

# WILDSIDE

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## DEDICATIONS

To our Parents: Thanks for your support, encouragement and understanding (the four years of college education didn't hurt either).

Mike Pondsmith: Thanks for *Cyberpunk*, and for giving a bunch of wet-behind-the-ears college sophomores a chance, even if it took them four years to say thank you.

Jeff Hexter: You've always been there for us and we'd never trade you in for a better model.

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Mike MacDonald: A hell of a guy, but not much of a radar detector.

Thanks to all our friends at the University of Rochester and the URSGA, for the good gaming and great times.

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# INSIDE WILDSIDE

## By Benjamin Wright and Michael Roter

Welcome to the Wildside. You now stand at the gates to the underground... and as you meander through the pages of this book, you'll get the inside story on all the deals, scams, rackets and schemes that make up *Cyberpunk*. The Wildside is the prototypical gray area, where nothing is simple and desperation meets decadence. This is the stuff of the Street, the dominion of the Fixer and the essence of *Cyberpunk*. The Wildside has always been at the beating heart of the dark future, but so far it has been relegated to half-written codes. It has never been thoroughly explored and the systems which make it work have never been named, published or explained. Until now. Why? Because it's not pretty. This stuff is grungy, nervous, illegal, confused, jury-rigged, menacing, claustrophobic and disturbing. Most people want glamour and action out of their endeavors, but there's more to *Cyberpunk* than that. If you don't want to know, don't bother reading any further. Like they say on the Strip, "If you're squeamish, don't kick the beach ball."

Some people may wonder why this book is needed; after all, everyone knows that street lowlife is an integral part of *Cyberpunk* and Fixers are just thieves and drug dealers, right?

No. Although it may be perfectly clear to your average *Cyberpunk* player that the underground exists, some players fail to grasp all its subtleties and nuances. The underground can be difficult to understand, therefore some role-players try to gloss over its intricacies. Now they no longer have to. Despite the number of Fixer characters that are out there, less has been said about this role than any other in the *Cyberpunk 2020* rules. Perhaps the greatest misunderstanding of these characters is the equa-

tion of Fixers with thieves; this is a bland oversimplification. Fixers are the brains behind the operation while others perform the hands-on dirty work. Fixers work with people; they are go-betweens, masterminds and negotiators. If they can, they hire other characters to carry out missions. This fact should help highlight the important idea that Fixers are everywhere: they own the nightclubs of which edgerunners are so fond; they buy restricted weapons and sell restricted cyberware, and perform all the other duties which keep covert capitalism alive. Beyond this, Fixers have many roles in the "legitimate" world, managing the careers of big-name Rockers, acting as political favor brokers, hiring themselves out as media talent scouts and even being your local Avon lady! No matter what position they fulfill, Fixers can add new dimensions to a *Cyberpunk* game.

New dimensions are what *Wildside* is all about. *Cyberpunk* may be full of creative violence, but it is a world where bullets can cut through armor like cheesecloth and dying is not only inevitable—it's easy. In such an environment, combat is an obstacle, not a goal. There are so many role-playing possibilities in *Cyberpunk*

**Well, Excuse Me Us:** Some gamers may feel betrayed when they see that this supplement refers back to the pages of other *Cyberpunk* products. We feel that it is impossible to work in a vacuum. If we weren't able to include references to other supplements, we would be wasting space with repeated information... the only other option would be to make every game a standalone product with no supplements at all. Besides, most of these references are small and are only included for your convenience, usually to provide extra information. If you don't have one of the supplements which *Wildside* mentions, there are many options:

- 1) Go buy the supplement.
- 2) Borrow a friend's copy of the supplement.
- 3) Go to your local gaming store and look up the reference.
- 4) Make it up. Who's gonna know?

2020 that it seems a shame to devote all attention to corporate extractions and gang shoot-outs. As the authors of this book, we hope you will use its information to expand your gaming horizons. If you think freelancing for the corporations as a black ops team-for-hire is tough, try establishing and running a successful smuggling operation! Go ahead and try anything and everything in your games...play a heavily-sculpted exotic Fixer, run a gambling casino as a Bookie-business adventure, or set up a "raid & trade" campaign in orbit. Why not do all three? Check out the edges of *Cyberpunk* and see what you find.

Don't be trapped by any bounds, even the ones in this book. If there's something you don't like, ignore it. If certain rules would walk all over your character or campaign, pretend you never read it or rewrite it to suit your purposes. After all, rules should always be secondary to role-playing. However, be warned that even one rules change in your game can disrupt the balance of a campaign. Like all things in *Cyberpunk*, a pebble thrown into a pond makes waves. Technologies used to make weapons will trickle down to the general public and show up in toasters, so remember the law of cause and effect: every effect has its CAWS.

## WHAT MAKES A FIXER TICK?

The following was downloaded from the files of the School of Human Sciences at the University of Hamburg in Germany. It contains excerpts from a lecture by the University's Dr. Jürgen Zielger, Chief of the Department of Modern Anthropology and Sociology, entitled "Behavior Patterns of the North American Fixer." The lecture was given at an international Sociology conference held at the Matsuyama Institute of Higher Learning in Osaka, Japan. This written transcript was translated from German—audio, video and braildance recordings are also available.



"...North America has always been noted for its high crime rate. A natural but nonetheless disturbing result of this century-long trend of civil rebellion is the evolution of the so-called Fixer. For those members of my audience who may not be familiar with the term, a Fixer is an independent street operative who specializes in the exchange of goods—any type of goods, be they found, bargained for or stolen—for as great a profit margin as possible. This lecture centers mostly on the North American Fixer, but as my honorable hosts can attest, the phenomena is not limited to the Americas....

"...The subject of interview #23 hails from Quebec. He has spent the last 15 years on the streets of Providence, RI, in the northeastern region of the United States of America. During his career, #23 has been a drug dealer, a trafficker in stolen goods and, most recently, a trader in highly illegal software. #23 has

told me of his desire to move into the smuggling of stolen human organs.

Interviewer: "Your life style must be very exciting? I've seen many popular braildance chips and videos highlighting life on the American streets."

#23: "Exciting? I don't think you really understand what's here, gato."

I: "Please, enlighten us."

#23: Excitement - yeah, I guess. If living in a sewer is your idea of excitin'.

I: "But, what about the romance, the adventure?"

#23: "Adventure? You want the fairy tale, don't you? Here's the facts: every day you wake up and look over that edge, into that hole in yourself, and every day it grows a little bit larger..."

I: "How clever, an allusion to Nietzsche, no doubt."

#23: "Who?"

I: "Excuse me. You were saying something about a 'hole.'"

#23: "Yeah, the hole in your heart"

— the hole in your soul."

I: "What exactly does that mean?"  
#23: "It means that one day you walk up and put 3 nines in a brat you ain't even old enough to shave 'cause he's in your way."

I: "nines?"  
#23: [makes a gun out of his hand by pointing with his index finger and dropping his thumb] "Bang!!"

I: "Uh..."

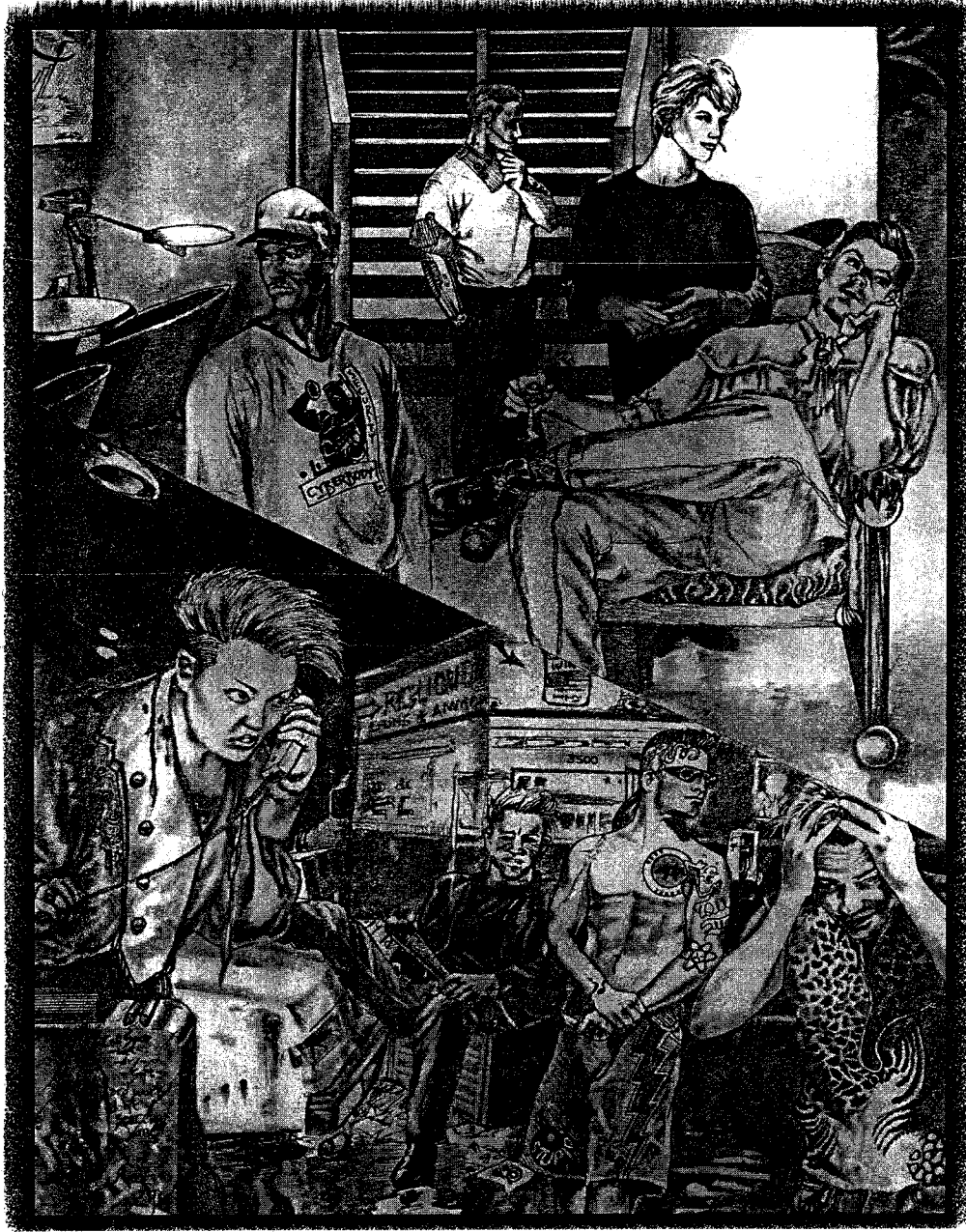
#23: "The hole, gaijin. It means that soap-opera love is too good for ya. Best you can hope for is a hot night with some cold fraulein between the sheets... All shake, man, no heat."

I: "Er... how is your dinner?"

#23: "Well, I'll say this much, not like my usual grub-time."

I: "Why would that be?"

#23: "For once, I don't hafta worry whether the knife or the fork would make a better weapon, if there was a table..."



# CH. 1 FIXERS

**In 2020, corporations and conglomerates compete to direct the cash flow of entire populations, governments struggle to maintain their uneven influence, and crime waves wash back and forth across the cities. While not exactly utopian, this chaotic situation provides an ideal environment for freebooting entrepreneurs; shady characters such as smugglers, freelance negotiators, organizers and information brokers. In Cyberpunk parlance: Fixers.**

A Fixer is a power broker of the Street, a man whose mission is to make things happen in the semi-legal swamp that is the cyberpunk's world. A Fixer needs to know many people and have a lot of information; that way, he can bring the right talent and resources together and accomplish something. Perhaps he's trying to run a successful drug ring; perhaps he's putting together a black ops team—it doesn't matter. Smart business is what a Fixer is all about, because business means money.

Most Fixers have a less than glorious past. They commonly start out as small-time punks; little different from the assorted muggers, streetgangers and Solo wannabes. However, the true mark of a Fixer is a certain knack for figuring out what other people want, and how to get it for them, as well as a willingness to do this only if the price is right.

Eventually, a successful Fixer moves out of the nickel-and-dime stuff into big-time action. Most Fixers settle on a particular racket, such as smuggling—there's big Euro to be made moving illegal weapons over the border. Out of necessity, any Fixer worth his salt has a strong talent for making his own opportunities. If you can't break into the gun-running scene, you might try creating a demand which you can supply, such as stealing and reselling medical supplies from the corporations.

While stealing and selling is good work if you can get it, the true center of a Fixer's power comes from his contacts, so it's only natural that many Fixers find their calling as skill brokers—acting as an agent for talented people. Any major city has a pool of high-priced Solos and Netrunners who need representation. Agent-type Fixers with wide-reaching

influence sometimes hire whole Netrunner packs to back a client's contract.

In any line of work, people are a Fixer's most valuable commodity. A Fixer's contacts and allies can form a potentially vast web of information, intrigue and coercion, allowing him to pull strings without acting directly. Through this network a Fixer can buy and sell favors and make connections in any kind of business, deal or even political group. Fixers are ubiquitous characters; they buy into hot nightclubs, smuggle military-surplus weapons onto the street, and play negotiator between sides if a corporate war is going down (with a definite eye on the main chance).

Fixers are, by nature, ruthlessly profit-oriented, but it is not entirely unheard-of for a Fixer to do a good deed. A Fixer can hide someone who needs to get the heat off, get people housing when there isn't any, or bring food into blockaded neighborhoods. Perhaps these uncommon Fixers like the idea of helping people in need, but it doesn't hurt that these people will be in the Fixer's debt, and if they can pay for services rendered, well that's even better, isn't it? In the socially fragmented 2020's, Fixers often bridge the gaps that the proles can't cross on their own.

Fixers stand apart from the rest of the desperate population of the *Cyberpunk* world by their special ability, *Streetdeal*.

This "skill" represents their ability to collect information, make deals and have contacts in all levels of society. To truly understand what a Fixer is, one must first understand Streetdeal.

## STREETDEAL

This mysterious and powerful Special Ability called Streetdeal is the one thing that a Fixer cannot exist without. What is Streetdeal, and how is it used? It is, as the name implies, a competence in issues where money and the street intersect. In game terms, Streetdeal allows you to locate and acquire a desired person, place or thing; for example, Streetdeal can be used to locate people or get valuable information. It is, largely, a reflection of the fixer's talent of networking with other people. Having the ability of Streetdeal is somewhat like the Lifepath event of "making a connection" (CP2020 2nd printing, pg. 27). Instead of knowing only one particular person, you have made numerous connections over the course of your career. Through his many contacts, a Fixer has a superior ability to deal with the underground information network. Therefore, a Fixer is adept at uncovering rumors and information, finding things which are in demand, putting gossip out on the street, picking up clues and ultimately scoring big deals.

The number of points you put into your Streetdeal ability reflects your competence as a Fixer. The higher your Streetdeal ability, the more connections you have, and the more information you can gather about things happening around you. As a Fixer's Streetdeal increases, so does his group of informants, and in turn he can dig up increasingly secretive information (or, more accurately, he can have other people dig up the information). A level +3 Streetdeal can get/find weapons, tools, and people who can carry out minor illegal operations. At level +5, you can penetrate the secrets of anyone you're likely to come into contact with; only crime families, corporations and other large

groups are beyond your reach. At level +9, you are the equivalent of a Mafia crime lord yourself, privy to every secret that's on the street. Generally speaking, the capabilities reflected by your Streetdeal special ability will function as a skill added to your COOL stat in game play.

### Streetdeal: The Big Picture

The information you have just read can be found in the *Cyberpunk 2020* rulebook. As it says, the number of points you put into your Streetdeal ability reflects not only your competence and talent, but also your position in your chosen field—your reputation and comparative status among other Fixers. If your Streetdeal is 1-5, you are a simple street runner, but at level 6 you could lead a small racketeering gang. At level 7, you could run a multi-faceted operation and at level 8 you could control an entire neighborhood, either for yourself, or possibly as a lieutenant in a crime family. At level 9 you are a powerful networker known city-wide, or you are in the inner circle of a crime family, while at level 10 you ARE an organization unto yourself. Realistically, a Fixer automatically has a Reputation score (see *Cyberpunk 2020*) equal to one-half his Streetdeal special ability. Therefore, the name of a Fixer with a Streetdeal of 10 will be recognized by others beyond his local area, as is befitting a crime lord or other bigshot.

Has this answered your questions about what Streetdeal is and what it does? No? Not surprising. Streetdeal is the most unique, complex and potentially most powerful Special Ability in the *Cyberpunk* world; read on and see.

This special ability is so powerful because it is so expansive. Another good name for Streetdeal might be "Networking" because a Fixer's business is totally connected to interacting with other people. Fixers, as reflected by their special ability, have their strengths focused in five main areas: Contacts, Information, Resources, Streetwise, and Dealmaking. These five categories make up the many special abilities of Streetdeal, but they all

come from the same source: people. Fixers live and die by their contacts, whether they know one powerful corporate or several dozen snitches, making Streetdeal a kind of "people power". A Fixer may not be a great shot, a computer whiz or a big-time music hero, but when he talks, things happen. Fixers are organizers. Fixers are motivators. Fixers are the power behind life on the street. Anything that goes down on the street is usually involved in some Fixer's scheme.

The trick to Fixing and Streetdealing is to make use of your "people power". In other words, you have to know people. If you don't know anyone, you're a crummy Fixer. On the Street, useful people are called —you guessed it—contacts.

### Contacts

The use of contacts is where a Fixer's power comes from. However, contacts can sometimes be tricky because (annoyingly) they have wills of their own. In a roleplaying game, you may or may not have the opportunity, desire or capability to fully explore the complex networking necessitated by having many contacts. For this reason, three different approaches to contacts will be offered below, and you may choose which one suits your personality, character and game best. The first system, called **Down & Dirty**, is the fastest and simplest way to use contacts in your game. It is best suited to one-shot sessions, such as Con events and nightly one-shots. The second system is called **Hot Stuff**, and it is an intermediate method which is reasonably simple, roleplayer-friendly, and fast. It is a "standard-issue" system which takes some preparation, and is good for multi-session adventures and shorter campaigns. The **Big League** is the final system, and it is the most involved. It requires a good deal of preparation and is heavy on roleplaying, so it is advisable that this system be used mainly in long-running campaigns and solo Fixer adventures. The three systems are explained below.



### Down & Dirty

[Down & Dirty Bonus: +1/2 Streetdeal (rounded down)]

When your roleplaying environment is relatively simplified, streamlined or otherwise stripped-down, such as in a one-night "pickup" game or a Con event, Fixers are best played **Down & Dirty**. This system requires virtually no pre-planning on the part of the player. All you need to have is your Fixer specialization (see *Specialized Fixers*, page 19) and your current level of your Streetdeal special ability. **Down & Dirty** contacts are represented by a bonus to your Streetdeal roll in your particular field. The bonus is equal to one-half your Streetdeal level (rounded down). If the roll does not involve the Fixer's specialty, then no bonus is awarded. Whether or not the situation is covered by the Fixer's area of expertise depends on the situation and

requires the application of a little common sense. For example, Mad Man Mandel is a black market cyberware dealer (a Black Marketeer type of Fixer specializing in cyberware) with a COOL of 8 and a Streetdeal of +8. Let's say a client asks him to get hold of a gold-plated cyberhand with built-in Scratchers, common sense tells us that this comes under his area of expertise (cyberware). In this situation, Mad Man Mandel's respectable network of contacts (underground cyber-technicians, inventory managers in cyberware stores, used cyberware scavengers, etc.) will be able to help him out, so he gets a +4 bonus ( $1/2$  of  $8 = 4$ ) to his Streetdeal roll. His total roll would be  $20 + 1D10$  ( $1D10 + COOL-8 + Streetdeal-8 + Specialty-4$ ). His chance of success would depend on what his referee decides is the difficulty of finding a gold-plated cyberhand with Scratchers—probably about a 25 (real gold

plating is pretty rare no matter how you look at it). If Mad Man Mandel were not a cyberware-oriented Black Marketeer, he would not have gotten the +4 to his roll, so his total roll would have been  $16 + 1D10$ , which would have made it much harder for him to be successful. Similarly, if he were a cyberware Black Marketeer who had been asked to find a missing person, he would also not receive his +4 bonus. Your bonus may also be canceled by circumstantial difficulties (again, this is up to your referee) such as your familiarity with an area. Mad Man Mandel, a Night City native, would have a very hard time finding his client in a cyberware area at all if he was stranded in the middle of Africa. However, he could call one of his contacts and so they could point him in the right direction, so the referee should still let the Fixer make a roll (with a hefty negative modifier).

### Hot Stuff

[Hot Stuff Network Points: Streetdeal x Streetdeal]

When playing a Fixer in a "regular" gaming environment, namely as a member of a group or "party" involved in a self-contained but multi-session adventure, your contacts become Hot Stuff. Hot Stuff requires that the player spend some time "fleshing out" his character's network at the time of character creation. The procedure is simple enough, but it takes a little thought and attention. As with the Down & Dirty system mentioned above, you will need to know your Fixer's specialization (see *Specialized Fixers*, page 19) and your his/her current Streetdeal level. However, instead of receiving a numerical bonus to your Streetdeal roll in game play, Hot Stuff simulates your interaction with multiple sources, snitches, moles and contacts by allowing you to make more than one roll for the same task—if you fail to beat the difficulty number with your first roll, just try again! To use the Hot Stuff system, you must square your current Streetdeal level (multiply it by itself)—the resulting number is your Network Points. These points are spent for extra rolls in a specific field or area (such as cyberware, monetary services, the grapevine, etc.). One extra roll costs a base of 4 points, doubled for each extra roll after; therefore, two extra rolls costs 8 points, and three extra rolls costs 16 points, four extra rolls would cost 32 points, and five extra rolls would cost 64 points. These costs impose two limits on the possible number of roles: firstly, no one can make more than six rolls, since no player can have 128 Network Points. Secondly, Level 1 Fixers cannot afford to get ANY extra rolls, since they're just too lowly. Tough luck, guys.

As an example of the Hot Stuff system, we return to our old friend Mad Man Mandel (the cyberware Black Marketeer with a COOL of 8 and a Streetdeal of +8), who has 64 Network Points (8 x 8 = 64). Mad Man Mandel's player, at the time of character creation, must decide how he wants to allot these points. He could dump all 64 points into cyberware, granting him five extra rolls, but that

wouldn't be smart; if he settles for just one roll less, it would only cost him 32 points—he could afford an extra four rolls in some other area as well (such as Black Clinics, so he could provide installation and repair services to his customers). However, Mad Man Mandel's player decides instead to break up his 64 points like this: he puts 32 points into cyberware, 16 points into Black Clinics, 8 points into Night City Gangs (so he'll be

**"If you speak English slowly enough and loudly enough... you can get shot in the head for being an uncultured idiot."  
-An Unknown Euro-Fixer**

able to find buyers), 4 points into Forged Documents (so he can make his sales seem legal), and 4 points into Police Information (so he'll know when they're coming after him). He has no leftover points, so he's all set, but odd Streetdeal levels will grant another odd number when squared, so some of you are bound to have 1 point left over. One point is of no use to you since it won't buy any extra rolls. Too bad. Life just ain't fair, is it?

### The Big League

[The Big League Contact Points: (Streetdeal x 2) x (Streetdeal x 2)]

This is the last word in Fixer roleplaying. If you are involved in an ongoing, open-ended campaign, or if you are playing a solo game (not that kind of Solo!), with your referee, then this is the only way to fly. The Big League is highly specific and totally comprehensive. When playing in The Big League, the Fixer character's creation process becomes almost secondary to the creation of his network of contacts. Roleplaying is stressed in this system, so there are no numerical bonuses or other flashy advantages which are directly attached to the Streetdeal special ability. Instead, The Big League draws on your Streetdeal level to generate a broad, opportunity-rich roleplaying envelope. The Big League is basically an advanced incarnation of Hot Stuff. In The Big League, you multiply your current Streetdeal level by 2, and then square that number (multiply it by itself)—the resulting number is called your Contact Points. Contact Points are used to buy contacts in the form of NPCs, so that the more Contact Points you have, the more contacts you have and the more useful those contacts are.

