 Manticore (kills Demons)
- \$2000 Hydra (kills Demons)
- \$3000 Dragon (kills Demons)

### BLACK PROGRAMS

- \$50000 Zombie (makes you into vegetable)
- \$75000 Brainwipe (makes you into vegetable)
- \$100000 Liche (brainwashes you)
- \$100000 Firestarter (fries brain, wiring, modem)
- \$150000 Hellhound (stops heart)

p/lvl: per level of program