Contacts, as full-fledged NPCs, may be any type of character. An expensive contact would be a high-ranking corporate executive, while a cheap contact would be a streetkid who is always high on 'Dorph. Whoever or whatever the contact is, they are there to provide the Fixer with something, be it fake IDs, illegal weapons, cheap thrills or information. Since the player pays points for his contacts, it is assumed that the contact will be on relatively good terms with the character (of course, in *Cyberpunk* it's a bad idea to REALLY trust anyone). However, they will usually want something in exchange for their help; it may be money, it may be drugs, it may be a favor, but we all know nothing's free. Right, gato?

The type of character the contact is will determine what they can provide for the Fixer. An inventory manager at the local Parts N' Programs won't be much help with money laundering services, but

he'll be very useful for new cyberware. However, even very powerful contacts have their limits. A member of Congress can be quite handy in many situations, but he sure won't be much good in getting you custom-designed aphrodisiacs. It all depends on what the contact's own capabilities are. Each contact will have their own resources and skill levels, which are determined when the contact is bought from the Fixer's Contact Points.

Before any Contact Points are spent, the contact's occupation must be decided. This need not be one of the Roles from the Cyberpunk rules, although it can be. The descriptions should be limited to one "job," or lifestyle. Perhaps the contact is a Corporate, perhaps another Fixer. Perhaps a Cop, Media or Nomad. Maybe they are a homeless person or an organized criminal. Other options include government employee or official, private investigator, musician, prostitute, club owner, gang member, dock worker, thief, construction worker, lawyer, scientist, soldier, librarian, terrorist, college professor, mercenary, or an orbital character of some kind. The options are infinite, but some kind of occupation must be specified. Then the contact is priced.

The cost in Contact Points for each NPC contact is based on their level of skill in their occupation, the amount of access and/or influence they have in their given area of expertise, as well as their availability and reliability. All of these determining factors are subject to opinion, so the process of buying contacts should be carried out with your referee. The list of potential contacts is virtually unlimited, so the descriptions listed below are rather general in their nature.

### Contact Capability

The capability of a contact within his occupation determines the base cost of the contact. Once the contact's occupation has been decided, their level of competence and talent in that occupation is bought with Contact Points. A very capable contact will be more expensive than a sub-standard one, so the varying costs determine

what the contact can actually DO. When making use of a contact, the referee secretly rolls 1D10 and adds the contact's Capability Number. This number stands in for the contact's applicable Stat+Skill totals in his area of expertise (that is, his occupation). The referee compares the result of 1D10 plus the contact's Capability to the difficulty he has assigned to the task to find out if the contact will be able to help the player. There are five levels of Capability, as are listed below:

- **Snitch:** (you meet a lot of people that are 95% useless in the "scene," but when they do manage to do something for you, you cultivate them) Capability of 5+1D10. Cost is 5 points
- **Incapable:** The contact has a Capability of 10+1D10. Cost is 10 points.
- **Capable:** The contact has a Capability of 15+1D10. Cost is 15 points.
- **Very Capable:** The contact has a capability of 20+1D10. Cost is 25 points.
- **Super-Capable:** The contact has a capability of 25+1D10. Cost is 40 points.

### Contact Reputation

This covers the amount of influence and access the contact has within his particular area of specialization. Once it has been decided what the contact's Capability is, it must be decided how important they are in their field. This translates directly into their reputation score. Contacts who are not very well-renowned in their field will be cheaper, as their reputation will tell you how well-connected they are.

• **Reputation 0-2:** This contact is involved with a very narrow field within his occupation. An organized crime contact would be involved only with one of his family's rackets (such as protection), a police contact would be involved only with one project (such as infiltrating a particular crime family), and a corporate contact would only be involved with one of his corporation's department (such as accounting). Cost is x0.5

• **Reputation 3-5:** This contact is involved with a typical field within his occupation. An organized crime contact would be acquainted with most of his family's operations, a police contact would be involved with a whole department (like homicide), and a corporate contact would be knowledgeable with most of the corporation's aspects. Cost is x1.0

• **Reputation 6-8:** This contact is involved with a wide field within his occupation. An organized crime contact would be acquainted with all of his family's operations and those of the other families in the city, a police contact would be involved with the entire local police force, and a corporate contact would only be familiar with all of his corporation's aspects and those of other businesses in the same industry. Cost is x1.5

• **Reputation 9-10:** This contact is involved with an expansive field within his occupation. An organized crime contact would be fully aware of every single aspect of his family's operations and knowledgeable of organized crime around the world, a police contact would be involved with an entire national police force (such as the CIA, Interpol or Netwatch), and a corporate contact would be one of the inner circle of an entire industry (perhaps a corporate president or chairman). Cost is x2.0

## Contact Availability

The trouble with NPC contacts is that they have minds of their own! This means that they will not always be available when you need them. It is logical to assume that the more important a contact is (that is to say, the higher their reputation is), the less available they are. This is usually true (just look at the costs otherwise). However, if you have Contact Points to burn, you can buy a contact who is virtually at your beck and call. One aspect of Availability is determining how the Fixer regularly contacts this NPC—is it by phone, in the Net, at a favored meeting place, or by carrier pigeon? A contact's availability may also represent how willing they are to talk to you. If they prefer to hear from you once a month or less, that effectively makes them less available. Availability is based on a difficulty versus the Fixer's LUCK stat + 1D10. This roll does not use up LUCK points, unless you also decide to

dump LUCK points into it. A LUCK-based Availability roll may be made once per day.

- **Seldom Available:** LUCK+1D10 vs. 18. Cost is x0.5.
- **Sometimes Available:** LUCK+1D10 vs. 12. Cost is x1.0.
- **Often Available:** LUCK+1D10 vs. 8. Cost is x1.5.
- **Always Available:** LUCK+1D10 vs. 5. Cost is x2.0.

## Contact Reliability

This is the final aspect of contact creation. Each contact, being an NPC, is

capable of letting you down. Maybe they have nothing useful for you this time, maybe they just don't want to help you, or maybe they're lying to you and are selling you out behind your back. You can't always know if such a thing will happen, but you can try to prevent it by paying Contact Points for their reliability. On a case-by-case basis, you can literally buy the contacts reliability by bribing him. This will have to be roleplayed out, and the referee will decide how much Euro it will take to keep the contact

loyal ... and don't forget, whatever you pay your contact, the enemy could be willing to pay him more.

- **Unreliable:** This contact is unscrupulous. If his Capability roll fails, he'll deceive you (give you bad merchandise, lie, whatever) and if the Capability roll critically fails, he'll backstab you, sell you out to the enemy, or some other treacherous betrayal. Cost is x0.5.
- **Reliable:** This is a pretty typical contact. If his Capability roll fails, he simply cannot help you and if the Capability roll critically fails, he'll deceive you (give you bad merchandise, lie, whatever). Cost is x1.0.
- **Very Reliable:** This is a superior contact. If his Capability roll fails, he cannot help you now but suggests you try him again in 1D6+1 days (another failure then means he's no help). If the Capability roll critically fails, he simply cannot help you at all. Cost is x1.5.
- **Super-Reliable:** This is an excellent contact. If his Capability roll fails, he will DEFINITELY be able to help you in 1D6+1 days. If the Capability roll critically fails, he cannot help you now but suggests you try him again in 1D6+1 days (another failure then means he's no help). Cost is x2.0.

The Big League will create a kind of supporting cast for the Fixer, so that he will come with his own pre-generated network of contacts. Players and referees should endeavor to make these NPC contacts as "alive" as they like, perhaps delineating the history between the Fixer and his contact, the contact's appearance and habits, and perhaps even a few of the contact's contacts. This is a somewhat slow, painstaking process, but the rewards are a large cast of charac-

ters (read: plot devices) and an effective roleplaying aid for both the Fixer and the Referee.

## Which Is Which?

The three systems for dealing with a Fixer's contacts are interchangeable. Whatever system you choose to use when creating your character, you can always move to one of the other systems if your game calls for it. If you have a Fixer who plays in The Big League, and you decide you want to use her in a one-night pickup game, you can simply shunt over to the Down and Dirty system. Or, if your referee doesn't want to deal with all the complexities of the Big League, you can compromise with Hot Stuff. Even if you create a Fixer with the Down and Dirty method, after a few sessions she is bound to interact with several NPCs who would qualify as contacts of various calibers. Should you want your Down and Dirty Fixer to graduate to The Big League, just figure out what kind of Contact Points these NPCs would be worth, and spend what you have left as you see fit. Then you're all set.

Whatever system of contacts you use, there are two complications which you WILL encounter. The first is that you will no doubt make new contacts during the course of a game, even though you did not pay any points for them. That's fine. The systems offered above are designed simply to give your character a boost at the start of game play. If you have a mere level 1 in Streetdeal, and you somehow establish a relationship with the CEO of WorldSat, go with it. You may not have paid any points for him, but he's there for you now. Just remember that a tried and true contact is more than a simple acquaintance, it is someone with whom you have a symbiotic relationship. The second type of complication is the issue of Improvement Points. As you play, you will amass IP in your special ability, which will eventually raise you to a new level of Streetdeal. In the Down and Dirty method, you get a bigger bonus; in Hot Stuff, you get another roll (maybe); in The Big League, you can afford more

contacts. IP affects your game capabilities only when you have gone up a full level; 3 IP won't buy you one more little contact. Once you have enough IP to move up a full level, you can increase your abilities. It is assumed that when you go up a level of Streetdeal, you have managed to make a big enough score that your name has become more well-recognized. In making a big enough score (or enough big scores), you now have a better rep and thus more people will be willing to deal with you. Remember that your Reputation is equal to 1/2 your Streetdeal, so if you go from a 5 to a 6 in Streetdeal, your Rep will go up from a 2 to a 3. It has always been true on the Street that your Rep is more important than your credit rating (as any Fixer will tell you).

## Information

Everybody knows that information is power. Well, gato, information can also be free. There are a lot of things you can find out if you know where to look...or who to ask. Fixers, as people who know people (who know more people), have plenty of associates who they can ask for information. Even if the contacts do not have the information the Fixer wants, the contacts can ask their own contacts. The process may take some time, but is bound to grant results. In fact, time is an important aspect of information-gathering. The longer a Fixer (or anyone, for that matter) spends seeking out information, the better the chances are of success. If you're looking for a streetgang's secret hideout, an hour-long search is not going to be as fruitful as a day-long or week-long search. In essence, the amount of time spent looking for a particular piece of information modifies the difficulty number. In other words, the referee should base the difficulty of the task (to some extent) on the amount of time spent on the task; learning the location of a gang's secret hideout in an hour would be Nearly Impossible (Diff=30), in a day would be Very Difficult (Diff=25) and in a week would be Difficult (Diff=20). This also works in reverse—

• **Favors:** Although Fixers usually accept payment in money, trade or services, sometimes they will extract a favor as payment. Under the principles of *Grit* (see sidebar, pp. 16), a favor is a debt which must be repaid—even if you are not called on to do so for many years. Favors are a powerful commodity. No matter who you run into, you're bound to have use for their services at some point in your life. If that someone owes you, they must perform a favor for you in order to repay their debt. Within reasonable limits, they must do whatever you ask. To not do so would be to invite bad rumors, embarrassment, loss of reputation and eventual blacklisting (that is, if you decide to put the word out that your associate would not repay his debt). Most Fixers make use of favors to some extent—having a "one-shot" contact can be very handy.

• **Maintenance:** A whole lot of the capable and super-capable contacts are going to require maintenance in play; make this a priority. The interaction between fixers and their contacts provide great adventure hooks and ideas. We suggest using these missions as a counterpoint to the ongoing campaign. As things intensify, jump out the action to some non-adventurous/non-heroic action (skin trading, or the like). The antithesis of the campaign. Then, in the synthesis, bring back an episode from one of these adventures to haunt the party.



• **Fixers in Europe:** Same job, different country. Social acceptability and etiquette are more important in affluent (snotty) Europe; more deals go down in fancy restaurants and well-decorated offices than in alleys or on piers. White-collar crime is the name of the game, so investing some jack in a new suit is advised. As far as contacts go, you'll need ins with the corps and the EEC government—make sure they're reliable, because megacorps and the council are more upright and powerful than American streetmovers. The other trick to working in Europe is the language situation. Streetlangu just won't satisfy those prissy French glitterkids and straight-laced German corporats. Most people in Europe speak either German or French, so it's a good idea to have decent skill levels in both languages—at the very least, chip them as high as you can. Oh yeah—one more thing—make sure you've got a license for your gun, gato.

the higher the Fixer's Streetdeal roll, the less time his information quest takes (for every 5 points that the roll exceeds the Diff. Rating, reduce the time factor by one category). These rules also apply for other players using *Streetwise* and *Private Eyes* using their combined *Streetwise* and *Research* (see *When Gravity Fails*, page 45-46). In fact, Fixers operate somewhat like *Private Investigators*, spending time on the streets, in bars and clubs, on the phone and in the Net trying to dig up whatever information they are looking for (but Fixers can use the added bonuses of the *Down & Dirty* or *Hot Stuff* systems, or use the connections of their contacts in *The Big League*).

Information gathering is a case where a Fixer's specialization becomes important. If you are an information-oriented character, you will get good bonuses to finding things out. However, your information is only as good as your contacts, so the referee must be careful in judging the results of any information-related Streetdeal roll. A Fixer may use his Streetdeal to find important clues or goods—take *Mad Man Mandel* as an example.

If *Mad Man Mandel* were looking for a gold-plated cyberhand with built-in *Scratchers* for a client, he could start by checking what news is floating around on the grapevine. He'll hear several rumors, most of which will be worthless to him, but if he makes a good Streetdeal roll (or roleplays well, or is just lucky) he may hear something useful. Maybe there's a rumor that a nearby cybernetics warehouse was raided. *Mad Man Mandel* smells *Biz* now, and he decides to talk to some of his contacts and see if there is any news about the robbery of the warehouse. Another high Streetdeal roll, good roleplaying, or luck, could result in one of *Mad Man Mandel's* contacts telling him that the thieves fenced the goods with a major black marketeer in town. The enterprising Fixer decides to put a rumor on the Street that he's looking for new cyberware, and if things go his way, his Streetdeal/Rep is powerful enough to grant results. *Mad Man Mandel* gets a call on his cellular phone from *Jimmy The H*, who has the hot cyber-

ware. Does he have a gold-plated hand with *Scratchers*? Well, that's another story...

This is a moderate scenario, with a good amount of skill-rolling and room for plenty of roleplaying. Once again, it all depends on your game. However, the Fixer's ability to get information is useful not only to himself, but also to other players in the party, as well as the referee. Fixers are useful for picking up clues, which helps move any adventure along, and that makes players and referees alike happy. If Fixers are well-connected enough, and cultivate the right contacts, they can dig up secretive information. This may be for the good of the party, or for their own advantage—they may even get dirt on other player characters! (*Blackmail*, anyone?) By tapping the grapevine and accessing the underground information network, Fixers are excellent at "environmental reconnaissance," that is, gathering information about the things happening around you. A Fixer lives longer if he knows what the latest rumors are; a few of them may turn out to be true! If you heard a rumor that the Mob was going to move in on the *Yakuza*, you might do well to steer clear of *Little Italy* and *Japantown*. You'd feel pretty dumb getting gunned down in a mob war crossfire, wouldn't you? With their access to information, Fixers become exceptionally useful game elements, making them attractive as a character choice for players, attractive to player groups as useful asset to the team, and attractive to referees as scenario motivators. It is generally advisable that the gathering of information be roleplayed rather carefully, as a reckless roll of the dice taken out of context can sometimes reduce an adventure from a quest across country to a chat on the cellphone. Play it out, but the roleplaying should be complemented by an appropriate Streetdeal roll. As long as referees are careful not to let this get out of hand, a Fixer's information-gathering powers should be most helpful. A final note: always cross-check info from different sources! This is especially important when dealing with multiple contacts of questionable reliability. (When weren't they?)

## Resources

*Resources* is the special ability of the Corporate character class, but the Fixer special ability of *Streetdeal* also functions, to some extent, as a *Resources* ability. The higher a Fixer's level of *Streetdeal* is, the more power and influence he is going to have in his field. He may be a small-time snitch, he may be a mid-level member of a local crime family, or he may be the force behind a global smuggling operation. Whatever the Fixer does, he has access to some amount of resources. Much like a Corporate's special ability, a Fixer's *Streetdeal* is an index of his ability to command his operation's resources. In this capacity, *Streetdeal* is used much like a persuasion skill, with the difficulty proportionate to the scale of the resources desired. This aspect of *Streetdeal* is almost totally context-related, and is more applicable to Fixers who are members of a crime family than those who are self-employed. If your Fixer character runs a black market weapons dealership, you have access to any weapon in which you traffic. However, if your Fixer is a Lieutenant in the Mob, you potentially have access to all of the family's cars, gunmen, secret hideouts, hookers, weapons and bought politicians. It's all relative.

In general, a Fixer's resources will be more limited than those of a Corporate, and his resources will cover different areas: drugs, yes, but accounting, no. The more powerful and well-known a Fixer is (in other words, the higher his *Streetdeal* and *Reputation* are), the more resources he can call upon at any one time. Your level of *Streetdeal* determines exactly how much you can request from your superiors in your parent organization without overreaching yourself, or how much you can afford to divert from your regular operation to serve your personal needs. Naturally, the nature of your character's business and the nature of any organization to which he may belong will affect what it can provide. For a weapons dealer, requisitioning of a 9mm handgun would call for a *Streetdeal* roll versus a Difficulty of 10, while requisitioning of a *Militech Laser*

*Cannon* would be closer to 30, and requisitioning a sports car would probably be out of the question (since cars are not part of his business). However, a high-ranking member of a Mob family probably would be able to request a sports car, since most organized crime families have some kind of stolen car or chopshop operation going. However, the reasons the Fixer gives to the Don would have to be good ones (good roleplaying), the Fixer would have to be very persuasive (good *Streetdeal* roll), or he would have to be such a powerful member of the family that he just gets what he asks for (high *Streetdeal* level). In general, such a use of *Streetdeal* would reflect whether you approached your boss in the right way to get what you want—basically, it determines if you cut a satisfactory deal with your power structure.

Referees must monitor this function of *Streetdeal* closely, because if it is not kept under control, a Fixer's *Streetdeal* ability could turn into an "everything's free" shopping mall for himself and the players in his party. Also remember that the resources afforded by *Streetdeal* are not always as materialistic as weapons, cars or cash. The resources afforded by *Streetdeal* may, depending upon conditions, grant a Fixer such benefits as safe places to hide out, thugs to protect you (or take out someone for you), services performed for you (such as money laundering or a plain old good time), or even favors owed to you. This last resource is very subjective, but at some time during game play it just might come in handy to have a *Netrunner* owe you a favor. Depending upon your background and business, this may or may not be such an easy thing, but it's always worth it to try.

## Streetwise

A smart observer will notice that Fixers do not get the skill *Streetwise* in their career skill package. This is because *Streetdeal*, among all its other capabilities, encompasses most aspects of *Streetwise*. As is said in the *Cyberpunk 2020* rulebook, the skill of *Streetwise* is a

knowledge of the seamy side of life, such as getting illegal and contraband things, how to talk to the criminal element, and how to avoid bad situations in bad neighborhoods. The difference between *Streetwise* and *Streetdeal* is that *Streetwise* serves as a source of solid knowledge of your operating territory, while *Streetdeal* is general environmental information (combined with a grasp of sales/bartering techniques and a network of contacts). The *Streetwise* skill is a street-related common sense, while *Streetdeal* grants an awareness and rapport with the overall street environment.

The distinction between these two skills is rather subtle. *Streetwise*, as a skill that any character can have, is general in nature. *Streetdeal*, as a Fixer's special ability, is powerful enough to distinguish between specifics. The examples given in the *Cyberpunk 2020* rulebook can use some help here. A character with a +2 *Streetwise* will know how to get hot items and score drugs, while a Fixer of a comparable level can get contacts for weapons, tools, or minor illegal operations. Someone with +5 *Streetwise* would know how to arrange a murder contract, and be able to call on muscle when he needs it; a Fixer with a +5 *Streetdeal* can penetrate all but the most powerful crime families, and knows a few mobsters who might owe him favors... Once again, the distinctions are very subtle. A *Streetwise* of +2 means you know, in general, the way to get hot items and drugs (such as asking the right questions in pawn shops or hanging around parks late at night), while a *Streetdeal* of +2 means that you actually have contacts who can get you hot items, drugs and illegal ops. In this case, it is a case of general knowledge versus specific connections. *Streetwise* at +5 gives you the knowledge of how to set up a murder, and the experience to know where to get muscle boys as backup. A *Streetdeal* of +5 knows plenty of mobsters, and has close enough ties with them to actually worm his way into their information network. Once again, *Streetwise* covers general activities, while *Streetdeal* involves cultivated relationships. It is a question of general experience and specific ability. In both cases,

• **Giri:** In the underground economy there is an unspoken code to which everyone is expected to adhere. The central idea to this code is "Giri," a borrowed Japanese term which can be translated as duty, honor and obligation. Giri embodies the "honor among thieves" ideal of fulfilling your end of a bargain, of conducting your business with (cautious) respect for your customers, of repaying people with what they deserve, and most importantly not welshing on your debts. Giri plays a greater role in the life of a Fixer than in that of any other character. Sure, there are plenty of Yonos (scum) who pay no attention to Giri, but their reputations aren't worth a bag of kibble. When you backstab your partner, welsh on a bet or rip off someone who really didn't deserve it, you'll probably be found out (if anyone who was involved survived, and sometimes even if they didn't). This is how you get a reputation as a Svolutch (bastard), and nobody wants to do business with a Fixer who is expected to cross them! Effectively, if a character goes against the codes of Giri (referee's judgment is required), he will start amassing a Reputation level as a Svolutch. This is very bad, because your Reputation as a Svolutch subtracts from your Streetdeal on a one-to-one basis! If you are enough of a Svolutch, you'll lose all your contacts and your Streetdeal will plummet to zero! This is the phenomenon of Blacklisting, which has put down as many Fixers as bullets have. Fixers who insist on crossing the wrong people and conducting bad business should make sure that there are no rumors by eliminating all witnesses, evidence and clues. This could get complicated...

the functions of Streetdeal encompasses the functions of Streetwise at a similar level.

To illustrate the differentiation between the general knowledge granted by Streetwise and the specific information granted by Streetdeal, take the following example: two characters (O.D., a non-Fixer, and Mad Man Mandel, a Fixer) need to get an illegal weapon (say, a MAC-14). O.D. knows that he needs to go to a rough section of town and see what he can find, while Mad Man Mandel knows that he has to go to Old Downtown. Once in the a suitably rough area, O.D. knows he should look for a small, privately-owned store and ask a few questions, while Mad Man Mandel knows that he should go to Guevarra's. Should the two characters find themselves facing a group of gangers outside the store, O.D. would know that they are combat-gangers and probably figure that they are there for the same reason that he is, while Mad Man Mandel would recognize their colors as those of Maelstrom, and he would know that Maelstrom is very likely to try to knock over Guevarra's. To get into the store without trouble, O.D. would have to try to just act cool and not piss the gangers off, while Mad Man Mandel would know the gang's behavior patterns, probably know the gang's hand-give greetings, and maybe even know one of the gang members personally. Armed with this knowledge and experience, Mad Man Mandel is more likely to be allowed in, carry out his business, and be allowed to leave before Maelstrom attacks the place. O.D.'s chances to escape a chaotic evening would be pretty slim.

The bottom line on the Streetwise-Streetdeal issue is that Streetwise is not a Streetdeal for non-Fixers, it is a simply a knowledge of what life is like on the Street. Streetdeal certainly includes that, but it is much more as well...end of story.

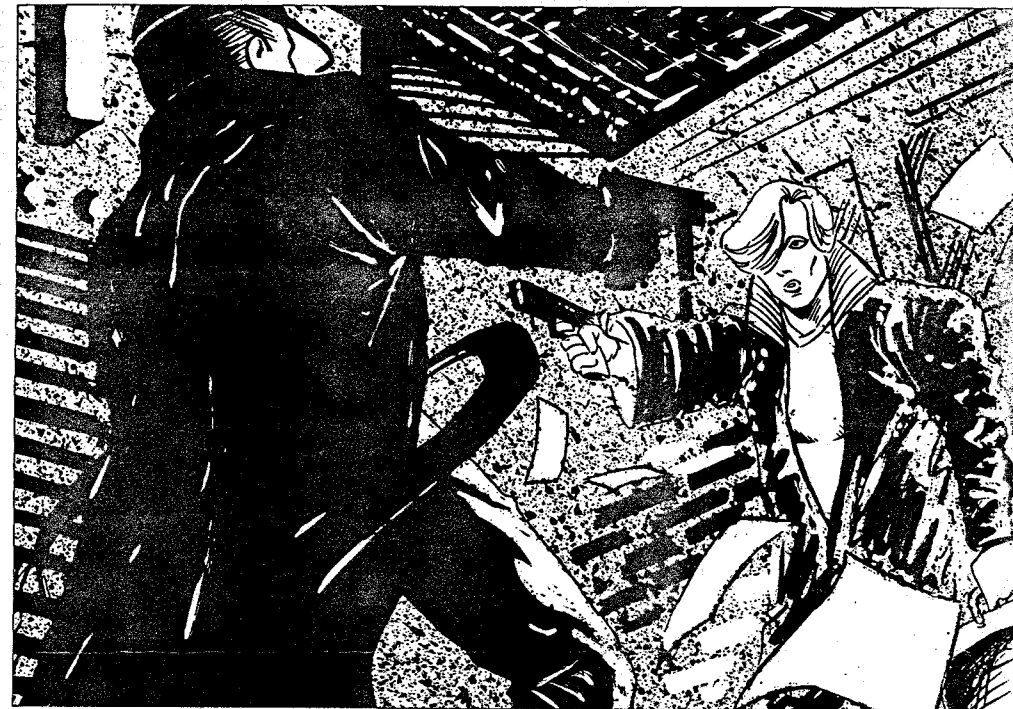
## Dealmaking

Streetdeal's name reveals a lot about what the skill is for: Streetdeal allows you to deal with the Street. How-

ever, Streetdeal also covers making deals on the Street. Operating somewhat like an Expert skill, Streetdeal includes an appraisal ability, and much like a Persuasion skill, Streetdeal covers the fine arts of haggling and cutting a deal. When making any kind of exchange or transaction, a Fixer on the buying end will want to appraise the merchandise (if he can) to decide what the commodity is worth. He will then try to talk the seller down and eventually a deal will be made. If a Fixer is on the selling side, he will already have appraised the merchandise and will know what he wants to sell it for. Be it selling or buying, making the deal is a Fixer's bread and butter. The skill of Streetwise also includes a "haggling" ability, but the more refined practices of appraisal and negotiation are the domains of Fixers alone.

A Fixer can appraise the value of a commodity by rolling his Streetdeal and comparing to a difficulty number which is determined by the referee. Generally, figuring the exact price of a commodity rather than a ballpark figure will increase the Difficulty Number by one level (5 points). The base difficulty will depend on the Fixer's area of expertise. For example, Mad Man Mandel, as a cyberware Black Marketeer, would have an easier time of figuring the price of a gold-plated cyberhand with built-in Scratchers than a Pimp or Drug Pusher would. A successful roll will tell the Fixer the actual value of the commodity. If he is selling, he will probably ask for more than this, and if he is buying, he will probably offer less than this. Such is the law of sales.

Once appraisal has been completed, an exchange usually takes place. Roleplaying out the haggling is recommended, since this is the most gratifying to both the players and the referee. However, some players may be not confident in their own haggling skills and may supplement their roleplaying with a Streetdeal roll; sometimes neither players nor referees wish to spend the time to roleplay out every exchange, instead opting for a simple contest of



skills. In such cases, the two characters performing the exchange each roll their COOL+Skill+1D10. After any applicable modifiers, the character who rolls higher wins. The "Skill" may be either Streetdeal or Streetwise. When the two skills are the same (Streetdeal vs. Streetdeal, Streetwise vs. Streetwise), each 1 point of success results in a 2% change in price in favor of the winner. However, when a Fixer haggles with a non-Fixer character, his advantage becomes 5%, reflecting his greater prowess at haggling and deal-cutting. For example, suppose that Mad Man Mandel (COOL 8, Streetdeal +8) were buying the cyberhand from a ripperdoc with a COOL of 7 and a Streetwise of +6. If Mad Man Mandel rolled a 24 and the ripperdoc rolled a 21, Mad Man Mandel would get the cyberhand for 70% of its actual value. However, if the ripperdoc rolled a 21 and mad Man Mandel rolled an 18, the

ripperdoc would sell the cyberhand for 115% of its actual value. Under normal circumstances, the price will never deviate by more than 50% either way. Sometimes the loser of this contest of skills for the deal may not be happy with the results. This is why Fixers usually have some muscular backup in the form of Solos or other goons on call when cutting major deals.

## COMPLICATIONS

Streetdeal is unique among Special Abilities in that it is so multifaceted. Fixers have a much broader range of power and influence than most other characters, since their Special Ability combines a status ranking, a myriad of skills, and a network. These

combined functions give Fixers advantages in their element, the Street—but there are responsibilities attached to Streetdeal. Having all this ability open the door for all sorts of potential repercussions. Aside from the large amount of time a Fixer is obligated to devote to his network (see *Speaking Of Money*, pg. 48), a Fixer's connections can sometimes get him (not to mention other players in his party) into all sorts of trouble.

Contacts, as a roleplaying device can sometimes do as much harm as good. Depending upon their reliability, they might be unhelpful to their patron Fixer, or even sell him out to the authorities or other Fixers. Contacts can also be taken hostage by "the enemy" (whoever that might be) and coerced/tortured, brainwashed into handing over PC Fixers and any attached player-characters. Similarly, being a reputable Fixer is dependent upon being talked about, recognized, and known to some extent.



### • Full Borg Fixers:

Sometimes Fixers specialize not because of what they do, but because of who or what they are. Full Borks (unless they're disguised Geminis), tend to intimidate people by their mere appearance. That's never good for business. Moreover, the standard Empathy losses make metalheads awful negotiators... So those few Full Borg Fixers that do exist tend to deal almost exclusively with their own kind—other Full Borks. Metalhead Fixers can specialize in almost any field, but they usually provide special services that Borks in particular require, such as cyberchican expertise, spare parts, psychological counseling, tailored psychoactive drugs and a network of brethren Borg contacts.

The grapevine, publicity and advertising are all very closely related, and being known is not always an advantage. It may bring in customers, but it also makes it easier for "the enemy" to find you. The more attention you draw, the more people line up to take a swipe at you; for personal and official reasons alike. Once again, PCs who are closely associated with a well-reputed Fixer are correspondingly more likely to be easily located.

Even if a Fixer is not exceptionally well-known, the grapevine has the curious nature of spreading word around whether you like it or not. They say word travels fast, and in the underground information network, data gets shuffled around at light-speed. There are always young, ambitious, amoral individuals out there who would be more than willing to roll over an established Fixer and hijack all his wares. Fixers are often security-minded to an extreme, investing in electronic security, bug-stompers, and well-armed bodyguards. Even this is not guaranteed to dissuade the criminal element from making attempts on a Fixer's life, stealing his property, hijacking his supplies, invading his network and generally being a pain. Once again, anyone who hangs around with a high-powered Fixer long enough is very likely to get caught in the crossfire during such an event. These raids are particularly suited to Fixer-oriented campaigns. Entire subplots can be generated around rivalries between Fixer organizations, the shifting attitudes of local gangs as their leadership changes, and the ever-present threat of BIG organized crime muscling in on your private little enterprise.

Mob takeovers are a constant thorn in every Fixer's side. In any modern *Cyberpunk* city, there are numerous Fixers who start up their own rackets, such as gambling, prostitution, smuggling, and assorted black marketeering. Very few of these indie Fixers ever make it to the big league because the Mob doesn't take kindly to small-time operators using their "territory." The Mob, which is a blanket term used to describe the powerful organized crime groups which control a large part of any city's criminal

activities, consists of such notorious groups as the Mafia (from Italy), the Yakuza (from Japan), the Chinese Triads, the Sudams (from the Spanish word for South Americans), the Union Corse (from France) as well as newcomers like the Jamaican Posses and the Organitskaya (Euro-Russian gangs). Every large city in North America has strong representation by some (if not all) of these groups, and each city is divided up into territories controlled by particular groups with strictly-enforced boundaries. Wherever a Fixer operates, he will be hard pressed to find a base of operations which is not on someone's turf. In general, the Mob will ignore the really small-time operators (those with a Streetdeal of less than 5) and concentrate on the big fish who look like they are actually taking money away from the Mob's business. Those who do attract the Mob's attention will find that the way they are approached will depend on which group's territory they are violating. The Jamaican Posse will most likely murder offending privateers outright, the Yakuza would more likely force indie Fixers out of their turf, and the Mafia often attempt to induct private entrepreneurs into their own organization. These situations, even if initially resolved in some way, will probably crop up again and again as Mob treaties alter the boundaries of their territories, the leadership and temperament of the local Mob changes, and Fixers expand their operations into new dimensions. Pressure from the mob is another excellent theme for creating subplots in Fixer-oriented campaigns, and very prominent NPCs can be made out of local Mob bosses. These characters may be feared threats to the Fixer's organization (and life), annoying pests who are constantly trying to intimidate the Fixer's Facemen, or even allies who will support the Fixer in times of trouble. Having an Organized criminal as a contact (or even better, as a lifepath personality) can be a great boon to any Fixer. From the point of view of shunning the Mob, a high Streetdeal can be more of a liability than an asset.

Fixers who work for the Mob do not have to worry about takeovers and terri-

torial pressures, but they have other problems. When working for the Mob, a Fixer has someone he has to answer to, rules he must live by, and a stereotype to which he is permanently mated. The cops are always a concern, since being a member of a crime family makes a Fixer more visible to the authorities, and the ever-present threat of Mob warfare looms above. Having to schlep out and fight a running gun battle for your 90-year-old Oyabun can really put a kink in your business schedule.

Be they Mob or indie, player-character Fixers will find that there is one final drawback to having a potent Streetdeal: other player characters are always trying to get your services for free! Player-character Fixers who are part of a group or team during a job will find that they are expected to act as some kind of free supply shop for the party. Referees and Fixer players alike should do their best to keep this from happening—such behavior leads to extended "shopping runs" which take up precious game time and skew the balance of power in favor of the players. PC Fixers would be poor role-players to be so gracious as to provide free resources to anyone, and any *Cyberpunk* referee worth his salt will confound such attempts anyway. Just because a group includes an Arms Dealer as one of its player-characters, this should not lead to the players becoming mobile weapons platforms. Fixers think in terms of money first and people second (usually—this can depend upon the character's personality, history, special circumstances or whatever), so players should be charged just as much as any other customer. Fixers are very conscious of the laws of supply and demand, and preferential treatment of one group will cause resentment in other customer groups, leading to yet another complication: disgruntled customers.

A customer can sometimes be a Fixer's worst enemy. Although Fixers, as largely independent operators, have the right to refuse any-damn-one they please, they would be unwise to do so on a regular basis. It's bad for business when you have no clients. There are all sorts of crazies out there, and Fixers meet more

than their fair share of them—it's almost impossible to know when you're selling to the wrong person. While department stores have customer complaint windows, Fixers are islands unto themselves, and if a customer gets ticked off due to something they paid a Fixer for... well, they know exactly who to blame, don't they? Many a Fixer has been blown away by a vengeful customer; sell someone a faulty Minami-10 and the next thing you know they're chainsawing their way through your front door, looking for payback.

One way around such troubles is to operate in rackets which are not quite as high-risk as gunrunning. To cover their butts, Fixers usually choose a field of expertise at which they know they can be successful. In terms of profit margins, the more narrow your field, the better your chances are of becoming the best at your profession. There are all sorts of markets, both legitimate and illegitimate, which are ripe for exploitation by ambitious Fixers. In terms of *Cyberpunk* character roles, each Fixer must choose such a field of expertise; this procedure is referred to as specialization.

## SPECIALIZED FIXERS

In Night City, where the "haves" and the "have-nots" are constantly dogfighting, there are a few Fixers who everyone has heard of—the Fireman, Bag Lady, and White Lion come to mind. Sometimes the corporates want to find someone who has gone to ground in the combat zone. Sometimes a boostergang wants the lowdown on the Police's patrol routes. Sometimes (often, in fact) a Street Samurai decides he won't be happy until he owns the newest milspec assault rifle. It is at these times people seek out a Fixer who specializes in the needed goods. Sometimes the Fixers come to them. To maximize their expertise (and thus their business), most Fixers specialize in a particular field. The most comfortable lifestyle is enjoyed by

### • Specialized Fixers

- Salesman
- Black Marketeer
- Information Broker
- Pusher
- Shoemaker
- Sleaze
- Moneybags
- Factor
- Fence
- Loan Shark
- Bookie
- Leeches
- Talent Scout
- Talent Agent / Manager
- Go-Betweens
- Owner
- Negotiator
- Smuggler
- Sniffer
- Trader
- Mobsters
- Mundane Fixers
- Avon Lady
- Insurance Salesman
- Real Estate Agent
- Ticket Scalper
- Car Dealer
- Neighborhood Gossip
- Real Estate Agent

## • Black Market Buying/Selling:

The Black Market is a counter-economy; this means that it is different from the normal market. Its differences are twofold: (1) it can get you things that you are not supposed to be able to get, and (2) it can get you the normal market's wares, but cheaper. To a Black Marketeer this means that the price, both buying and selling, of any wares depends on legality and availability. In the realm of wares which are easily available and totally legal, the Black Market can only compete by being a lot cheaper. Therefore, on the Black Market, commonly available wares go for about 50% of their normal value (this would include cigarettes, booze, clothes, food, etc.). This means that Black Marketeers will usually pay only 10-25% full price for these items so that they can still make a profit. Obviously, the people you buy these things from will have to have very cheap access to them, such as by making them or stealing them. However, in the realm of wares which are rare, illegal or otherwise unavailable, the Black Market can compete with the normal market because it actually has them for sale—to anyone, no questions asked! This is where the big money is; you can get away with charging inflated prices for uncommon wares because demand is high and supply is low. Drugs, weapons, explosives, and all sorts of other stuff falls into this category, and can be sold for anywhere from 150% to 1000% the normal price (depending on the rarity of the item). In such cases, the Black Marketeer usually pays close to the normal price for the wares, which he can get from his varied sources, contacts and connections. Nothing to it.

the big-time "Leeches": the agents and managers who work well out of harm's way and just rake in the Euro. Salesmen are more directly involved in Street action, sweating through tense meetings with nervous clients. Also common to the street are Mobsters, who get up-close and personal with their victims—uh, clients—and whose lives are often decorated with flash and pizzazz. Some Fixers adopt the less glamorous lifestyle of a Go-Between, but still enjoy stimulating challenges everyday. The rarest (but usually richest) type of Fixers are the Moneybags, the loan sharks and money launderers who deal in pure currency. What follows is a more in-depth explanation of these colorful characters.

## SALESMEN

Salesmen are probably the most well-known breed of Fixer. Opportunistic, persistent and greedy, salesmen keep large stocks of products and sell to whoever has the money. There are six types of salesmen: Black Marketeers, Information Brokers, Shoemakers, Pushers and Sleazes. All of these fixers have one thing in common: they have something, and they want you to buy it.

## Black Marketeer

This type of Fixer makes his money by pocketing a percentage of the sale of things that most people cannot get, either because of legal constraints or limited availability. The authorities catch on pretty quickly when they find people with things they aren't supposed to be able to buy, so running a black market business is dangerous work. However, the money is excellent. Contraband can sell for as much as 10x its legitimate market value on the street, while locally unavailable goods (which, if you have the right contacts, can usually be bought at a small percentage of their actual value) can bring in a hefty profit even if they're sold for 1/2 price. A truly successful black market ring requires time,

good management, and a little luck. Dodging the local authorities is a Black Marketeer's biggest concern, so a relatively small and easily rotated staff is useful (it confuses The Man). Even when taking such precautions, the life of Black Marketeer is a nervous one, where pointing a gun at your client's chest is a lot more useful than shaking his hand. Black Marketeers deal in many types of goods. Popular commodities are weapons, electronics, cyberware, body parts, drugs & chemicals, vehicles, software, slavery, braindance and/or VR, wetware (bio-science products), and secret documents. There are particular quirks to every market, and a good Black Marketeer is always aware of what is happening in his business. For instance, a software salesman must move his goods quickly, since out-of-date programs can't compete against state-of-the-art ICE. Slave traders deal in a particularly difficult commodity, namely people. There is a small but extremely profitable market for humanity, where people are valued as sexual playthings, data-storage entities; and even food. The drug-dealing business for a black marketeer is different from being a drug pusher. Black Marketeers who specialize in drugs deal in volume, and hire pushers to move the stuff on the street. They also deal in combat dorphs and brain-boosters, as well as other strange chemicals. They often have connections with organized crime, and many have large contracts with gangs of all types. Even more esoteric markets exist just waiting for a smooth operator to turn a profit on them. For instance, several Black Marketeers deal in wetware, selling skillchips, other brain-augmenting or -modifying software, and various forms of bio-implants. Most major cities also have a couple of "Juicemongers", Black Marketeers who specialize in providing covert electrical power. Juicemongers usually have a couple of inside men at power plants, as well as a competent netrunner who taps power from the local grid and siphons it off to paying clients who do not want the authorities to know how much energy they are using. It's a small, dangerous market, but has great potential. Black

Marketeers can, if successful enough, develop solid reputations—the Fireman and the Bag Lady (see *Cyberpunk 2020*) are both Black Marketeers who are both well-known and well-thought of.

## Information Broker

Of all the salesmen, the Information Broker (or "Info Bro") is the most mysterious, most respected, and most difficult to become. Information Brokers are in the business of knowing things, which can make them very popular with people who aren't in the know, but very unpopular with those who are and don't want others to know. One great advantage that Information Brokers enjoy is that the authorities are usually not a problem; it is seldom illegal to know things. Depending on what the Info Bro knows, he may make very little or a great deal of

money, but an Information Broker knows that in his business, newness is everything; out-of-date information has no value as it soon degrades into public knowledge. By the very nature of their business, Info Bros spend a great deal of time doing research. They usually are somewhat reclusive, hiring underlings to do their legwork. Success in the Information Brokerage business demands many informants and contacts—preferably powerful, high-level contacts—as well as a good deal of intelligence and patience. Low-level Info Bros are simple snitches, selling whatever dirt they have to anyone with a few Eurobucks. Snitches generally are hated as shameless, sniveling lowlifes, and they have correspondingly short lifespans. However, a big-time Info Bro wields tremendous respect, and is often feared more than a little. The best Info Bros specialize in knowing a great deal about a particular area, such as the security industry, the forefront of high technology, or local/world pol-

### Black Marketeer

Streetdeal  
Persuasion  
Brawling  
Handgun

Awareness  
Intimidate  
Melee  
(Plus 3 SPECIALTY skills; see below)

(BRAINANCE/VR)  
Expert: Braindance/VR  
Braindance Editing  
Electronics

(DRUGS)  
Chemistry  
Resist Torture/Drugs  
Pharmaceuticals

(WEAPONS)  
Expert: Small Arms  
Weaponsmith  
Forgery

(CYBERNETICS)  
Forgery  
Cybertech  
Cryotank Operation

(BODYPARTS)  
Biology  
Diagnose Illness  
Cryotank Operation

(ELECTRONICS)  
Electronics  
Basic Tech  
Expert: High Tech

(SOFTWARE)  
System Knowledge  
Cyberdeck Design  
or Electronics  
Programming  
or Expert: Software

(SLAVERY)  
Cryotank Operation  
Pharmaceuticals  
Psychology  
or Expert: Torture

(CARS)  
Drive  
Basic Tech  
Pick Lock  
or Electronics Security

(WETWARE)  
Expert: Wetware  
Wetware Design  
or BioTech  
Human Perception

New Skills  
1) Braindance Editing: TECH-based  
2) Psychology: INT-based (knowledge of, not therapy)  
3) Wetware Design: TECH-based  
4) BioTech: TECH-based; (see *Eurosource*, pg.43-44)

## • Datamen and Datarunners:

Tools of the Info Bro. The problem in dealing with information is that you have a job you can never talk about. The secretive nature of the Information Biz makes it difficult to hire mere secretaries, let alone couriers, to deliver the information. To overcome this problem, many Information Brokers employ Datarunners. A Datarunner is basically any person with a secured Wetdrive (see *Chromebook 1*, pg.35). Some Info Bros also insist that their Runners use Courier Chips (*Chromebook 2*, pg. 73). Where electronic protections fail, the Information Broker can always rely on blackmail and intimidation to keep his Datarunners honest. The ultimate form of Datarunner is the Datamen. Virtual slaves to the Information Broker, these cyborgs have so many MU stored in them, they are bordering on cyberpsychosis. Datamen are usually enhanced with Bodycomps (*Chromebook 2*, pg. 8), Wetdrive access links (*Chromebook 2*, pg. 5) and biochip memory storage areas distributed throughout their bodies allowing them to act as living computer processors. Information Brokers control their Datamen in a fashion similar to that of corporations and their top scientists, anything from involuntary drug addiction to cortex bombs. The use of Datamen is illegal in several American states and strictly prohibited in "civilized" countries such as Germany and Japan.

itics. Info Bros usually lead intellectual stimulating but physically protracted lifestyles, so they tend to be anything from eccentric to bizarre. This is a highly specialized and narrow field, suited to a very specific type of person—many Fixers sell information, but few deal in it exclusively. The biggest threat to Info Bros is posed by those concerns about whom he sells information. White Lion (CP 2020, pg. 213) found this out the hard way when she sold information which led to the downfall of a mob family. She's still hiding from the contract they put out on her.

**Information Broker**

Streetdeal	Awareness
Persuasion	Interview
Forgery	Library Search
Interrogation	Human Perception
Expert:	Education & General
(your choice)	Knowledge

**The Records Racket:**

Info Bros spend a lot of their time searching out particular clues and pieces of information, but in their spare time they run across all sorts of bits and bytes which may not be what they are looking for, but are nonetheless useful to someone (they took the time to enter it into a computer, didn't they?). Usually, they will scoop up this excess data and store it for later. In their spare time, Information Brokers use their computers and Datanets (see other sidebar) to sift through all the extraneous information they have gathered and organize it into lists. These lists could be the habits of particular segments of a population or social group, market research study material, patterns in advertising or purchasing, changes in the social climate, fashion trends or any other collected body of data organized around a central theme. Then, the Info Bros will find a buyer for the list and hammer out a deal. These

lists can generate a lot of profit, and that's the only reason Info Bros go to all the work—such lists can usually only be sold once, and then they're useless. Many corporations buy large quantities of lists from freelance Information Brokers and then have their account managers, market researchers, R&D departments or AIs process the data for marketing, advertising and promotional campaigns. In game terms, approximately 50MU of random data can be collated into one saleable list. This will take about 1D10x10 hours (the time can be divided among you and your staff, and will be reduced by powerful computers at the rate of -10% per 3 INT of your computer systems). Such lists will net anywhere from 100 Eb at a local bar to 2,000 Eb from the corporations; some lists will be worth even more, depending on the uniqueness of the information collected. Of course, all of this is arbitrated by your referee. The type of list you come up with will be pretty much a random occurrence, owing to the randomness of the source data, but it will be influenced by the Info Bro's fields of expertise and his control over the collation process.

**Shoemaker**

With the modern evolution of the Net, the majority of America's population are registered in the systems of the Net through their State Identification Numbers (SINs). This number is the citizen's electronic lifeline, serving as their social security number and tied to their driver's registration, bank account numbers, employee identification, Net access code and even their phone number. While this system has streamlined the principles of the electronic highways, it can also be used by Big Brother to keep an uncomfortably close eye on you (see *SINs of Identity*, page 62). For criminals and Edgerunners this system can be difficult, and when they need to disappear for a while, it becomes a potentially serious

problem. The only way out is a complete change of identity, from cosmetic surgery to alteration of records. This procedure is called "getting new shoes," and the Fixers who provide this service are known as Shoemakers. Also called SIN-Lifters, their business is SIN-surgery, namely the meddling with the files attached to an individual's State Identification Number. Because it requires a tremendous amount of contacts, resources and money to perform such drastic operations, the SIN-Lifter business is very exclusive and is sometimes called "the Priesthood." Shoemakers generally deal with three highly illegal services: the creation, alteration and erasing of electronic identities. All three of these operations (grouped together as "Identity Fraud") are considered Priority 2 crimes (*Protect & Serve*, pg.66), and anyone associated with the business, from the Shoemakers themselves to their staff and customers, is sure to receive hard time in a high-sec block (if you mess around too much in gov't files, they may even call it Espionage). Shoemakers need unusually high-powered contacts, powerful members of the government bureaucracy such as the CIA and Immigration, as well as many connections with credit corporations, insurance companies and banks. The quality of the identity services provided by a Shoemaker is directly related to his Streetdeal. This fact, and the reality that Shoemakers need such potent contacts (as well as a great deal of money for computer equipment), demands that most Fixers start out in some other area, such as information brokerage, before graduating to the Priesthood. As far as staff concerns go, Shoemakers work very closely with Netrunners, who perform the hazardous netruns which make SIN-surgery possible. Shoemakers also have used for Techies, who put together their computer and information systems, and usually one or two Solos on permanent retainer as bodyguards. During the course of their dealings, SIN-Lifters often stockpile identities like any other commodity and buy, sell and trade them with their customers (similar to the passport trade of old). Low-level Shoemakers have very

small identity portfolios, only being able to offer you as an alternate identity something like an obese Eskimo housewife with mild epilepsy—not exactly inconspicuous. Shoemakers sometimes buy customer's identities from them rather than performing erasure, and unscrupulous SIN-Lifters are not above stealing identities and vengefully zeroing enemies. The most vicious Shoemakers have been known to deliberately murder entire families and appropriate their SINs and identities. The Priesthood is very closely related to the various Mobs because organized crime is one of the few sources which can provide all the necessary contacts and connections to make SIN-surgery possible. However, there remains a small set of indie Shoemakers which is even more exclusive than the general Priesthood and is incredibly secretive. It has to be; a great deal of the independent Shoemakers business comes from people who want to hide from the Mob!

**Shoemaker**

*Note: should be considered an NPC*

specialty	
Streetdeal	Awareness
Forgery	System Knowledge
Programming	Library Search
Bureaucracy	Accounting
Stock Market	Education &
	General Knowledge

**Pusher**

Despised by the authorities and the general populace, drug pushers nevertheless continue to flourish in 2020. Pushers are almost universally slimy characters, even those who gain the money and power to rise above the scum and graduate to becoming a major drug dealer (see *Black Marketeers*). Although they are often supplied by organized crime, they are not true mobsters, and wield no power within an organization; usually buying supplies and paying dues to some other type of Fixer of higher caliber. Pushers generally work on their own, only dealing with others when buying supplies or selling to customers. Although a higher-level



Drug-Lord type of Fixer may employ several Pushers, they will seldom work together, or even know each other. There are exceptions, depending on what is being sold, but pushers differ from the bigger-time dealers in that these scum are generally not involved in supply, only in sales. Pushers are always being hassled by the authorities, and rely on their dealer bosses to bail them out if they get bagged. It doesn't always happen. Pushers are parasitic, preying on incapacitated, helpless addicts. Often pushers will demand sexual favors from their buyers, sometimes leading to beatings, murders, revenge shootings, and gang warfare. The authorities despise pushers, but there are usually too many to be effectively controlled. Some pushers deal in designer drugs which are so new that they have not yet been ruled illegal, and some deal in widely-available drugs such as stimulants and depressants, brain-boosters and memory

drugs. The pharmacological world of 2020 is so fast-paced and complex that pushers have the edge. Specifically-tailored amphetamine derivatives, synthetic endorphins, hallucinogenic compounds and biological enhancers of all kinds flood the cities of 2020. Depending on where they operate, some pushers can actually be legitimate businessmen, thanks to the registration system (see *Life on the Pharm*, pg. 81). Not all pushers are bad guys either—some sell the medicines and combat drugs which Edgerunners constantly need, and some simply sell over-the-counter medicines and antibodies to the desperate poor who can't afford full price. However, in most of the country (and most of the world) recreational drug use is heavily restricted if not absolutely prohibited. This doesn't stop the drug scene from being popular and profitable. Be they legal or underground, drug dens and chemical parlors can be found in literally every

• **Fleshmen:** These are Scavengers who are proficient at the harvesting of human organs and body parts from unwilling donors. Sometimes they dissect still-warm corpses salvaged from accidents and other street violence, and sometimes they kidnap perfectly healthy people (even children, whose parts are in high demand) and deliver them straight to a body bank. In extreme cases they will even raid Trauma Team vehicles and morgue wagons. A low-level Fleshman is little more than a ghoul, but high-powered Fleshmen can have city-wide networks based on careful monitoring of emergency broadcast bands and large forces of seekers and slicers working the streets.

city in the world. At this rate, Pushers will never go away.

#### Pusher

Note: should be considered an NPC specialty

Streetdeal	Awareness/Notice
Persuasion	Intimidate
Brawling	Handgun
Melee	Pharmacology

### Sleaze

Sleaze isn't really a profession, it's a state of mind. These types are the lowest (and most common) breed of Fixer; a close relation to the Vagrant class (in *When Gravity Falls*). They occupy the poorest economic niches in the Fixer hierarchy, usually making their living as runners, middlemen, snitches, informers, petty thieves and other lowlife professions. Their business consists of leeching money from the dregs of society, so they seldom even enjoy support from any criminal organizations. Sleazes, if they get really lucky, may form the link between the assorted underground organizations and the general inner-city populace. Sleazes are simple street salesmen, peddling the dirtiest wares and lowest services available from the corporate center to the combat zone; petty crime is their forte (keep in mind that a Sleaze differs from a "thug"-type character, which would be a low-level Solo). Because they generally lead miserably petty lives, most Sleazes spend their lives hoping for that elusive "big score" which will raise them above the filth, but such things rarely happen. It is most common that a Sleaze is a person with Fixer potential who suffers from some disadvantage which prevents them from really going anywhere. They may be illiterate, or drug addicts, or simply very young people forced to fend for themselves. Sleazes seldom have a Streetdeal level above +4; if they do, they usually graduate to something more profitable, such as Black Marketeering. Sleazes use the standard package of career skills from the *Cyberpunk 2020* rulebook. Although these skills were supposed to represent a generic

Fixer, the package is well-suited to Sleazes, as such low-level fixers tend to need a variety of hands-on skills.

#### Sleaze

Streetdeal	Awareness/Notice
Forgery	Handgun
Brawling	Melee
Pick Lock	Pick Pocket
Intimidate	Persuasion

## MONEYBAGS

Moneybags are those fixers who deal in pure currency. Money in 2020 has an almost magical power (a lot like today, actually). The mega-corporate economy has made money the greatest weapon known to man: it can buy peoples' souls and topple nations. Paper and coins, electronic cash, extended credit lines, expense accounts, personal checks, non-liquid assets, precious metals and jewels, stocks and bonds are the bodily fluids of the capitalist organism which is the world in 2020. Clever entrepreneurs who know how to manipulate currency can make out like bandits and get away with murder. There are generally four types of Moneybags: Factors, Fences, Loan Sharks and Bookies, but they often overlap.

### Factor

Factors are big-time financial brokers, and as such, are the most large-scale of the moneybags. Factors deal in such practices as money laundering, forgery, ghost accounting and embezzlement. There are two kinds of Factor—the rich and the jailed. The classic definition of a Factor is someone who is brought in by a company to resolve inventory problems. This practice still happens in 2020. Sometimes companies find themselves threatened with imminent bankruptcy when they cannot sell all of their inventory, and at these times they employ a Factor. The Factor agrees to buy all of the company's inventory at a reduced price, thus ensuring that the company can at least stay afloat, and

then it is his job to find buyers for the wares and make some kind of profit. Clearly, Factors need to have access to substantial funds even before they begin such a transaction, but a smooth operator can turn junk into gold. A musicshop owner's warehouse full of unpopular music chips may well become an Information Broker's airtight smuggling medium. Such services as were provided by the classic Factors of old may still grant high profits, but the modern-day Factor of the *Cyberpunk* economy is a multi-talented individual (this is the point at which Fixers come closest to Corps). Insider trading is as common a practice in 2020 as it was during the 1980s, and with talented Netrunners on contract, entire corporations have fallen to the manipulations of serious Factors. These Moneybags are also experts at embezzlement and other accounting magic-tricks; every Mob boss has at least two Factors on the payroll to watch for treachery from within the ranks as well as to "correct" tax returns and bankbooks. Factors are also the Fixers who specialize in pure monetary exchange, and are among the few Fixers who are not only willing, but capable, of exchanging jewels and precious metals for solid credit. Some Factors even deal in international currencies which have taken a back seat to the Eurodollar, and they can work with cash or credit (although dealing with cash often includes with a 3-10% processing fee). Some of these Moneybags also provide money laundering services, accepting stolen money from bank robbers and other thieves and moving it through a series of small, innocuous transactions which separates the criminals from the incriminating serial numbers. Money laundering usually costs a hefty percentage of the original stolen monies (as much 50%), but with the advent of electronic cash as the economy's standard currency, electronic money laundering has become more common than the physical shuffling of the last hundred years. Because of this, most Factors take Programming as a pick-up skill and have several Netrunner contacts to help them circumvent the electronic safeguards which pro-

tect credit systems. Some Factors specialize in falsifying an account-holder's consent to a transaction, which takes them into the forgery business—faked signatures, fingerprints, voice patterns and retina scans are the wares of forgery-minded Factors. It is very hard to crack stolen credchips without fancy equipment, and Factors (with funds large enough to afford the equipment and enough Netrunner and Techie contacts to pull it off) are the affirmed experts in the criminal industry of cracking chops and tips; see the sidebar on "Chopping" (*Electronic Livelihood*, page 53). Ghost accounting, or the formation of black-market banking, is another field which is capitalized upon by Factors. *Face Banks* (see pg. 55) are complicated arrangements not only from the programming angle, but also from a commercial standpoint. Every Face Bank has several Factors who work as black account managers, making sure that transactions made to and from the Face Bank appear legitimate to outside observers. Routing debits and deposits through front organizations and using legitimate bank accounts as host-systems, Factors ensure that Face Banks remain secure credit-havens for Edgerunners and criminals alike. As the classic Black Marketeer-type Fixer is to the Street, so the Factor-type Fixer is to the world economy.

#### Factor

Streetdeal	Awareness
Persuasion	Interview
Accounting	Human Perception
Stock Market	Education & General
Social	Knowledge
Business Sense	

### Fence

A Fence buys stuff super-cheap and resells it semi-cheap. Also called Pawnbrokers, these Moneybags are experts at the redistribution of wealth. Fences buy assorted loot (that can be anything), and resell it at a higher price. Most fences are small-time operators and therefore they can get away

• **Business Sense** (*Solo of Fortune*, pg. 31): an INT-based skill. The knowledge of how to invest capital, how to run a business, and how to spot business "opportunities."

with more and face lesser consequences when caught (a Priority 5-6 crime, *Protect & Serve* pg.62-64). Fences usually pay somewhere between 10-30% of the value of stolen goods, and then resell them at half price or so. Fences are highly valued professionals in 2020, as there are always shady characters who want to sell off assorted wares they have stolen, scavenged, found, inherited or whatever. Fences are experts in the confidential exchange of assorted goods, from human organs to stolen cars. However, Fences are generally better off buying wares that are easy to sell or otherwise dispose of rather than going for fancy stuff like genetic material or atomic bombs. The hotter and more unique the wares are, the more risk they pose to the Fence, both from an economic standpoint and a security perspective. By the very nature of their business, Fences require substantial finances to keep their enterprise going. Before a Fence can re-sell anything, he has to buy it from somebody. This is why many Fences have other rackets going on the side—anything from gambling to prostitution can serve to finance a Fence's business. The most common financial support available to a Fence is the ever-present organized crime system. Fences are very popular targets for Mob takeover because they are an excellent source of income, hard-to-find items and make perfect fronts for even more devious and unpleasant rackets. This is a difficult specialty for a player-character Fixer, because it requires a great deal of hands-on attention and a solid base of operations which cannot be abandoned. It does

not require as large a staff as black marketeering rings and prostitution, but it is much more limited in terms of roleplaying opportunities. Fences make excellent contacts and NPC informants, and are the perfect tools for referees who are keen on hatching subplots.

### Loan Shark(CredShark)

These guys will make a loan to just about anyone, however, their interest rates are very high and a delinquent payment means a broken limb (or worse). Just as Fences sell tangible goods, Loan Sharks sell interest rates. While these interest rates may or may not be affordable, not paying gets your legs broken for free... Loan Sharks all have the same basic staff, which consists of several solos or other goons to hunt down welters and one or more Factors as accountants. The only variable is how many staff are involved, this being dependent upon the scale of the operation. Loan Sharks are prime candidates for Mob involvement, since Loan Sharking is high-profit with relatively low risk and requires a substantial monetary base to keep it going. The 21st century's ultimate evolution of the Loan Shark is the CredShark, a Loan Shark who deals exclusively through the Net. These electronic Loan Sharks often operate out of Face Banks, working alongside Factors and Netrunners. Their main customers are Netrunners, but all types come to CredSharks for their own reasons. Some naïve types prefer CredSharks because they never have to actually meet their black-market benefactors, but this is just smoke and mirrors. CredSharks are as vicious and dangerous as their meat-eating cousins—perhaps more so. While a Loan Shark may look up a welters's address and have them harassed or beaten up, a CredShark attaches tapeworms (various forms of computer virus) to the electronic credit they front their clients. These tapeworms infect other facets of the customer's electronic identity, and may be activated like time-bombs by their CredShark masters. Should any

gonk welsh on a debt to a CredShark, he may find the Government knocking on his door for something he didn't do; he might find that all his legitimate bank accounts have been closed; he may wind up on a CIA wanted list; or he might find that as far as the databanks are concerned, his name is Elvis Presley and he's currently living on Mars. On the other hand, CredSharks can give their clients up-to-the-nanosecond interest rates and real-time compounding. Whether they are back-alley Loan Sharks or wilderspace CredSharks, these Moneybags keep their clients hopping.

<b>Loan Shark</b>	<b>CredShark</b>
<u>Streetdeal</u>	<u>Streetdeal</u>
Awareness	Awareness
Intimidate	Intimidate
Shadow/Track	System Knowledge
Accounting	Accounting
Human Percep.	Programming
Interrogation	Handgun
Melee	Electronics
Brawling	Interview
Handgun	Melee

### Bookie

The term "Bookie" is a holdover from the middle 20th century, when gambling odds were recorded in simple paper books (talk about low-tech!). Back then, each neighborhood had its own bookie, who could be found hanging around the local bar or pharmacy. He would know the odds on boxing matches and horse races, and "keep book" on bets he accepted. Winners would get their payoffs from the pot he had accumulated, and he would walk away with the excess. In 2020, gambling is a huge business, and although they are still called "Bookies", in *Cyberpunk*, Oddsmasters are technology-based databrokers. There are two types of Bookies, and their functions overlap so much it would be foolish to list them separately. First, there are the classic Bookies who accept bets and keep track of a "pot" of money, handing out winnings as well as monitoring odds. Then there are the Oddsmakers, who are more concerned with keeping track of (and even setting) odds than

they are with covering bets. Bookies in 2020 have a lot to keep them busy. Although gambling on horse races is covered by legally-sanctioned Off-Track Betting groups, and the "numbers racket" has been replaced by state-run lotteries like Body-Lotto, there are a variety of other events to bet on: boxing, pro wrestling, martial arts competitions and major sports events, such as football, baseball, basketball and soccer (which is huge outside of the United States), are all popular forums for underground gambling rings. There are huge betting rings organized around illegal casinos and back-alley competitions like knife-dueling, mobile crap games and animal fights. Among the filthy rich, it is in-vogue to bet on anything. Political campaigns, wars, and even the weather have bets placed on them. Oddsmakers are the people who set the odds for all these rackets. Bookies often make extensive use of computer systems and other information-processing equipment to organize their betting pools and get minute-by-minute updates on odds. The information age has revolutionized the gambling business. There are screamsheets and on-line information services which are concerned exclusively with the information oddsmakers provide. *The Racing Form*, a horse-racing newspaper which has been around since the early 20th century, lists everything any gambler would ever want to know about the horses in a race—owner, jockey, track record, lineage are all included. Oddsmakers deal in this type of gambling information, setting odds, keeping track of odds, and providing their clients with tips on good bets. Some Oddsmakers are so talented and well-respected that their predictions are regularly published in major newspapers. The most powerful source of gambling odds has always been Lloyd's of London, a British insurance company which has been the authority on odds of all forms for a very long time. Lloyd's publishes calculated odds on everything under the sun, from sports to politics, and as such it has been the target of a great deal of attempted computer crime (Lloyd's has stupifyingly dense ICE). Some Bookies specialize in

combat-related gambling, resembling military analysts who lay odds and accept bets; their commodities are knife-fights, gang warfare, and full-blown national conflicts. In 2020, most Bookies rely heavily upon the Net, no matter what their specialty may be. Electronic gambling casinos and betting rings can be found all the dark corners of cyberspace, protected by thick security programs and staffed with number-crunching netrunners. The type of betting varies from cyber-casino to cyber-casino. Some have their own gambling programs which simulate lotto and bingo systems, and the underground equivalent of a stock exchange, with huge data-structures fluctuating in time to the shifting odds of assorted events. Organized crime often plays a large role in gambling, and most bookies soon find themselves involved with the Mob in one way or another. Often times, the Mob will arrange to have certain popular betting events fixed, and walk away with huge profits. This is not to say that independent Bookies and electronic cyber-casinos do not do the same thing, it has just always been considered a staple of Mob business. Fixed betting usually works by altering the posted odds of an event (such as a boxing match). More often, the competitor who is listed as the favorite by the odds will be persuaded (one way or another) to "throw" the match. Since the by-the-odds favorite is most expected to win, most bets are placed on that competitor, and fewer are placed on the other competitor(s). Then the Bookie collects all the money from all the bets, the event begins, the favorite throws the match and everyone who bet on the favorite loses all his money. Only those who bet on the actual winner receive any money, and the Bookie walks away with a large wad of money in his pocket. If this is a Mob-sponsored event, the Mob gets most of the money and the Bookie gets a cut. The trick with fixed betting is not to make it look too obvious. Many Bookies have been done in by outraged betters who feel they have been double-crossed. Another quirk in the Bookie's world is the fact that with the advent of

### Exotic Fixers

While Exotics are more accepted in society than Full Borgs, they still suffer from some of the social stigma of prejudice (in some cases, jealousy may be closer to the truth). Exotics have the advantage of evoking a carefully-tailored response from humans: be it fear for draconiforms, underestimation for weasels, or abject lust for cats, bunnies and playbeings... Like metalheads, exotics have particular needs and usually prefer to rely on someone who understands those needs. Exotic culture is more complicated than 'Borg' culture, sometimes creating entire enclaves or neighborhoods devoted to these "Crier Kids." Exotic Fixers often serve as Go-Betweens, bringing normals and cyborgs together with exotic clientele or employers, as well as catering to the needs of the exotic community; selling specialized grooming supplies, providing safehouses and other forms of asylum, contacting medical expertise (such as skin cancer specialists), and serving as social organizers in the capacity of Owners, all come to mind.

#### Fence

Note: should be considered an NPC specialty

<u>Streetdeal</u>	Awareness/Notice
Persuasion	Intimidate
Brawling	Handgun
Melee	Forgery
Accounting	Basic Tech or Expert skill (in whatever you prefer to buy)

modern cybernetics, it is possible to get implants which will count cards and calculate odds so efficiently that almost any gambling system can be outmaneuvered by a better with the means. However, most gamblers are small-time, desperate streetcums and wageslaves who cannot afford such exotic wetware. Bookies and Loan Sharks get a lot of business from people who are really desperate for money. Loan Sharks are guaranteed to give you some money, but their draconian interest practices make them somewhat unappealing. Bookies, on the other hand, are far less fearsome but the chances that you will lose your money are equal to (if not greater than) your chances to make a profit. Most gambling is done for fun rather than out of economic necessity, but the addictive quality of gambling ensures that Bookies will always have business.

<b>Bookie</b>	
<u>Streetdeal</u>	Awareness
Intimidate	Persuasion
Accounting	Human Perception
Gamble	Handgun
Brawling	Mathematics
or Melee	

## LEECHES

People are a Fixer's greatest commodity, but for a Leech this is more than a cliché, it's a code to live by. A Leech is a Fixer who specializes in personnel services, be they legitimate or illegitimate. A Leech brings employers and employees together, making things happen on the street below and in the corporate world above. Although there are plenty of gray and black services which come under the influence of these Leeches, there are also many totally-legal trades with which they are involved. Be they Talent Agents, Talent Scouts or Managers, all make their living off of other people's talent, and that is why even the fairest and most selfless "People-Person" will find himself unflatteringly referred to as a "Leech."

## Talent Scout

A Talent Scout is a Leech who goes out on tour in search of people with an unrealized talent for acting, musical performances, sports, business, and assorted black ops like netrunning and assassinations. Whether they are sent out by an employer to find a particular type of talent, by a media mega-corporation to find any kind of talent, or are independent operators who search out talented people without representation and then act as their Agent, Talent Scouts are the people who actively seek out talent. Talent Scouts frequent hotspots of activity for their target talent group. When looking for athletes to invite into the big leagues, Talent Scouts tour the nation's stadiums, public playing fields and sports bars. When looking for Netrunners to induct into a corporate cracker unit, Talent Scouts visit VRcades, hang around Netrunner bars like the Short Circuit, regularly check out underground electronics shops and are constantly scouring the Net for exclusive BBs and other virtual hangouts. Talent Scouts spend a great deal of time socializing, schmoozing and asking a lot of unwanted questions. Some people (like nightclub owners) think Talent Scouts are pests, but they are considered invaluable by their employers. Since you never know where or when a talented person is going to show up, Talent Scouts are always on the move. They get a great deal of mileage out of their contacts, who are mostly club owners, industry-connected Techies, Medias, or Corporates. A Talent Scout's profits come from charging their employers a "Finder's Fee," which can take the form of a percentage of the monies which the talent brings in, or a simple financial settlement which may or may not be prearranged (essentially, salary or commission). Like any Fixer, Talent Scouts are always looking for their "big score" in the form of a hot talent who they will be the one to discover. When a Talent Scout discovers a truly giant new talent, both parties are pretty much ensured of financial well-being. Although many corporations and other groups have Talent Scouts as regular employees, there are also many independents who

will work with these big groups as freelancers. Indie Talent Scouts are often small-time operators and more desperate than their corporate cousins, but every once in a while, a nobody Scout brings a white-hot performer to the doorstep of an influential conglomerate and walks away with a finder's fee which will keep him comfortable for many years to come. Talent Scouts can even work for the Mob, seeking out new gunsels and fixers to fill holes in a family's ranks. These Mob Scouts keep track of criminals who are just getting out of prison, and patrol the seedy parts of town looking for young toughs and other capable lawbreakers. It is very likely that at some point during any Edgerunner's career they will receive an offer of employment from a Mob Talent Scout. Solos, Fixers, Prowlers and Netrunners are most likely to draw this attention, but only if they show some potential—no-talent gonks can pester these Leeches as much as they want, but the best they can expect is a beating by the Scout's hired muscleboys. Talent Scouts give referees a great method for bringing PCs together, or for introducing important NPCs, or for generally making a the job of a team of players easier or more difficult.

<b>Talent Scout</b>	
<u>Streetdeal</u>	Awareness
Persuasion	Intimidate
Expert:(field)	Human Percpt.
Social	Ed. & Gen. Knowl.
Expert:(culture)	Interview

## Talent Agent / Manager

The bulk of the Leech population is made up of Talent Agents, whose job is less trying and thankless than that of a Talent Scout. Talent Agents are paid by their (supposedly) talented clients to represent them to potential employers. Since they are paid to find job for talented people, Agents spend a lot of time schmoozing and networking with people in their clients' industry, keeping channels open and sniffing out business opportunities. Representing a pool of human resources requires an extensive network of contacts so Talent Agents usually have several

people on their payroll, even if the Agent represents only a single person or group. Most of an Agent's contacts are corporates or other bigwigs in their client's field. An Agent who represents actors/actresses would have a lot of contacts in Hollywood and London, including media corporations like DMS and Net 54. The number of clients a Talent Agents might have varies widely, influenced mainly by the relative popularity of the client(s). Assume that the number of clients is very low at Streetdeal level-1, reaches its peak at around Streetdeal level-5 or level-6, and then drops off again as it approaches Streetdeal level-10. Such high-powered Agents often represent very well-known people like rockerboy Kerry Eurodyne, baseball star Ray Isaac, braindancer Slade McCallahan or corporate Solo Morgan Blackhand. The truly fat, big-time Leech racket is being a Manager; such people will inevitably become well-recognized and well-respected names themselves, and their reputation can become so great that they will wield as much influence in their industry as the talents they represent. Being in charge of the business affairs of a single person or group of talented people combines the representative functions of a Talent Agent with the business savvy of corporate division head, without the job-hunting worries of a normal Agent. Managers have other problems, to be sure, but their close involvement with a group or person (to be referred to as the "client") makes the Manager a member of a team, and as such, a rightful recipient of a percentage of the client's total profits. This benefit carries a heavy price, however, in that Managers lead very stressful lives. They have to take care of all the business arrangements pertinent to their client's career. What these arrangements are depends upon the nature of their client's profession.

Agents/Managers need not always operate within the law. Netrunners, Solos and covert strike teams need repping as much as Rockerboys and actors. In this respect, edgerunner Agents can be thought of as confidential employment agencies. When a somebody is staging a gray or black operation and need to contract an operative or ops team, they can talk to an underground Agent with a good rep-

utation—the Agent will be able to provide skilled operatives, either by offering someone who they represent or directing the employer to another Agent who has the personnel required. He will also generally serve as a middleman between the team and their patrons. For those referees who are running ongoing mercenary-style campaigns, a player-character Fixer who has specialized as a Talent Agent Leech is a great gimmick for setting up adventures, bringing in new player-characters and involving important NPCs. The Manager role must have a very close connection with his clients—regular business meetings, traveling with them, even helping them with their personal problems. Overall, an excellent choice for players who are new to playing Fixer characters, since the Manager will be very much a part of the group of players and will usually accompany them on business matters. Player-character personality and background will affect how adventures are conducted, in that some Agent/Managers will refuse illegal jobs for their clients, and others will only accept contracts for certain causes which they support. However, most Edgerunner Agents are willing and able to arrange anything from a corporate concert to a military coup. In representing an assortment of talented people within a certain industry, business or racket, Talent Agents/Managers are paid to make their clients' goals their own goals, but double-crossing an edgerunner Agent is a rather bad idea, since he's bound to have tight connections with the sort of shady characters who he could persuade to pay you back in kind..

This role can be one of the most useful of NPC fixers, opening up all sorts of possibilities for the creative referee. These NPCs can serve as vehicles for new plotlines, help players out in times of trouble, sell out their clients to the "enemy," or be captured and held hostage! Be they PCs or NPCs, Managers always provide a Cyberpunk campaign with a great deal of color.

The lowest of the Talent Agent/Manager class are the generally shady, sleazy Pimps. They make their living by arranging business for their joytoys and taking a (usually large) percentage of the profits in exchange for organization, protection and care. Pimps are commonly connected to

criminal organizations, paying off the Mob in return for the right to use certain areas. Through the Mob, many elevate their minimal status, becoming the managers of escort services and other setups. Prostitution may be the world's oldest profession but the business has changed a great deal over the years. In 2020, the wide availability of sexually-oriented Virtual Realities Brandances has drastically reduced the profitability; many pimps are also black market VR and Dance dealers. There is also the 21st-century variation of the prostitute called the "meat puppet," where a girl (or boy) is connected to a brandance while carrying out their "business." The meat puppet's body is controlled by a simple computer program simulating erotic behavior while the actual person is experiencing a totally different world. This is somewhat expensive, and cheap meat puppet outfits often suffer casualties from "technical failure." Because of these alternatives, the higher-level pimps may resort to perverted techies, and the proliferation of horrendous STDs makes it necessary that any Pimp be part Medtech, as well. Some Pimps specialize in Exotic prostitute such as Playbeings, or even Full Cyborg joytoys. Although it has greatly shrunk, the simple hooker market still exists for those who cannot afford the luxuries of escort services, meat puppets, virtual reality brandance. Depending upon where the pimp is based, prostitution may or may not be legal. Generally, where the "real thing" is illegal, VR sex sells better.

<b>Talent Agent/Manager</b>	
<u>Streetdeal</u>	Awareness
Persuasion	Ldrship or Acting*
Interview*	Human Perception*
Social*	Expert:(entertainment)*
Intimidate	Education & General Knowledge

<b>Pimp</b>	
<i>Note: should be considered an NPC specialty</i>	
Uses the Manager package with these changes (*):	
Handgun	
Melee	Brawling
Seduction	Diagnose Illness

## GO-BETWEENS

In 2020, increasing gaps between the rich and the poor, inflamed tensions between racial groups, harsher confrontations between multiplying political movements, deeper divisions between generations, enhanced disparities in technology, and new alienations in humanity itself (pure humans, cyborgs, exotics and full 'borgs) have led to an almost hopelessly fragmented society. Like the crossover from analog to digital technology, society has been divided into smaller and smaller units, leaving no apparent links which "bind us all together." The resultant future shock has made it critical that there are professionals who serve as living interfaces between people—these people are Fixers, and they are called Go-Betweens. Go-Betweens are experts at bridging the gaps between individuals or groups, forging connections for the Street with the Corporations and for the nobodies with the Edgerunners. Whether Go-Betweens do this as a matter of duty, idealistic crusading or plain old greed is a matter of individual context, but the business is undeniably profitable and fraught with danger. In terms of economics, Go-Betweens are masters of supply and demand, smoothing the flow of commodities (goods, services and information) around the numerous social and economic groups packed into a *Cyberpunk* city. Go-Betweens know who's selling, who's buying, and how to bring them together. As with other Fixers, some Go-Betweens deal in gray and black businesses and others with those that are totally legitimate. There are five types of Go-Between, each concerned with bringing people (and products) together. They are Negotiator, Smuggler, Traders, Sniffers and Owners.

### Negotiator

These Go-Betweens deal in a commodity which is entirely non-material but is always in high demand: arbitration skill. With so many social sets, economic classes and special-interest groups, there is always a conflict of one type or another which an accomplished Negotiator can turn to his advantage. Their skills may be applied to

such mundane jobs as settling disputes between two individuals (such as the forging of a commercial treaty between two Black Marketeers), or arbitrating a massive head-to-head clash between warring crime organizations or corporate competitors. The size of the conflicts a Negotiator is regularly involved in is almost always proportional to the level of his Streetdeal. A small-fry Negotiator with a Streetdeal of 2 will get most of his work from individual clients and petty gang rivalries. A more talented Negotiator may handle neighborhood disturbances, student riots, workforces on strike, police reliability complaints, and racial disputes. An extremely talented Negotiator may handle full-scale warfare between gangs, organized crime, corporations, or even civil wars. The trick for a negotiator is to remain neutral enough to be acceptable to both parties and removed enough to not get assassinated by vengeful losers. Because of the potential risks involved in being a freelance arbitrator, these Go-Betweens often keep a careful eye on the progression of all sides in their "Conflict of Interest," ready to buddy-up with the likely winners and thus guarantee safety from any losing side. Other Negotiators go nomad, picking up their outfit and leaving town (or even the country) after each job. A Negotiator's contacts often include a lawyer (or paralegal), some police officers or other authorities, and a media or two. The actual staff for a Negotiator should be kept light, since they are obliged to attend to the meat of their business themselves, but a Negotiator can use his Facemen (subordinates) for finding new business, keeping track of the parties in his Conflict of Interest, troubleshooting negotiation proceedings and keeping channels open with contacts and old clients. Sometimes Negotiators are kept on permanent payroll by certain groups, such as the larger organized crime syndicates, certain corporations, and even the more enlightened gangs.

<b>Negotiator</b>	
Streetdeal	Awareness
Persuasion	Oratory
Brawling	Human Perception
Social	Expert: (field of choice)
Know Language of choice	Education & General Knowledge

## Smuggler

With the advent of corporate domination, the breakdown of federal authority; the resurgence of states' rights; the rise of free states, and the establishment of free-trade zones, commercial laws and economics differ widely from place to place across this once-great nation of ours. The same holds true for the various nations of the world: victimless crimes are legal in some places, illegal in others. In some states you can carry weapons openly, in others, firearms are discouraged. Complex webs of tariffs and taxation divide the globe into a maze which daunts most private traders and clears the way for corporate conglomerates to control import and export. This complicated environment is well-suited to those Go-Between Fixers who specialize in the art of smuggling. Smugglers take advantage of the variance in economic climates to turn a comfortable profit. If computer intrusion software or cloned organs are cheap and legal in one zone, and expensive and illegal elsewhere, a tremendous amount of money can be made transporting these items from the first place to the second place. The trick is not to get caught doing it! Another interesting quirk of this business is that smuggling is not confined to illegal wares. Substantial profits can be made simply by transporting perfectly legal goods (such as liquor and cigarettes) from one area to another without paying the tariffs and taxes. Sometimes, smugglers find themselves involved in such novel enterprises as bringing food into a neighborhood that has been blockaded or aiding political offenders in escaping to other countries. Some Smugglers insist on handling only operations which are morally supportable, but the great majority of Smugglers are in it purely for the money; if someone in Japan wants Chinese-made M-9 assault rifles or Filipino-made Black Lace combat drugs, most Smugglers will ask no questions and gladly accept full payment. Smuggler-type Go-Betweens generally require larger staffs than other types of Fixers, because a Fixer who runs a Smuggling ring certainly isn't going to actually carry the goods across any borders himself. These Go-Betweens usually have anywhere from one to a dozen Jockeys (vehicle

experts, see the Runner role in *When Gravity Falls*, pg. 45) to make the actual runs, a couple of reliable guards in the form of Solos, and a Techie or two to design secretive containers for shipping and storage. Smugglers find that politicians make very handy contacts when it comes to dodging border tariffs and having a few friends in law-enforcement agencies such as the CIA (which absorbed the FBI DEA in the early 2000's) is a big help when your Jockeys get caught. A solid contact in the Mob can also go a long way, because smuggling operations are favorite targets of Mob takeover. The Mob itself runs numerous smuggling rings, including weapons, drugs, organs and any other commodities which would interest a Black Marketeer. The most difficult smuggling operation—the covert transport of wares to and from space—is a field which is exploited more by the Mob than any independent Go-Between simply because only powerful organized crime families have the resources and the means to get through the heavy security regulations in LEO. Besides, who else but the Mob can afford their own space-worthy deltas and cutters?

<b>Smuggler</b>	
Streetdeal	Awareness
Persuasion	Know Language(s)
Brawling	Hide & Evade
Handgun	Forgery or Basic Tech
Leadership	Resist Torture & Drugs

## Trader

Traders are a very particular brand of Fixer who deal not only in monetary transactions, but also in pure bartering. Very often Traders have an "Import/Export" business as their front, using the pretense of dealing in international goods such as art or antiques to provide a perfect smoke screen for trading black-market commodities through utterly untraceable handshake deals and midnight drop-offs at waterfronts and basement loading docks. By exchanging one type of goods for another, Traders do not have to deal in actual cash or credit; their operations are therefore much harder to monitor and crack. The only way to trace

a Trader's business is to keep an eye on fluctuations in the markets in which he deals—you have to know what a Trader is moving to catch him. For this reason, Traders may be very finicky as to what commodities they will trade, since common wares attract little attention, while unlicensed AI components are comparatively high-profile. Traders make their eventual profits by making wise decisions in what they trade. A smart Trader can exchange a truckload of generic food pre-packs for a building full of business workstations. It's all in knowing who wants what. If the people who have the workstations are starving squatters occupying a closed office building, they will gladly trade computers for food. The computers can then be sold, put to use, or traded for an even more profitable commodity. Being a Trader requires a complete mastery of bartering (see the Bartering section in *Money in 2020*, page XX), and as such must invest very heavily in information. Traders have to know who has what, who wants what, and how to get them together. Traders often rely heavily upon real-time computer models of citywide inventories, and as such, most Traders have at least one Netrunner and maybe a Factor on the payroll. The ever-present Solos are useful for security at warehouses and drop-sites. Some cities run fully-licensed "Barter Houses"; warehouses where customers can register their products, figure out a relative value (based on the current market value, minus a small transaction fee), and post a "want list" of items they need. Almost every city has underground barter-houses, which use a wide number of code phrases, false IDs, and pseudonyms to protect their customers. Most barter-houses are run by Traders, allowing these Go-Betweens to work in a strictly legal capacity (in which case they become bureaucrats) or in a more traditional black-market environment. The mysterious "Agoras" provide useful tools for Traders, as gold is a suitably palpable commodity which still does not qualify as real money (see *Agoras*, page 59). Trader business is absolutely riddled with Mob involvement since organized crime is readily capable of procuring large stockpiles of valuable commodi-

## Going by Muleback

For those Smugglers who can't afford vehicle transport, there's always the time honored smuggler tradition of using "mules." During the drug wars of 1980s and 1990s, large drug cartels would pay an illegal alien, the mule, money to swallow balloons filled with cocaine. When and if he or she got over the border, into America, the cargo would be retrieved (by heavy use of laxatives). Occasionally, one of these balloons would burst in transit and the mule would get a free sample large enough to kill an elephant. This always upset the dealers who had just lost a perfectly good shipment. In 2020, with modern bio-technological advances, drugs (and other goods) may be implanted within a mule much more safely. For the Smuggler, this means more successful transfers. But detection devices have also increased in reliability. The average awareness roll needed to spot normalized contraband within a mule while using a detection device, such as Scanway (*Chrome Book 2*, pg. 23), is 15%.



around in the grimy, dangerous streets for some rich powerdealer who doesn't want to get his expensive shoes dirty... In this respect, Sniffers are very closely related to Private Investigators. A Sniffer's reputation is dependent upon his ability to find anything and his willingness to go to any lengths for any client to get them their desired wares. Sniffers are the bloodhounds of the Fixer underground, often sent on lengthy quests which may take them throughout a city, state, country or even around the world. Corporate R&D executives

ties and providing the physical space to store these wares. Besides, the Mob likes to keep its operations as untraceable as possible. Although establishing a Trader operation requires a rather large amount of capital, once the racket is under way, its operating costs are relatively low and the profits generated can be impressive. This is another reason why the Import/Export business is so crowded with Mafia and Yakuza enforcers.

<b>Trader</b>	
Streetdeal	Awareness
Human Percep.	Know Language
Persuasion	Edu & Gen Knowl.
Intimidate	Interview
Melee	Handgun

### Sniffer

This type of Go-Between is also called a "Procurement Person," and these Fixers often find themselves hired to schlep

often hire Sniffers to track down the creators of flashy new weedware (street-generated technology) so that their corporation can get patents on the newtech and mass-market it in a hurry. Richkids and other glitterfolk often have steady relationships with Sniffers who regularly fetch drugs, prostitutes or any other black-market wares their clients may want to have but not want to take the risk of getting for themselves. Sniffers have similar jobs to freelance Talent Scouts and low-level Info Bros, since they travel a lot and are always looking for something. And that something might very well be people. White slavery is a business which some Sniffers fall into, nabbing beautiful street kids to become the concubines of filthy-rich foreign nationals. To make themselves accessible to their rich clients, Sniffers usually have offices in reasonably upscale districts, hang around high-society haunts like restaurants and bars, dress presentably and cultivate a sociable personality (this is not a universal practice, of course, and Sniffers

usually have two images: society and street). Most denizens of the street and Edgerunners do not trust or even like Sniffers, since these Go-Betweens are thought of as little more than street-level gofers for the powers that be, stoolies who serve as the eyes and ears of the oppressive elite. This is sometimes painfully true. For this reason, most Sniffers try to adhere to some kind of "honor among thieves" code, refusing to sell the street out to The Man and only taking jobs which they deem as treachery-free (if only it were that easy...). Staffing is usually light, since Sniffers are too mobile to have a large entourage—most Facemen for Sniffers will be informers and gofers. Organized crime has little interest in self-employed Sniffers, whose business is considered too small-time to merit Mob attention. On the other hand, the Mob certainly performs many such services itself, providing the rich and powerful with illegal toys and cutting a percentage off the top, so there are plenty of Sniffers in organized crime syndicates. Sniffers are an excellent choice for Player-Characters, since they are not tied down by big operations and numerous employees, are expected to move around a lot, and are a valuable addition to most roleplaying groups.

<b>Sniffer</b>	
Streetdeal	Awareness
Persuasion	Social
Shadow/Track	Library Search
Intimidate	Human Perception
Brawling	Handgun

### Owner

Every city is packed with establishments which cater to public entertainment and congregation. Restaurants, bars, clubs, casinos, VRcades and drug parlors are a staple of *Cyberpunk* culture. The proprietors of these establishments are important members of their establishment's community. They have contacts from all walks of life, make lots of friends and hear all sorts of rumors. Sounds like these guys are Fixers, doesn't it? In fact, Club Owners and other such social proprietors (referred to, for convenience's sake, as Owners) are a type of Go-

Between, since they run a business which brings people together. Places such as the Grand Illusion and the Night Owl get business from almost every social set, from partying glitterfolk, to biz-minded Edgerunners to booze-hunting streetscum. Some Owners are one-joint joes, acting as the full-fledged owner and manager of their own personal establishment, while others are partners, owning parts of numerous bars and clubs all across a city, country or even the whole world. The legality of their businesses will depend on where they are located. Some American free states allow whorehouses and drug parlors as legitimate establishments, while some tightwad European countries have a curfew which effectively bans late-night bars and clubs. The Owners of these establishments often have a mixed bag of potential contacts, including politicians, media stars, corporate mega-honchos, glitterfolk, Edgerunners and bums, and their staff requirements are understandably heavy. Factors to handle accounting, Netrunners or Techies to run lightshows, Solos as bouncers, maybe a Medtech or two to tend bar, and even some small-time Rockers for live acts and to be the DJs/MCs. Facemen can act as almost any of the above, as well as serving as anything from assistant managers to coat-check clerks. The level of an Owner's Streetdeal special ability is directly linked to the popularity and the importance of his establishment(s). Many Owners use their establishments as front for other types of rackets, such as information dealing, drug dealing, talent scouting, negotiations or anything else that Fixers do. Independent Owners have a lot to fear from the Mob, who are likely to try selling "insurance" as part of their protection rackets, while many of these social hotspots are run (at least partially) by organized criminals, and certain restaurants and bars are entirely dedicated to Mob business. Owners are not very useful as player-characters, but they make excellent NPCs, allowing referees to give their favorite *Cyberpunk* hangouts an added dimension of personality in the form of their proprietors, who can get PCs jobs, get them in trouble, or just get them drunk.

<b>Owners</b>	
<i>Note: should be considered an NPC specialty</i>	
Streetdeal	Awareness
Persuasion	Social
Interview	Intimidate
Accounting	Human Perception
Brawling	Wardrobe & Style

### Mobsters

For player characters of almost all varieties, but most especially Fixers, it is inevitable that the Mob will make itself an issue at some point in the character's career. With such a booming underground network as exists in *Cyberpunk* cities, it is unavoidable that organized crime syndicates will want their own piece of almost every character's action. In 2020, when one says "the Mob," one is referring to organized crime groups of all types. There are too many different syndicates vying for power all over the world identify them individually. The Mafia, the Yakuza and the Triads are generally considered the major syndicates, but there are many others, and most of these groups have overlapping spheres of influence despite their separate geographical origins. It is possible that when large organized crime syndicates exist where the government is corrupt or very weak, the Mob may actually BE the government (consider the Warlords of Somalia in the 90's). The character of the organization a Mobster belongs to will dictate a great deal about how he lives his life; his friends, his lifestyle, even the amount and kind of cyberware permissible are determined by the Mob. It is also important to remember that with all the perks that come with belonging to organized crime, enemies are also included in the package. To be specific, rival syndicates and major law-enforcement agencies.

Most syndicates are organized along racial/family structures, although in the melting-pot world of *Cyberpunk*, the Mob will usually accept low-level operatives of any nationality or race. The Mob employs professional operatives of every variety. Thugs,

**• Fixers in Spaaaaace:**  
The biggest danger facing Fixers operating in space (next to explosive decompression) is usually boredom. In the tightly controlled and monitored environment of space, there's not a lot of leeway to make a profit. Usually, Fixers use their skills as support staff, such as handling the supplies and purchases of a workshack, or negotiating with other space bases and the dirt-siders (Earthlings). On the other hand, any Fixer who can set up a regular racket in space will usually find themselves in the midst of a highly profitable monopoly. The claustrophobic environment of space life makes people desperate for entertainment and escape, therefore, the production and sale of psychedelic and mood-altering drugs, custom-made VRs and unregulated brandnames becomes an ever-popular business. Life in space also means that a Fixer has less to worry about from organized crime, although there are rumors of a mysterious, high-tech Mob which is indigenous to LEO. Go-betweens will always be busy in space. The trade or sale of high-technology wares has potential, as premiums on raw materials and physical room often keep highriders from having everything they want. Another field ripe for exploitation is space-related smuggling, carrying wares such as drugs, weapons and underground amusements of all types. This is a very difficult business, since it requires either the outsmarting of the orbital customs officials (very tough) or the regular use of private space-vehicles (very, very expensive). However, for well-connected and ambitious Fixers, space holds a great deal of promise.



**Cyber-Vultures:** These scavengers lead only slightly more tasteful lives than fleshmen, organizing around the search for cheap, used cybernetics. Death may put an end to a human's worth (except to a fleshman), but cyberware is too precious to be mulched with its owner. Cyber-Vultures sometimes resort to attacking live targets and forcibly removing their cybernetics. This can be done while the "donor" is still alive, and without anesthetics (this often happens to cybered-up individuals who hang out in the Combat Zone late at night). However, some Cyber-Vultures work in legitimate business arenas, acting as Repo Men, repossessing cyberware from owners who are delinquent on their payments and retrieving cybertech which is to be inherited by a deceased's next of kin. However, most Cyber-Vultures earn their name, descending on the aftermaths of drive-by shootings and traffic accidents, and jumping unwary cyborgs. Well-enhanced players should take note—Cyber-Vultures give a whole new meaning to getting "ripped off."

bodyguards and hit men are Solos, while other character types occupy the positions of accountants (Factors), lawyers (Lawyers are a semi-legitimate role—see *Protect & Serve* pg. 70), computer experts (Netrunners) and doctors (Medtechs). However, there is only one character role which fits the bill of the classic Mobster, and that is a Fixer. There are no specific categories of Mobster; the majority of Fixers employed by the Mob are Salesmen, Go-Betweens, Leeches and Moneybags. A select group of Mob Fixers are those who have been "Made" (as in the Mafia), or "Taken In" (as in the Yakuza). The basic idea is that they have been inducted into the hierarchy of the syndicate (some sort of initiation procedure is usually called for). These Fixers are different from the many other roles employed by the Mob in that, instead of running a particular racket or operation, they serve the Mob leaders, acting as the observers and managers of other Fixers. As has been stressed in the other Fixer descriptions, the Mob employs all breeds of Fixer to handle their rackets. Any kind of Fixer from Factors to Black Marketeers can work for the Mob, the difference is that only "Made" Fixers are integral parts of the organizational structure. As such, a Mobster's special ability level serves as an indicator of his rank within his syndicate, somewhat like the special abilities of Streetpunks, Corporates and (ironically) Cops: A Mobster with a Streetdeal of 1-5 is a typical wiseguy or watchdog, Streetdeal level 6 makes a Mobster a gangleader, level 7 represents a serious enforcer, Streetdeal of 8 is a sub-lieutenant, level 9 is a lieutenant and Mobsters with Streetdeal 10 are full-fledged crime bosses. A Mobster's Streetdeal also functions as a sort of Resources skill, indicating how much of the Mob's resources the Fixer can access—this facet of the skill is used like a persuasion skill with Mob superiors in accessing those resources.

Most of the low-level Mobsters (level 1-5) oversee the classic protection rackets which sell "insurance" to members of a community (sometimes that community may even be the Net). Nice commodity, that protection... Racketeers are selling something you may not even need, until

they get into your neighborhood. Staffing starts small and works its way up, and mostly consists of big, dumb Solos. Becoming this kind of watchdog usually requires swearing an oath of loyalty to the syndicate, and perks include the recognition and respect (read: fear) of being a member of the Mob in question. You have the right to associate with the family, but you'd better follow orders. However, the Mob looks after its own, and if you need help you'll get it.

The next step up is a gangleader (Streetdeal 6), where you actually get to lead other watchdogs and you have a small subgroup of the syndicate named after you. By this point, Mobsters have been involved in syndicate operations of some import, so they are allowed to sit in at meetings and even speak up once in a while if they have something really worthwhile to say. Gangleaders can intimidate local streetscum and low-level watchdogs from rival syndicates, and they are more respected and feared than before, as well as drawing the animosity of law enforcement authorities. If attacked, a gangleader can call on his gang's members to help him get revenge.

When a Mobster has moved on to a Streetdeal level of 7, he becomes an enforcer—he is a respected member of the syndicate, has authority over several gangleaders and has responsibilities to his Mob organization as a whole. This includes the training of new members who will generally retain some loyalty, and the enforcement of the boundaries of the syndicate's turf. An enforcer's opinions are valued, but at this level the internal politics of organized crime dictate that you watch your step. Most enforcers have committed a few murders and done some time in prison in their past careers (this definitely boosts the Mobster's reputation and credibility). Attacks against enforcers are considered attacks against the "family," and will certainly provoke a retaliatory response, and enforcers who get arrested will usually have bail posted and legal support provided by the syndicate.

With a Mobster's Streetdeal reaches 8 or 9, he has achieved the rank of lieutenant or at least sub-lieutenant. By this time, the Mobster has probably been

involved in, if not committed, the murder of rival Mob members. Reaching the level of a sub-lieutenant can be done through sheer merits, but to become a full-fledged lieutenant almost always requires that the Mobster be chosen by a retiring or promoted lieutenant in the organization as a successor, or that he engineer a secretive power-play to usurp his superior. At this strata, the Mobster becomes a member of the inner circle (effectively "adopted" by the family) and can control the operations of an entire syndicate racket (such as drugs, prostitution, gambling, etc.). Most people (including rival Mobsters) will do everything they can not to anger a lieutenant, but the authorities will want to take him down something fierce—however, to do so would require a major operation. If they do catch him, the syndicate would spare no expense in trying to free their comrade. These "made" members can invoke the Mob's name under their own authority, direct the actions of several gangs, organize powerful criminal networks and generally throw a lot of weight around. If attacked or otherwise hassled, the Mobster can call on a small army of goons and hitmen, but remember that poor leadership is dangerous to your health.

At Streetdeal level 10, the Mobster is a crime boss. In the Mafia, the name is Godfather. In the Yakuza, crime bosses are referred to as Oyabun. Crime bosses openly challenge, intimidate and sometimes control authorities such as corporations, police forces, rival syndicates and even some governments (crime bosses always have a few politicians in their pockets, and in some cases they may effectively dominate their nation's destiny). Feared by everyone, crime bosses know everything that goes on in their territory (usually an entire city), and major figures such as media stars, corporate officials and politicians vie for your attention and endorsement. They are always stupefyingly rich, owning vast estates and surrounded by an entourage of secretaries, bodyguards, advisors and assorted stoolies who live to serve their master's every whim. Favors, fortunes and human lives are traded with equally casual waves of the hand, and even the police stay pretty much out

of the way at this point. A crime boss's violent death is likely to come someday, but not without a full-blown war first.

#### Mobster

Use the standard Fixer template, or specialize according to the racket.

## THE EXTENDED FAMILY

The range of activities which are covered by Fixers is vast, but boundaries exist and they must be pointed out to prevent confusion. While the previous section covered what Fixers do, this next section covers what Fixers do not do. Provided below is a selection of new character roles which will often work very closely with Fixers but are not Fixers themselves. These new roles are Prowler, Con Man, Scavenger, Prostitute/Dancer.

Each of these new character roles is well-suited to serving as player-characters or NPCs, and can add greatly to a Cyberpunk gaming environment.

### Prowler

This character role is provided here to illustrate the all-important point that FIXERS ARE NOT THIEVES!! While Fixers are traders and dealmakers, a Prowler is a thief by profession, no matter how his skills are applied. Low-level Prowlers occupy themselves with pickpocketing, mugging and



generally avoiding the notice of security personnel. TECH, REF and INT are key stats for any Prowler, and *Sleight of Hand* (REF-based, see *Hardwired* pg.22) is recommended as a pick-up skill. Prowlers use the Netrunner pay scale.

Prowler	Awareness
Sneak	Stealth
Hide/Evade	Handgun
Pick Lock	Electronic Security
Athletics	Melee
Disguise	

## Con Man

Throughout the years, the Confidence Man has gone by many names: Hustler, Rip-off Artist, Grifter, Scammer and Sting Expert all come to mind. This type of character uses his interpersonal skills to set up elaborate schemes (stings) which fool his victims (marks) into essentially giving their money to him. Con Men have the COOL-based special ability of *Con*, which is the ability to separate a fool from his money, convince a mark to buy them drinks for hours, or spend money on worthless trinkets (from *When Gravity Falls*, page 48). Con can be countered by *Streetwise*, since the more familiarity one has with the Street, the more likely one is to recognize a scam when he sees one. For this reason, Grifters generally prefer to choose out-of-towners (bennies) as their marks because a smooth operator (a gato) has a good chance of smelling a sting and turning on the hustler. Con Men, more than any other type of street operator, use a lot of slang. Another special aspect of Con is that it is more than a *Persuasion/Lie* skill. It is used to create a real-time illusion which draws the mark in, and if successful, should end with the mark thanking the Con Man for taking his money. This special ability is used only for the actual execution of a sting, the planning of profitable scams that will actually work is up to the character's player. Con Men are usually independent operators, but they sometimes have partners for large, elaborate scams. These partners can be virtually any char-



acter role...except Cops. There are some truly miserable facets to a Con Man's life—one is that nobody wants to deal with a known Con Man; you have to make all your own business. Another sad fact is that once a Con Man is exposed as such, he has a very short life expectancy. To compensate, Grifters lead the ultimate in mobile lifestyles, traveling all the time with no steady home to call their own. A Con Man needs a high COOL over all else, but a high INT is very useful for figuring out good scams, and a high MA is also a valuable asset. *Pick Pocket* and *Sleight of Hand* (REF-based, from *Hardwired* page 22) are strongly recommended as pick-up skills. Con Men use the Media pay scale.

Con Man	Awareness
Con	Persuasion/Fast Talk
Disguise	Human Perception
Streetwise	Forgery
Seduction	Hide/Evade
Gamble	

## Scrounger

A Scrounger is an expert in finding uses for gomi (junk). He knows what people throw away, and he knows what to do with it. He can be hired to salvage

materials, machinery, equipment, and other objects from junkyards, trash dumps and the like. Scavengers must sometimes scavenge restricted areas, such as aircraft graveyards, biohazard sites, mass graves, natural disaster areas, ammunition dumps, scrap yards, and demilitarized or corporate industry zones. Scavengers use the special ability of *Scrounge*, an INT-based ability which represents the knowledge of where to find salvageable materials. The higher your Scrounge, the easier it is to locate unusual and valuable parts. With a Scrounge of +2, you can locate such common junk as hubcaps, sheet metal, shell casings and recyclable garbage. With a Scrounge of +5 you could turn up old computer parts, scrapped appliances and other handy stuff. With a Scrounge of +9 you can get a hold of cyberware components, half-full chemical containers and used military equipment. The trick with Scrounge is that, as an INT skill, it only tells you where to find the salvageable materials, not how to get your grubby little mitts on them. The actual retrieval of the goods will have to be roleplayed. Low-level Scavengers lead desperate lives of squalor and solitude, living the life of the urban homeless but higher-level Scavengers sometimes have large networks with

many Facemen and Muscleboys scouring the city for valuable junk ("valuable junk" is not an oxymoron in 2020). Some Scavengers specialize in harvesting very particular materials, adopting the roles of Fleshmen or Cyber-Vultures (see sidebars). Although these Scavengers often work alone, they sometimes hire Techies, Prowlers and Streetpunks to help them find, collect and make off with the precious gomi. A Scavenger can oftentimes be employed by a Fixer who finds buyers for the scavenged gomi and takes a percentage of the sales. The most important stat for a Scavenger is TECH, but INT is also important (being the base for Scrounge) and REF is handy for sneaking into and out of sites and driving transport vehicles such as pickups and dump trucks. Scavengers use the Techie pay scale.

Scavenger	Awareness
Scrounge	Basic Tech
Streetwise	Electronic Security
Pick Lock	Stealth
Drive	Strength Feat
Handgun	

## Streetpunk

These are the youth of today: disillusioned, alienated and angry. There are countless gangs infesting the cities of the 21st century, but the most common breeds are: Posers (identity-copying), Boosters (cyberware-fetishists), Chromers (heavy metal groupies), Dorphers (junkie groups), Guardians (neighborhood-defense), Families (supporting streetkids), Skinheads (hate ideologies), Partiers (purposeless and wild), Culties (neo-religious followers), Nihilists (suicide crazies) and Combaters (ritualistic warriors). Others include Primitives (back-to-nature low-techs), Thrashers (rollerbladers and skateboarders) and Bikers (motorcycle nuts).

Whatever the label, Special Ability is the same: Gang Rank. This ability is much like Family for Nomads, indicating the Streetpunk's level of authority, resources, respect and experience within the gang. A homeboy may be relative-

ly low on the totem pole in his/her own set, but if it is the most powerful set in the city, his/her rank is probably higher than if they were a leader of a nobody posergang. Rank can also be used as a Expert Knowledge skill pertaining to gang politics, trivia, colors and culture. Knowing about a gang in one's own area of operations is an Easy task. A gang in the same city is an Average task. Another city is a Difficult task. A different state is Very Difficult, while solid info about gangs in other countries is Nearly Impossible. The size and reputation of a gang can serve as modifiers at the Ref's discretion.

There are members of some gangs that specialize in gang trivia and knowledge. They usually have several Expert Knowledge skills in various aspects of gang culture. One such "librarian", Rolodexter, (of Night City's Brainiacs) claims to know the colors (and main business) of every established gang in the First and Second Worlds. A Librarian's knowledge can be vital in tricky situations of gang etiquette.

For more background information on Streetpunks, see *Cyberpunk 2020* pp. 218-19 (or 228-229 in the newest printing), *Solo of Fortune* pp.17-21 and *Protect & Serve* pp.58-61.

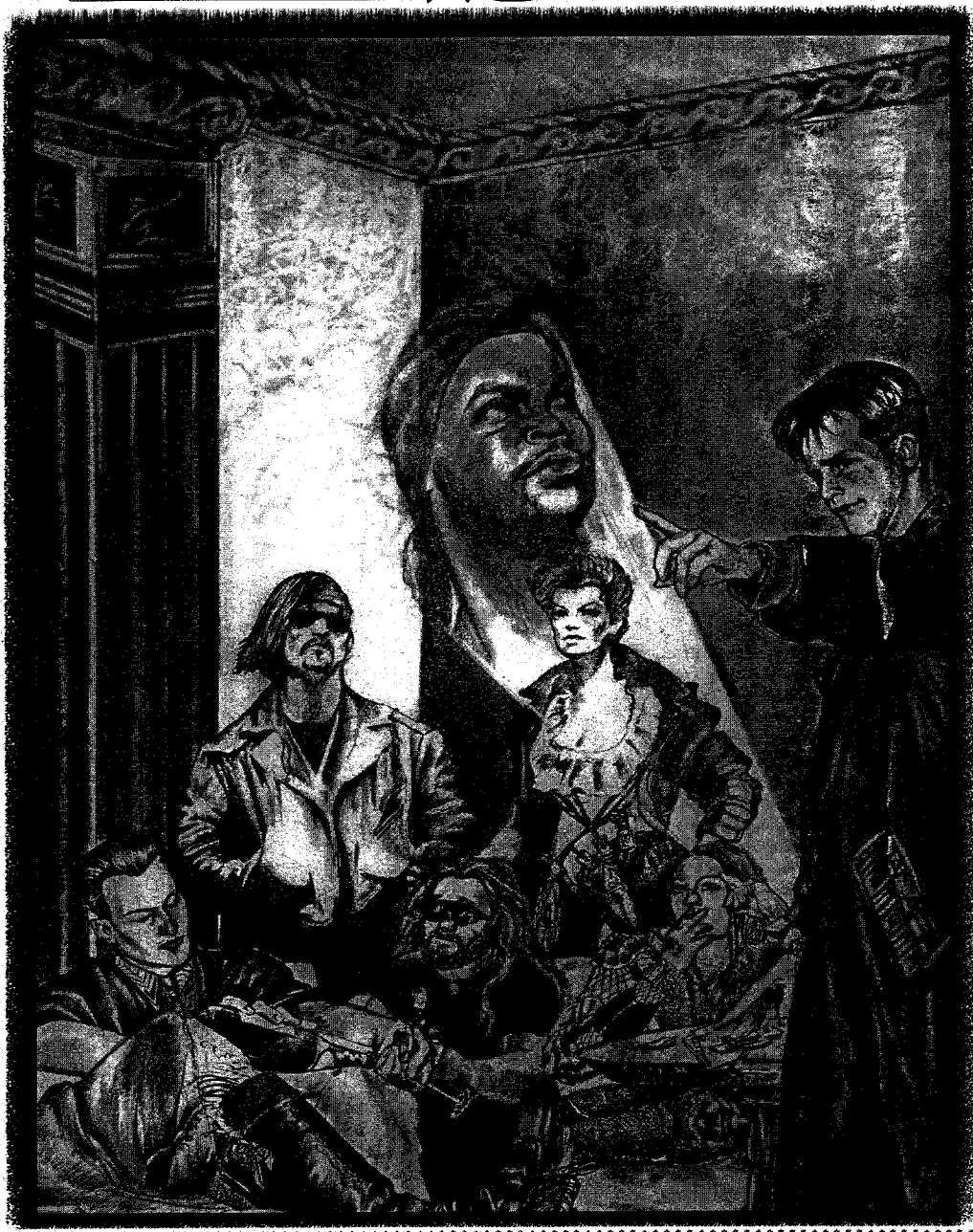
Example—Booster	
Gang Rank	Awareness
Streetwise	Intimidation
Dodge & Escape	Handgun
Melee	Brawling
Wardrobe & Style	
One Gang-Related Skill	

## Dancer/Prostitute

Although Fixers have been around a long time, these professionals have been around much longer. Their services are somewhat less popular than in all preceding human history due to 2020's advanced virtual reality and braindance technology, but for some people there's nothing like the real thing. Of course, with modern bodysculpting techniques, the "real thing" is subjective. If they can afford it,

most members of the skin trade invest heavily in cosmetic surgery whether they need it or not (it pays to keep your looks in style). In fact, the advent of cyberware, exotics and full body conversion has created new, previously unheard-of fetichisms. Whatever these joy-girls and boys are sculpted into, Strippers and Hookers are rarely independent operators—they almost always work for one type of Fixer or another, be it a Pimp, Owner or even Agent. Dancer/Prostitutes have the special ability of *Vamp*, which is simply another version of *Con* (see Con Men). *Vamp* is similar to *Con* in that it is used to extract as much money from customers (johns) as possible, but it is a sexually-oriented variation, which is why it is based on EMP. Prostitutes use their *Vamp* to entice johns into "going upstairs" or what-have-you—they might work on the Street, out of an hotel, in a warehouse or through an escort agency as a call girl/boy. Strippers, when not on stage dancing, use their *Vamp* to get stripclub customers to buy them drinks in exchange for friendly company. These Strippers may or may not moonlight as prostitutes, depending on how much money they make, their working conditions, and the legality of prostitution as opposed to stripping in their local area. Note that because of the risks involved in close association with total strangers, Dancer/Prostitutes usually have some sort of self-defense skill. EMP is a very important stat for the skin trade, but ATT is at least as key for obvious reasons. In 2020, the age of Leprosy and a host of more mundane social diseases, *Diagnose Illness* makes a good pick-up skill. Dancer/Prostitutes use the Media pay scale (successful Stripper and Hookers can become impressively wealthy if they have real talent).

Dancer/Prostitute	
Vamp	Awareness
Streetwise	Personal Grooming
Wardrobe & Style	Human Perception
Brawling or Melee	Seduction
	Performance
	Endurance



## CH. 2

NAME OF  
THE GAME

**W**hen making a Fixer character (particularly a player-character), you start in the usual way, namely by rolling 9D10 and distributing the points to the character's nine Stats. Try to have a character concept in mind, and tailor your stats to the concept.

Remember that all fixers rely most heavily upon their COOL since this forms the basis for their Streetdeal ability and their all-important reputation. INT is very important as well since it takes brains to support the complex networks fixers require. Fixers are organizers and as such they must be organized themselves. The other vital stat is EMP, without which one cannot interact well with people. Since interacting with people is what being a fixer is all about, an above-average EMP is key. However, most Fixers do not have top-end EMP, since if you are too empathic it is hard to remain detached, materialistic and ruthlessly neutral. There are few cybered-up fixers who are successful—how can you conduct sensitive negotiations if you're a raging cyberpsycho? Fortunately, Fixers have little need for cybernetics other than communications gear, so preserving your empathy is feasible. LUCK is handy but not vital, and the same goes for ATT. REF is not a big

concern, as Fixers generally hire other people to handle physical trouble. MA can be important, since deals sometimes go sour, and there are a lot of situations which you would be wiser to run away from than face down. BOD is utterly unimportant to a Fixer, except in terms of personal preference. TECH is generally not a factor, since Fixers will usually hire experts if they need them. However, certain types of Fixers, such as those specializing in high-tech markets, would be wise to have a reasonable competence with their goods (although an *Expert Knowledge* skill can suffice, or you can even fall back on a chip if necessary).

Once you have set all your stats, go through the Lifepath section and see how scrambled your carefully-chosen stats get messed up by the roller-coaster of 21st century life. Next, decide which type of specialization you want for your Fixer (see the *Specialized Fixers* section). After this you must set the level of your Streetdeal. This requires

some careful thought. Although you will undoubtedly be tempted to make your special ability as high as possible, beware—the higher your Streetdeal, the more responsibilities you must live up to. A Streetdeal of 10 makes you the equivalent of a Mafia crime lord or major underground organizer, and as such you must run an entire network. This doesn't leave much time for campaigning with the rest of the players! A Streetdeal of 6 or 7 is more powerful than you may think—that's what makes Streetdeal special. This special ability is so multi-faceted that even +4 gives you street-related powers above and beyond those of mere mortal cyberpunks. Besides, the higher your level, the more time you are obligated to spend maintaining your status, and thus the more Facemen you have to hire (see *Forming a Business*, page 41). Distribute your remaining 40 career skill points to the skills which come with your specialization, and then go on to choose your pickup skills. These will be more important than you might think, because as well as rounding out your character and making him/her unique, they will also make your character more capable than all those NPC Fixers out there. (Why do you think PCs always get such exciting jobs, anyway? There are a multitude of skills

• **Bureaucracy**—INT-based, from *When Gravity Falls*, pg. 48. The ability to maneuver through the ever-increasing tangle of governmental red tape. At +3, you can junk minor clerks. At +5, you sweet-talk councilmen and know the names (and numbers) of all forms (written or computer) used by your city/county of residence. +7 allows you to cut through lesser administrators straight to the mayor, senator, etc. You also can word a request or inquiry so that it bypasses all secondary forms. A must in this era of bad government and petty people.

which would be useful to any character, but there are some that apply to Fixers in particular—these largely depend on your specialty.

Certain pickup skills are useful for every Fixer. *Human Perception* is chief among these, as very few deals in *Cyberpunk* are actually honest, and it's always to your advantage to know what the other guy is thinking. *Library Search* can come in handy quite often, as 2020's information-based society calls for a certain amount of data-literacy. What's more, many Fixers find themselves in the role of a Private Investigator who sells things; spending a lot of time researching potential markets and looking up buyers. *Expert: Economics* becomes more and more necessary as your Streetdeal grows, since your organization, employees, and financial burdens will grow with it. An assortment of languages are very useful for touchy negotiations, sometimes Streetslang is too vague and translator programs can miss a lot of nuances. Speaking to a client in his own language puts his trust in you and impresses him to boot. Another useful skill is *Bureaucracy*, the INT skill of maneuvering through governmental red tape, which is most handy for those Salesmen and Factors who find themselves involved in the wheeling and dealing of dirty politics (see sidebar for more on *Bureaucracy*, a very useful skill). For those Fixers who deal with the higher levels of society, *Social*, and *Wardrobe and Style* skills are absolute necessities since the filthy rich don't associate with unfashionable, uncouth people. On the flip side, those Fixers who expect to find themselves down in the middle of the action on the street might be wise to choose *Stealth* and/or *Hide and Evade*, just in case. And remember, don't skimp on your *Awareness*!

One of the unique twists to creating a Fixer character is you learn that you don't really need a lot of cyberware or equipment. A Fixer relies most heavily upon his mind, his instincts and his greed. Communications gear is the only truly necessary equipment for a Fixer, as they have to keep in contact

with their markets and clients. Most fixers are decked out with all sorts of cellular phones, pocket radios, pagers, newsdecks and even briefcase communication suites. As far as cyberware goes, all the electronic claptrap can be avoided with the implantation of a little enhanced cybervision wetware. A Voice Stress Analyzer function can be useful, but the corresponding humanity loss is generally not worth the +2 bonus. Chipware is as useful for Fixers as any other character; so most Fixers are more likely to have a set of plugs and chip sockets than cybervision. Other than chipware and/or cybervision commlinks, little cyberware is needed. In fact, due to the loss of humanity (and thus Empathy, and in turn *Persuasion* and *Human Perception* skills), the less cyberware a Fixer has, the better. However, Fixers are money-minded individuals and as such they are likely to stock up on all sorts of goodies. A common choice for Fixers is a pocket computer, which, with the addition of the right CompuMods (*Chromebook 2*, pg.18), can serve all of a fixer's electronic needs, from a personal organizer and client database to a translator, drug analyzer and modem for the Net, to a portable voice stress analyzer and bug detector. A backup pistol or other weapon is advisable (just in case the hired muscle aren't enough), and some distinctive clothes go a long way. If you can afford it, get a few good fake IDs and maybe even a full fake identity...and hope you never need to use it.

Once your outfit is complete, keep track of your contacts—generate them with care, and tailor them to your specialty. However, don't forget that there are certain contacts who are useful to any fixer—a contact in the local police department is always handy and a major figure in the local organized crime structure is also a near-necessity. A corporate in the dominating company of your area helps, and an Internet executive or media-related contact is also nothing to sneeze at. A few low-level gofers or snitches who you can control easily can be a boon, and then

there are the Solos (for those tense midnight meetings at the docks). Depending on how high you set your Fixer's Streetdeal, you may need to hire Facemen to support your network (see *Forming a Business*). Once you've assembled your contacts and your network is complete, you're ready to play. During the course of campaigning, don't forget these roleplaying tips:

- Treat everybody with a reasonable amount of courtesy, since you can never be sure who your next client will be. You can turn down anyone you want to, but don't burn your bridges. Every person you meet could someday need you, or you may need them. Favors and match-ups are the name of the game.
- Keep notes on every person and group that you meet—you never know when they'll be useful, or what you'll be able to use. You may even be able to sell dirt you have on them. Everyone has enemies at one time or another.
- Fixers are organizers—they make things happen. They make arrangements, oversee events, and generally run things. A Fixer tries not to get involved in gunfights, but he is very good at setting up or defusing such situations.
- Fixers exist to make situations less dangerous (for themselves at least). In some ways, they're like underground politicians; cutting deals, getting information, and fast-talking their way out of trouble. It goes without saying that Fixers are nonetheless big fans of getting other people into trouble.
- If you have some downtime, don't waste it on braindance or naps. Fixers should spend as much time

as they can on the street, shaking down what's up. It is a Fixer's job to know what's happening; who's who, who's in the know, who's in need, who wants what, and who has what? Fixers should know the answers to these questions.

- When possible, be patient. The amount of time you spend on the

**"Where there's a sick, messed-up thing you can do to yourself, there's someone on the Street who's willing to do it."  
-Mantis, Fixer-at-large**

street chasing down your problem will reduce the difficulty of solving it.

- Always ask yourself, "What can I get out of this?" Streetdeal allows you to take a lot of disparate elements and put them together so that you know how to get people what they want (or how to keep it

from them), and how to make money out of it.

- Remember the *raison d'être* of being a Fixer: money. It is your duty to remember that business is business, and nothing should be taken personally.

## FORMING A BUSINESS

With any luck, your Fixer will be successful enough to establish some kind of business organization. Having an organization requires planning, foresight, leadership, personnel, and the ever-popular money.

First, determine who forms your client base—you have to understand who your buyers are, what they want, why they buy, and where they are. If you fence common items such as cigarettes, clothes and equipment, your clients will generally be poor families, gang members on supply runs and general down-on-their-luck types. If you sell software, your clients will be students, Techies and (mainly) Netrunners. If you perform financial miracles such as money laundering, account doctoring and forgery, your clients will be very rich people with something to hide: scheming corporates, dirty politicians and high-powered organized crime figures. Fixers who understand their clients are more capable of fulfilling their needs, and that's good for business. Don't be threatening to corporates—you'll scare them away. Don't be patronizing to gang members—they'll get mad and then your Solo will have to gun them down. Keep everything in context and keep your clients happy.

Knowing your clients leads to knowledge of where the action is and how to carry out the biz. A small-time 'dorph pusher would do much better in a ghetto area than in a suburban mall. While a big-time information



broker might frequent the hangouts of high-powered edgerunners and sneaky corporates, they could just as easily "advertise" through the net, posting cryptic messages on gray BBS systems. There are always certain areas where just about anybody can find action. In a city this is usually "the Strip" (see *The Strip*, pg. 67). Video, Braindance and VR Arcades (or VRcades, as they are sometimes called) are the home of lots of shady deals, and certain bars and clubs are like second homes to certain segments of the population. Sports events, both institutionalized and underground, are ripe with opportunity, as are racetracks and conference halls. Casinos and other gambling houses have potential, and the Net is full of special-interest BBSs, Virtual Malls, meeting areas, and even sight-seeing sectors which are full of promise. Know your business, target your clientele, and seek out the action. Once the money starts flowing, you can

establish a solid reputation and build a full-fledged organization to support your business.

The process of forming and sustaining an organization is dependent upon two things: its leadership and its staff. The leadership handles the planning and the money, and selects the staff who will do the dirty work. Consider your business goals, determine how many staff you will need and clearly delineate their functions. A stolen car chopshop will need car thieves (Prowlers), mechanics (Techies), security (Solos) and maybe a Manager and accountant (a lower-level Fixer or an accomplished Techie). Determine a system of keeping track of your employees, because betrayal is common in the underground, and your staff can bleed a lot of profit if you don't watch your books. An accountant, secretary, and maybe even a spy to watch the staff are all recommended.

Also necessary for a successful busi-

ness is an appropriate base of operations. A simple and effective definition of a "Base of Operations" is the place from which the money is controlled and where new business can find you. Your base of operations must be suited to the scale of your business, but there are an endless variety of choices available to the enterprising Fixer. Likely options include: a street corner, a booth in a bar or club, a van or other vehicle, a sleep-cube, an hotel room, a basement, an apartment, or a particular region of the Net (such as a BBS, virtual meeting area, or Net-scape landmark). Some of the more secretive or paranoid Fixers prefer to carry out all their business by proxy, always requiring voice-only communication, video-conferencing, virtual meetings, and all transactions being made through middlemen. This method of carrying out business is easier for Information Brokers, Talent Agents, and other such Fixers whose services

and commodities are not of a solid, material nature (like drug dealers and fences). The legality or illegality of a Fixer's business will affect what his available options are, as will the scope of his operation. A simple cyberware salesman can operate comfortably out of the back of a van, but a big-time cybernetics broker who bankrolls several black clinics, buys and sells in bulk, and has handshake agreements with half the gangs in the city requires a large complex to cover all his operations. Even more preferable would be several small outlets, all tied in to one relatively secret and secure base of operations.

The operating costs of running any business must be kept under strict control—sloppiness has killed more Fixers than lack of funds. A good *Accounting* skill (or better yet, a good accountant) should keep the business afloat, and if you balance your operating costs with your range of profit, you'll be fine. The key here is *risk*. If you play it safe, you'll stay where you are and eventually get swallowed up by a bigger fish. Fixers have to take chances and score big if they want to survive. Kill or be killed isn't the exclusive territory of Solos, y'know.

## Speaking of Money...

As is indicated in the *Cyberpunk 2020* rules, Fixers earn a monthly "salary" based upon the level of their Streetdeal ability. The term "salary" is actually misleading, as most Fixers are independent operatives and as such have no boss and no regular salary. A better term would be "profits", because a Fixer's monthly earnings come from the profits he makes on the countless deals, big and small, carried out in the course of a month. Fixers spend a great deal of their waking hours scamming, planning, dealing and trading, and all of these activities add up, granting a substantial amount of Euro.

Well, maybe not substantial. The Occupation Table on page 48 of the *Cyberpunk 2020* rules says that Fixers

with Streetdeal levels of 1-5 make 1,500 Eb per month. This is fine in terms of a player-character's starting funds, but in terms of typical day-to-day business, it's more than a little generous. To determine how much Euro low-level (1-5) Fixers make, multiply their Streetdeal level by 300 Eb to determine their monthly profits. This way, a small-time street sleaze with a Streetdeal of level 1 will not be making the same amount of Euro as the typically well-connected Fixer with a Streetdeal level of 5. This also becomes very important when you have to hire another Fixer to support your own operations. Since a Fixer's profits are a direct result of the efforts he puts into dealmaking, every fixer is obligated to spend a certain amount of time maintaining his network and thus ensuring a steady flow of cash from his deals. This is a set amount of time which must be spent, per week, actively networking and dealmaking in order to maintain a Fixer's current level of Streetdeal. Known as the Workload, this time need not be organized into any particular schedule, but must be fulfilled each week, or else the Fixer's reputation begins to drop. The Workload is determined by the level of a Fixer's Streetdeal ability; your Streetdeal level plus two, squared, is how many hours per week must be spent maintaining your network—carrying out all those invisible little deals, meeting with contacts, and keeping channels open. [WORKLOAD: (Streetdeal+2 x Streetdeal+2)] Once a Fixer starts burning his bridges, he has lost the edge and his business will suffer. It is clear to see that after a certain point it becomes impossible for one man to maintain such a vast network by himself. There are 168 hours in a week, and a Level 10 Fixer has 144 hours worth of obligations per week! This leaves only 24 free hours per week, into which must be crammed 14 hours of sleep (minimum, with a sleep inducer), as well as eating, nature's call, and random hassles. A clearly impossible task. Once one includes time for sleeping, eating, and having any semblance of a private life, the amount of time

which can feasibly be spent streetdealing becomes uncomfortably tight. Player-character Fixers who are busy taking part in an adventure have even less free time to sustain their personal network. They will be much too busy undermining Arasaka's power base, finding missing children, or shopping for big guns for the party's Solos. Realistically, one would have a hard time spending more than 12 hours out of any day Streetdealing, so the cutoff level for one-man Fixer networks sits somewhere around Level 7 Streetdeal.

Those Fixers who are high-powered enough to have Streetdeal abilities of more than 7 hire underlings to take up the slack in their tremendous Workloads. Only Fixer-class underlings can perform this service, as only they have Streetdeal. This is the way tremendous illegal (and semi-legal) organizations are created, with several level 10 Fixers running the show and droves of lower-level Fixers serving as the lieutenants, sub-lieutenants and enforcers who carry out their master's business at the street level. Setting up such an organization takes some planning, but for most player-character Fixers the task at hand will not be to form an entire crime family, but rather to put together a small group of street-wise dealmakers who work for that player-character. These underlings (sometimes called "Facemen") may be characters from the Fixer's lifepath or may be contacts. They may be found through other sources, such as those hired away from rival Fixer organizations, culled from the underground haunts of the city, or they might come to you if your reputation is solid.

Okay, so hotshot Fixers need underlings. How do they figure out what to pay these guys? Each Faceman will have a presumably lower Streetdeal level than their Boss, and each will expect to earn as much profits as their Streetdeal would normally afford them. If all their deals and all their profits are pooled to serve the Boss's network, how do you divide the pie? As an example, let's look at "Sly the Fly," a level 8 Fixer who specializes in illegal

software. With a level 8 Streetdeal ability, he makes 7,000 Eb per month but must spend 100 hours per week maintaining his network. Since Sly the Fly likes to have some free time, he decides he needs some help. He knows that "Chip," a level 1 Fixer who sells some small-time VR mods is down on his luck, so Sly decides to offer him a job. Under normal conditions (that is, self-employment) Chip's Workload would be 9 hours per week and he would make 300 Eb per month. Supposedly, if he worked for Sly the Fly, he would reduce Sly's Workload to 91 but he would also cost Sly 300 Eb per month. However, since he is now serving Sly the Fly, Chip has access to Sly's resources and contacts; because of this support, Chip's Streetdeal is averaged with Sly's, effectively raising the subfixer's Streetdeal to level 4 when dealing with Sly's business. [EMPLOYMENT BONUS: (Sub-Fixer's Streetdeal + Boss-Fixer's Streetdeal)/2; round down]. Because of this new Faceman status (remember that it only applies when Chip is working on one of Sly's deals), Chip can crank out up to 36 hours per week for Sly. It would be unrealistic to expect any Faceman to work more than 36 hours per week anyway. Meanwhile, Sly gives Chip a reasonable increase in pay (say, a 50% bonus to 450 Eb per month), but Chip is adding his Workload to the total hours, increasing total profits while

taking out very little Euro—Sly comes out ahead. See below for a full illustration of how Sly the Fly's organization would work.

Sly the Fly (Streetdeal 8) has a 100 hour workload and expects to see 7,000 Eb of profits each month. To support his network, he hires four Facemen (see TABLE 1 below.)

These four Facemen put in a little more than 100 hours per week, which is the Workload of a level 8 Streetdeal, so they generate 7,000 Eb per month. Meanwhile, Sly the Fly must pay these Facemen 2,250 Eb per month, so he gets 4,750 Eb per month (close to the salary of a level 7 Streetdeal). To make sure he gets his full 7,000 Eb each month, he decides to work 35 hours per week, increasing the total workload to 144 hours per week, the equivalent of a level-10 Streetdeal. Now, the totaled profits are 10,000 Eb per month, and with the Facemen's pay, Sly gets 7,750 Eb per month (the extra money could be used as bonuses for the Facemen, or whatever). Not too shabby. To maintain even larger fixer networks, assume that each increase over level 10 Streetdeal grants another 2,500 Eb per month (see TABLE 2 below.)

These increases are provided only for the purposes of making money from hours of work; this table will come in handy for those who want to make fixer organizations which are

built upon the networks of level 9 and level 10 characters.

### What About Lazy Fixers?

What happens when a Fixer does not fulfill his weekly Workload? First of all, people understand that there are times when a Fixer's life becomes so hectic that he cannot put in as many hours as he should. For this reason, there is a week's grace time during which a Fixer may let his obligations slide. However, if the Fixer does not make up his lost hours after that week, he will drop one level of Streetdeal and will need to earn those IP all over again. For example, if Sly the Fly's operation needs 100 hours per week to be maintained, 100 hours per week MUST be put in (remember that 144 must be put in to bring in the full profit, but 100 are needed to maintain Sly's level 8 Streetdeal). Hours spent catching up on a previous week's inactivity do not generate extra Euro. Let's look at a month in the life of Sly's software ring:

Week 1: Business as usual, 144 hours put in by the end of the week.

Week 2: The cops crack down, Sly's group goes into hiding—no work is done by week's end.

Week 3: The heat is off, Sly's group

must put in at least 200 hours (100 for last week, 100 for this week) to maintain level 8; however, the amount of money generated will not match 2 weeks of work (288 hours). Instead, Week 2 & Week 3, covered by this week's 200 hours of work, will generate 15,000 Eb (because 200 is close to 196, which is the workload for Streetdeal 12, which grants 15,000 Eb per 196 hours).

Week 4: Back to business as usual, 144 hours put in by the end of the week.

### The Big Payback

Although it may seem that hiring all these Facemen makes any Fixer's life easier and more profitable, it also carries a corresponding risk—treachery. Anyone who works for you can double-cross you. Fixers are constantly watching their Facemen for all sorts of backstabs. They might try to embezzle your funds, sell your contacts to other Fixers, attempt to usurp your organization, steal your goods or sell you out to one of the big fish. For this reason, each Faceman has a "Maintenance Time" attached to them which the Boss Fixer must spend keeping in contact with them and checking up on them. What's more, the higher the Faceman's level of Streetdeal, the more personal initiative he has and the more potential he has for treachery. The hours of Maintenance Time for any Faceman is 1/3rd his Streetdeal, rounded up. So, for Sly the Fly, his four-man organization would require 4 hours of Maintenance Time. The total Maintenance Time of an organization is added to 5, and this number is the Difficulty number which a fixer must match or exceed with a Leadership roll. The Maintenance Time of an organization can be reduced in various ways: an organizer system such as a pocket computer or somesuch will reduce Maintenance Time by 2 hours, and a dedicated secretary will reduce Maintenance Time by 12 hours (but of course, you will have to pay the secretary's salary,

and secretaries do not count towards total organizational Workload).

The base chance that there will be treachery in an organization is 10% per month. For each point by which the Boss' Leadership roll exceeded the difficulty number, the chance of treachery is reduced by 1%. For each point by which the Boss' Leadership roll missed the difficulty number, the chance of treachery is increased by 2%. When treachery occurs, the fate of the Fixer's organization is in the hands of the referee: it is then time to roleplay an organizational crisis. Anything goes, from a coup to a sellout. An adventure could occur where the referee creates a plot which centered around the treachery plotted by one of the Boss Fixer's Facemen. For this reason, it is advised that the Fixer's Leadership roll be made secretly by the Referee, or else the player-character Fixer will know to expect treachery. Treachery adventures are also a great hook for getting a PC Fixer personally involved in his organization. Nothing gets a Fixer more riled up than finding out that his henchmen is selling secrets to a competitor!

### FITTING FIXERS IN

With all the information you have read about Fixers, you may be gasping for breath by now. "Okay, Okay! So what do I do with this stuff?" We hear you. The previous sections covered what Fixers are, who they are and what they do—this section deals with what they're good for. Whether you are reading this book as a player or as a referee, your questions are about to be answered. Fixers can function equally well as team players, as referee aids, as plot devices and as comic relief. This section explains how, and is guaranteed to convince you that Fixers can be your best friends...

...or your worst enemies.

### ONE OF THE GUYS

In any *Cyberpunk* game, there is a lot of competition between player characters. Sometimes this escalates into full-blown enmity and even civil war in the party. Fixers are by no means beyond this with their superior access to information, resources and influence being good cause for jealousy among other players in a team. However, Fixers can work very well with other character roles, each one supporting the other's activities and generally conducting good business. Listed below is a breakdown of the major character roles, each with an explanation of how they can interact with Fixers.

### Rockerboys

What's the difference between a Rockerboy working with a Fixer and a Rockerboy working without a Fixer? An Audience. As a Rockerboy, you rely on your Talent Agent to get you new gigs or he can find you new talent for your band. If you don't have a recording label yet, you need to get the attention of a Talent Scout. A Loan Shark can keep your band afloat in hard times, but beware—Mobster may run your recording label or even use it as a front. Meanwhile, club and bar-Owners will be your temporary bosses from night to night. To give direction to your career (once you get one), your Manager will take care of your business needs. Pushers will get you the drugs that give you the energy to keep on rockin' though international tours. Info Bros will be able to tell you who's buying your albums, and Black Marketeers can provide chips of the latest trends in underground music for you to keep up on. Finally, you may have to deal with the big wheels in the media-corporations when you finally sell out and go Top-40; a Go-Between comes in handy there.

TABLE 1.

Faceman Handle	Original Streetdeal	Increased Streetdeal	Workload Assigned	Monthly Pay
Chip	1	4	36	900 Eb
Happy	1	4	25	450 Eb
Fritz	1	4	25	450 Eb
Bugs	1	4	25	450 Eb
Totals	NA	NA	109	2,250 Eb

TABLE 2.

Hours of	169	196	225	256
Workload Equivalent				
Streetdeal	11	12	13	14
Profits in Euro	12,500 Eb	15,000 Eb	17,500 Eb	20,000 Eb

## Solos

Solos and Fixers go together like bullets and guns. The ever-familiar Black Marketeers can get you all that fun, illegal cyberware, as well as guns, armor, explosives and vehicles. Equally useful are those slimy little Pushers, who can nonetheless get you those handy combat drugs and painkillers, and Smugglers can bring you foreign weapons (or sneak you into restricted areas). Once you're outfitted, your Agent will do his best to get you the good jobs (the ones that aren't suicide missions). If you're a true professional, a corporate Talent Scout may try to hire you into a corporate black ops team, or another choice is freelance assassin for the scheming Mobsters. While you're on the job, Information Brokers can get you data on targets, and when the op is over (assuming you survived) a Fence will be glad to buy any loot you brought back with you. And if, instead, you took a job that was just too big, a SIN-Lifter can get you a new pair of shoes...

## Netrunners

Truly hardcore Netrunners don't want to waste time with real-space pettiness. That's what Fixers are for. Black Marketeers keep you in illegal, under-the-counter programs and fancy electronic gear, and Traders are often good for second-hand hardware and software in exchange for valuable data. Info Bros sell system maps for most of the big-name data fortresses (sometimes they're even up to date) and will be glad to buy hot data from you. Shoemakers can get you into vital personnel databases and will fall over themselves to please a Netrunner with saleable SINS. If you're any good, a Talent Agent shouldn't have trouble finding you work. Bookies use Netrunners in their electronic numbers rackets, Sniffers often hire Netrunners to help them electronically track down hard-to-find items and Factors always need Netrunners to execute financial database tampering. A

Talent Scout could show up at any time trying to recruit you for the Mob, who use Netrunners both for data security purposes and for runs against their competition. You could be visited by Talent Scouts from the corporations (or the government), who could very well set you up against your hacker buddies.

## Medias

A Media's unique view of the world puts Fixers in the same context as everything else—a story. The masters of storytelling are Information Brokers, so Medias tend to spend a lot of time with them. Info Bros give Medias all sorts of leads in hunting down their stories and will also pay for certain information collected during reporting. If your specialty is sportscasting, then Bookies are full of great inside dirt on the sports players and their popularity. Some Bookies will take or even set odds on how your Stories will do in the ratings game. Sniffers can go places that you, as a high-visibility Media, can't or won't go, and when the plot starts to thicken, Black Marketeers can get you the necessary surveillance equipment. Freelancers who put their equipment to good use can expect to be offered a contract from some mediacorp's Talent Scout, or can rely on their own Talent Agents to get them the best assignments (covering the war in the Philippines, an anchorperson's seat, etc). On top of being perfect subjects for docudramas, Smugglers can also get you into some very secure areas if paid well enough. Mobsters have always been Media favorites, but they are very bad sports—if you refuse to suppress your stories, you might end up sleepin' with the fishes.

## Nomads

Fixers know that people who have nothing need lots of things. Nomads understand this too, although they may not like it. Nomads buy supplies in bulk, but are on a very strict budget. Traders are their best bet for getting

affordable supplies, usually by bartering things such as salvage and services. Black Marketeers can also sell the pack cheap food, clothing and supplies, and even Fences can provide cheap goods (if you don't mind the fact that they're probably hot). Smugglers can bring Nomad packs "imported" foodstuffs and other regulated commodities, and will sometimes help them sneak across state borders. If things get desperate, Loan Sharks could give the pack a boost—as long as the pack can repay the debt. Every Nomad pack should have a Negotiator, who is invaluable for acquiring temporary employment contracts with agricornps and for settling disputes with towns or the authorities (like HiWay). For the less ethical families, remember that Mobsters sometimes hire whole packs to ransack or destroy towns, if you like that kind of work. Nomads can also use the services of Shoemakers (if they can afford them) to become SINless, something which makes being a system-buckin' Nomad a whole lot easier.

## Corporates

Weasels and worms have more in common than you think—they're both sneaky and they're both survivors. Corporate weasels recognize the connection they have with underground Fixers, and they take advantage of the relationship. Corporates get the drugs they need to work those extra hours from Pushers, and Sniffers exist to get Corporates whatever they want from the streets but are afraid to fetch themselves. Info Bros can provide insider trading data and the plans of other Corporates, and Factors can carry out embezzlement, ghost accounting and even balance your books if you really need it. Bookies love to take bets from Corporates (they know a Corp is good for the money) and some will give odds and accept bets on Corporate endeavors. However, every Corporate in 2020 will have to deal with a Mob-related Fixer at some point—organized crime runs too many businesses. Keep an eye



out for well-dressed Talent Scouts, who might try to hire you away to work for another company; and if it happens, a Negotiator can get you better contract arrangements. Negotiators also have the annoying habit of representing disgruntled workers. Even in the middle of cutthroat business deals, Fixers will show up, jockeying for profit and position while fronting for your neighbor in the office down the hall...

## Techies

One good Fixer deserves another. Techies often rely on Information Brokers to tell them where to acquire newtech components and Info Bros can also sell secret designs and blueprints. To build those designs, you could go to a Trader, the best source of raw materials, and the only character willing to trade new inventions for your inventions. Black Marketeers can get

you specific equipment, parts, tools and even workspace. Fences can be a good source of random odds and ends, and Smugglers can provide restricted components and transport your finished designs anywhere (no matter how illegal they are). Mobsters make good employers, as well—they could hire you for any one of a number of rackets (like autobody shops or black cyberware clinics), and if you're really good, a Talent Scout might even hire you to work for the corps. If they do, hope you like lab coats and clock-punchin'...

## Cops

They say opposites attract. Although Fixers and Cops are usually on opposite sides of the law, that doesn't mean they can't cooperate. Every police officer has a few informants who keep him updated on Street news, and who would make a better informant

than a Fixer? Sleazes are born stoolies. Pimps and their charges are a perfect way to have eyes and ears on the Street, and Info Bros are the best informants around (when they cooperate). In addition to information, Black Marketeers can get a Cop the hardware that he needs but his department can't (or won't) pay for. If you need a quick bust to fill your quota, Pushers are always good for a collar, and there is an ever-present enemy in the form of the Mob. If you're skilled, or the type to sell out, corporate Talent Scouts might try to hire you away to a private security force (like Arasaka or Militech), but beware—various Managers will often try to control you. But then again, who doesn't?

In conclusion, if a player-character (or anyone else, come to think of it) wants to get ahold of anything on the following list, they will probably need to talk to a Fixer (see sidebar, pg. 48).

## •Fixer Services

Alternate Identity  
Assassination (to put a hit out on someone)  
Bartering  
Beating  
Blackmail Information  
Body Parts (no questions asked)  
Braindance/VR (illegal)  
Car Parts (no questions asked)  
Career Management  
Contract Arbitration  
Computer System Maps  
Corporate Contacts  
Cyberware (illegal)  
Drugs (illegal)  
Electronics (underground)  
Embezzlement  
Establishment Management  
Everyday Goods (extra-cheap)  
Explosives  
Face Banks  
False IDs  
Gambling  
Get-Rich-Quick Schemes  
Information (underground)  
Insider Trading  
Intercultural Connections  
International Connections  
Jobs (through a middleman)  
Loans (no questions asked)  
Meat Puppets (prostitution)  
Money Laundering  
Negotiation Expertise  
Netrunning Software  
New Shoes (identity)  
Odds (gambling)  
Organized Crime  
Pawnbrokering  
Personnel Services  
Political Favors (Pork)  
Procurement Services  
Prostitutes  
Racketeering  
Scalped Tickets  
SIN-Surgery  
Slaves  
Smuggling  
Talent (specified)  
Underground Wares (all kinds)  
Untraceable Wares (weapons, etc.)  
Weapons  
Wetware (experimental)  
Zeroing

## FIXIN' THE CAMPAIGN

Referees may feel some trepidation about including a Fixer character in their campaign. Fixers need lots of support, don't like to do hands-on dirty work and are generally a role with a complicated background. These facts should not bar Fixers from campaigns. A Fixer's complexity makes him an asset. This character role can function quite well in a "standard" *Cyberpunk* campaign, and opens up whole new gaming possibilities in the form of Fixer Campaigns.

"Standard" campaigns may be an oxymoron in *Cyberpunk*, but what is meant by the term in this context is: a game which has a team of players, one of which is a Fixer, and all players have roughly equal status and importance in the adventure. These campaigns can often involve a lot of traveling around, double-crossing corporate employers and a healthy amount of combat. In such campaigns, Fixers with large networks, numerous employees, extensive obligations and poor (or nonexistent) combat skills do not fit in very well. However, there are several types of Fixers who do not fit this bill and there are ways around any Fixer's obligations.

Certain Fixers are well-suited to "standard" campaigns, particularly Sniffers and Negotiators. As Go-Betweens, Sniffers and Negotiators are closely tied to people in general, but they have few other limitations. They are fully mobile, they do not run structured organizations, and both are capable of taking care of themselves. These two specializations are ideal choices for player-characters in "standard" campaigns, as they can greatly add to the capabilities of any team. On top of their Streetdeal capabilities, Sniffers bring the information-gathering powers of a Private Eye to the team, and Negotiators are as good as having a PR firm, ambassador and professional bullsh\*t artist all in one team-member. To round them out, these characters can amass more combat skills (or whatever is needed) as pickups. To solve the problem of network obligations, there are two

options: one is to have a relatively low Streetdeal, and the other is for the Fixer to put his best Faceman in charge of the network temporarily while adventuring. The first may seem unacceptable, but think about it—Streetdeal is such a wide-reaching, multi-level ability that level-4 or a level-5 puts you on the same level with level-7 Solos and Netrunners. Putting a Faceman in charge for a while is easier, but it invites mutiny among the ranks. If a Fixer walks away from his operation for a few weeks, when he returns he may find that the operation is no longer his!

Sniffers and Negotiators fit quite well into a team, and with a little work almost any type of Fixer can be worked into a "standard" campaign. However, the numerous specializations available to Fixers provide ample material for Fixer-oriented campaigns. These Fixer Campaigns are based around a Fixer's operations, and need not be single-player games. Fixer operations almost always require additional staff with varied skills. Each one of the Fixer specializations is campaign-ready, providing enough material and adventure hooks to establish a solid base for an organization which can employ several characters. Black marketeering, information brokerage or running a nightclub are all possibilities. In such campaigns, the Fixer is the "boss," and he employs all the other characters or otherwise works with them to support his operation. For instance, consider the possibilities in running a smuggling campaign. The Fixer character would be the brains of the operation, but he would need to hire vehicle experts (Solos or Vehicle Jockeys), mechanics and electricians (Techies) for maintaining the vehicles and coming up with creative smuggling equipment, computer experts (Netrunners) for altering computer security and shipping manifests, security thugs (Solos) and he could also make use of Nomads for large-scale transportation schemes. Even other Fixers such as Factors, Info Bros, Negotiators and Facemen could be hired to support the operation. The smuggling ring could be a Mob operation, in which case a Mobster would be present, or the ring could even be a deniable corporation-backed scheme to

undermine a competitor, in which case a Corporate or two would be around. The smuggling ring could traffic in Braindance, Music chips or other entertainment media, in which case Rockers and Medias would also fit in. Such a campaign would be a real challenge and a great deal of fun. The players would have to plan their operations, cultivate contacts with the authorities and pay out a lot of bribes, have to contend with CIA LawDiv or Interpol harassment, deal with competitors and find customers. This requires that not only the referee but the players need to have strong imaginations and show a lot of initiative. The adventures would be generated as much by the player's actions as the referee's plans. While this type of game is more involved and more difficult than "standard" campaigns, it can be much more rewarding and original because the characters have a vested interest in deciding their own fates.

Motivation is the key to a Fixer Campaign. There are generally two choices for the motivation of a Fixer Campaign—profit or cause. When profit is the motivation, the characters are in it for the Euro. In some ways this can be restrictive, because the characters must always meet their quotas and keep ahead of the competition. However, profit-motivated Fixer Campaigns can also be freeing in that they allow the characters to be of almost any disposition. Profit-mongers can be as mean and vicious as they want since they aren't trying to really *prove* anything. The other motivational option is a cause. The cause could be a political struggle, such as trying to overthrow or even establish a government, a revenge scheme such as destroying a powerful Mob family, or even a heroic goal such as helping people escape or overcome religious persecution. A less common and broad-based cause could be the promotion of a certain philosophy or ideal, such as environmentalism, anti-technology sentiment (Ludditeism) or anarchy. However, perhaps the most interesting and inspiring cause for a Fixer Campaign is the *Cyberpunk* Revolution. The idea behind this movement is outlined on pages 176-177 in the new printing of *Cyberpunk 2020* (pg.166-

177 in older printings), but the general idea is that the edgerunner community of America seems to be slowly organizing itself towards a clash with The Man—the corporations, the government and the system in general. For players who wish they could do something about how dark the Dark Future is (check out *Home of the Brave!*), the *Cyberpunk* Revolution is best motivation around.

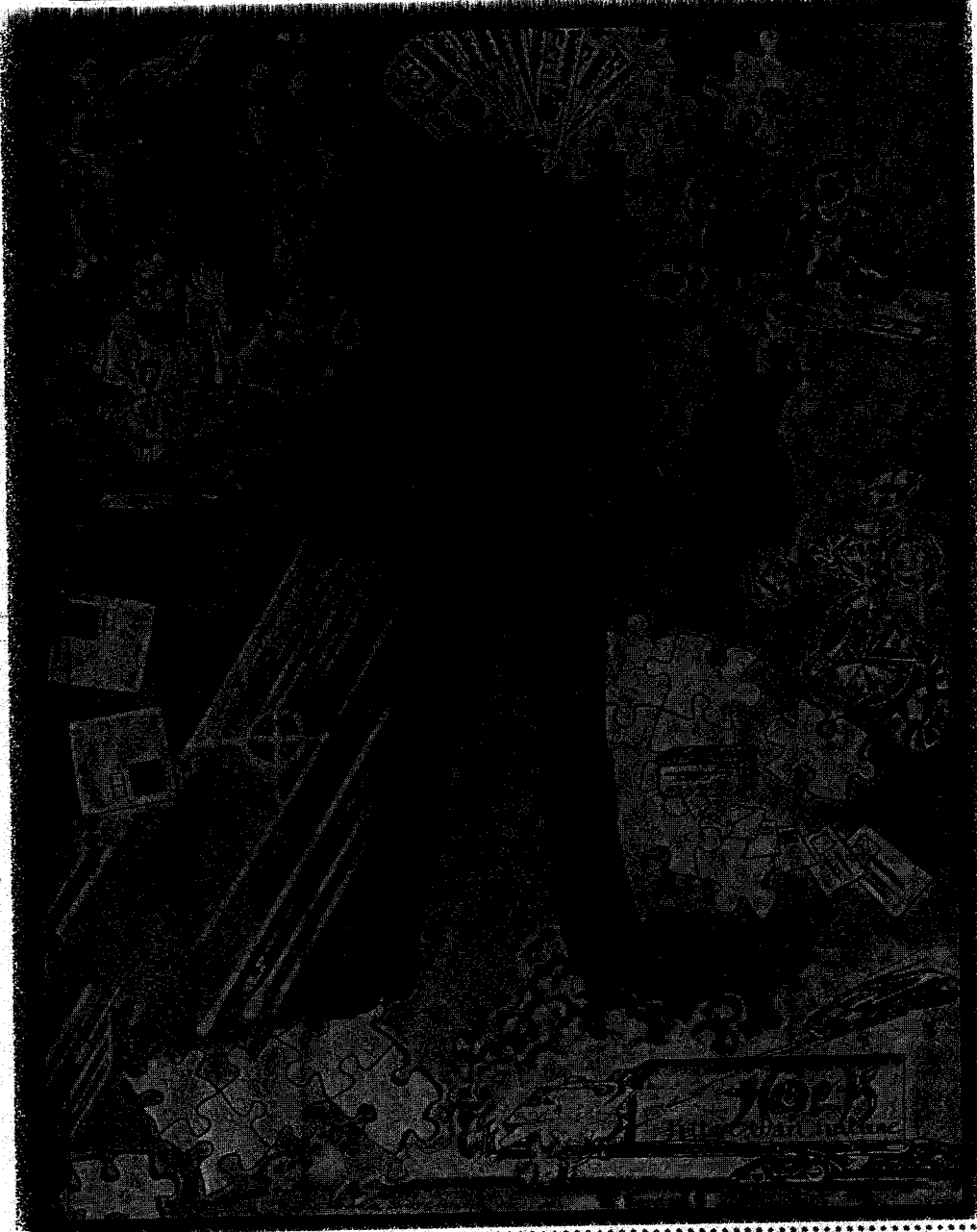
**"We're Robin Hoods for the good of the losers, the boozers, the ugly, the crazy, the drunks, the perverts, the lazy..."**  
**- Pop Will Eat Itself, Preaching to the Perverted**

## THE REFEREE'S GO-BETWEEN

Even if there are no Fixer player-characters in your campaign, don't write these entrepreneurs off. These characters are too useful and too colorful to leave on the shelf. NPC Fixers can

be one of the greatest tools of a *Cyberpunk* referee. Fixer NPCs can provide information, adventure hooks, employment, opposition and campaign organization. Player-characters will meet Fixers who are acting as club owners and bartenders, they will need to buy weapons and equipment from black marketeers, and they will find employment from Fixers of all kinds. Referees can use these Fixers to introduce new characters (PC or NPC) into an adventure, or to get important information to the characters. Fixer NPCs can provide all sorts of adventure hooks: temporarily hiring the players, being hired by the players, trying to get rid of them or even ridding them out to "the enemy." However, the gimmick which makes Fixer NPCs most useful to the referee is their ability to bring player-characters together. Remember, Fixers deal primarily in people—player-characters included. At the start of a game, adventure or campaign, the referee can make use of a Fixer to actually make the player-characters into a team. Talent Agents and Talent Scouts are the best type of Fixer for this task, but any specialization will serve, depending on the situation. Remember, Talent Scouts and Agents don't have to work for a mediacorp, they don't even have to be "legitimate" businessmen. They could represent the Mob, another big-name Fixer, or they could even be freelance, assembling special ops teams for private clients like blackmailed corporates, distressed heiresses or even orphaned children (go ahead, pull their sympathy strings—it probably won't have any affect anyway, knowing most cyberpunks). Also remember that Fixer NPCs wield the power of Giri (see sidebar, pg. 16); this weapon can always be drawn on the players if they don't cooperate or try to weasel their way out of an adventure...no player wants his character blacklisted out of existence. Heh, heh, heh...





# CH. 3 TOOLS OF THE TRADE

**B**eing a Fixer demands that your work be your life; the reverse must also be true. Once you realize that your life is your work, you have to step back and take a look at the big picture.

There are areas of knowledge which, while seemingly mundane, are vital to understanding the way the Underground works. If you don't have a decent grasp of these concepts, you'll never make it as a Fixer. This is equally true for any other character role, and the concepts in question are common to all characters.

The following section deals with these areas of knowledge, outlining how they work and how to use them. First it explains interpersonal skills, from seductions to intimidations, and then it goes straight to the bottom line: jack, scratch, Euro—money. After the section on credit and cash, the ever-popular act of theft has its consequences explained in the fencing section of "If You're Paying Too Much..." Finally, there's a section on SINS and identity, where you'll learn what to do if you just blew that 2 Million Eb deal. Although the understanding of these topics is essential to a Fixer, it is important that everyone knows the score.

## HOW TO INFLUENCE FRIENDS AND MAKE PEOPLE DO WHAT YOU WANT

No matter what their business, from running a club to information brokerage, Fixers are always dealing with people. That means that they have to know how to understand and communicate with them. However, sometimes simple conversation isn't enough. You can't always get what you want just by asking nicely; sometimes you have to confuse, coerce or seduce your way to what you want. If that doesn't work, you can always fall back on threats (this is the only time when it's actually a good idea to let your Solo open his mouth). If a Fixer is to be successful, he absolutely *must* understand the principles of interpersonal relations, the most vital tool in the any trade.

There's something to be learned here for other characters as well. In 2020, overpopulation is too large a problem to let you get away with ignoring people entirely. Like they say, if you can't recycle 'em, join 'em.

## Chilling Out

The most important element in interpersonal relations is COOL. Although your EMP is necessary to figuring out what the other guy is thinking, his COOL is what determines how tough a nut he is to crack: Whether you're haggling with someone, seducing them or intimidating them, your problem is their COOL. More specifically, your problem is their Stability.

Stability is a Difficulty Number which represents how difficult a person is to sway, confuse, frighten or otherwise befuddle. Stability is equal to COOLx2.5, rounded down. Being based on COOL, it is simply a Difficulty Number for overcoming their coolness with your skills. The Stability rating is consistent with statistical spreads common to the distribution of both Stats and Difficulty Numbers; if you do the math, you will see that a person with a COOL of 2 (as uncool as a person can be without being some

kind of mutant reject) has a Stability of 5, which is essentially an instant success in terms of skill rolls. However, someone with a COOL of 6 (the numerical average for every stat) has a Stability of 15, which is an Average skill roll. Meanwhile, a character with a COOL of 10 (maximum cryochilled nano-coolness) has a Stability of 25, which is Very Difficult skill roll to overcome.

The Stability of a character is important in the application of the following skills: *Authority, Charismatic Leadership, Interrogation, Intimidation and Seduction*. In practice, the character who is actively using the skill (the actor) to alter the opinions or behavior of the other person (the subject) rolls his skill against the subject's Stability. Take the following situation as an example:

Nelson Davids (aka "Captain Ginsu") has a corporate contract out on his head. Through the grapevine he has heard that one of his contacts, a creep named Yang, plans to rat him out to the NMF corporation. Nelson draws his favorite machete in an attempt to intimidate Yang into keeping his mouth shut. Yang's COOL is 7, making his Stability a 17. Nelson is bigger than Yang, and is brandishing a melee weapon, so he gets +3 to his roll; Nelson rolls an 18 (+3 = 21) —Yang is successfully cowed, and Nelson won't need to call in any backup.

## Interpersonal Skill Modifiers

These modifiers add to the actor's skill roll against the subject's Stability. Use your judgment as to what applies; beauty won't help Intimidation, and a big gun won't help Seduction. "X" is the Actor's most common skill use or character trait (whatever applies to the situation). (See TABLE 1 below.)

### If You're Paying Full Price, You're Paying Too Much

In 2020, haggling is a necessary interpersonal skill. Everyone wants to get the best deal, and nobody wants to get taken. Knowing how to talk a dealer down (or bleed a sucker for all he's worth) is as important to *Cyberpunk* economics as having a grasp of addition and subtraction. When haggling, the two characters performing the exchange each roll their COOL+Skill+1D10. After any applicable modifiers, the character who rolls higher wins. The "Skill" may be either Streetdeal or Streetwise. When the two skills are the same (Streetdeal vs. Streetdeal, Streetwise vs. Streetwise), each 1

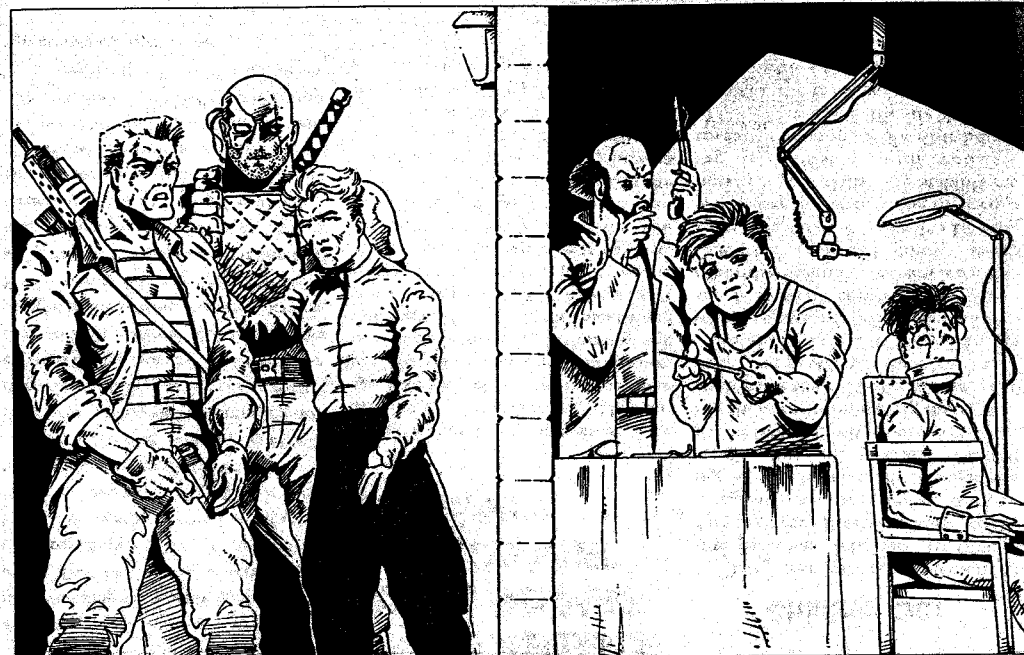
point of success results in a 2% change in price in favor of the winner. However, when a Fixer haggles with a non-Fixer character, the Fixer's advantage becomes 5% per 1 point of success, reflecting his greater prowess at haggling and deal-cutting. For example:

Page is a Fixer representing a group of player-characters who want to dispose of 50 1000-round boxes of stolen 12.7mm ammunition, and Izzy the Lobo is acting as the Fence. In the exchange roll, Page rolls his Streetdeal and gets a 22, while Izzy's Streetdeal roll is 18. Page beat Izzy by 4 points, so the players get Izzy to buy the ammo for (4x2%+30%) 38% the market price. However in another, unrelated exchange, a group of player-characters want to move 30MU of hot data though a Fence named Pagan. The characters have no Fixer in the team, so their Netrunner, Cybele, represents them in the deal. Cybele rolls her Streetwise and gets a 16, while Pagan rolls a 20; Pagan stifles the players, giving them only (20-16 = 4, 4x5% = 20%, 30%-20%) 10% of the actual value for the 30 hard-earned MU. This should tell player-characters that they need a Fixer (ideally, a Negotiator) representing them in such deals.

A note on dealing with Fences: The base price for any wares is 30% of its actual value. If the fence wins the haggling, the percentage still won't go below 10%. If the person selling the wares wins, the percentage still won't go above 50%. No matter what, you've gotta make *some* profit!

## ELECTRONIC LIVELIHOOD

It is a common expression among the filthy rich that "your life is only as good as your credit." This is somewhat of an overstatement, but not by much. In 2020, it is arguable that the most important factor of your personal life is your credit history. With the advent of the worldwide Net, electronically-based finances have become a founda-



tion for the world economy (this trend was started by cooperative EEC banks such as Suisse Bank, Euro-Worldbank, and Sumitomo). Such dependence upon an essentially intangible structure has led to a distinct paranoia concerning credit fraud. In the 21st century, punishment for credit fraud has seen increasingly harsh sentences. Personality adjustment and Braindance are common for such offenses, consistently carried out by the corporate police of the offended corporation (in accordance with federal law, of course...). In 2020, credit is the universal language.

### Getting Credit Where Credit is Due

Most corporate employees have credit in one form or another. Credit Chips (most commonly known as Cred-

chips, or "Chops") are usually issued to all corporate employees free of charge, with the chop's liquid crystal matrix (see Credchips, below) being imprinted according to the personal information the corporation has on its employee. Assorted subscriptions to magazines, bulletin boards and other services can be attached to a credit account, and employees' salaries are automatically credited to their account, with taxes, insurance, and medical coverage (if applicable) deducted automatically. The major players in the credit business of 2020 include WeltGeschellschaft Bank, American Express-World, Citibank, Sumitomo, Euro-Worldbank, and Drakon Worldwide Fund.

Anyone who is not a corporate employee must pay for the privileges attached to credit (usually a fee of about 50 Eb, and then a monthly 10 Eb service charge). To open an account, financial institutions require the applicant to provide his State Identification Number (see the section on Blanks and the SINless in

"SINs Of Identity," pg. 62) and (usually) extensive information concerning medical records, career history, and psychological profile. Individuals may, at no penalty, have multiple chops representing multiple accounts at different institutions, although some people carry just one chop for convenience's sake. If an applicant cannot provide all the required information (which will be checked upon), s/he could be denied credit and may be held for further questioning if they are especially suspicious-seeming.

The only other option is to carry cash.

### Cashing Out

Cash is, in fact, looked down upon in most circles as being old-fashioned and "low-tech," as it is less convenient than credit in the eyes of most. Cash is harder to carry than credit, it is easily stolen, difficult to trace, and needs to be physi-

TABLE 1.

Subject humiliated if they give in:	-1
Subject holds a "trump card" in the situation:	-2
Subject has a melee weapon:	-2
Subject has a gun:	-4
Subject(s) on psychoactive drugs: +STR or -STR of Drug (depends on the drug)	
Subject is a cyberpsycho: Roll 1D10: 1-5 = -2 to -10, 6-10 = +2 to +10.	
Actor on his home turf:	+1
Actor bigger than the subject:	+1
Actor much bigger than the subject:	+2
Actor brandishing a melee weapon:	+2
Actor brandishing a gun:	+4
Actor has backup (big goons): +2 1st goon, +1 for each additional goon, max +5.	
Actor on psychoactive drugs: +STR or -STR of Drug (depends on the drug)	
Actor has a Reputation for X:	+1/2 Rep
Actor's ATT (for Seduction):	

Average with EMP for Seduction's stat base, then roll vs. Stability.

**Your New Credit Key:** Credchips are on their way out, technologically speaking. Experts say that within the next five years, voiceprint identification systems will be so intelligent that they will be almost impossible to fool; Credchips and PINs will be unnecessary, and your voice will be your cash key. Imagine—you'll just tell a vending machine what you want, its computer will verify your voice pattern, your account will be charged, and you'll get your desired purchase. The whole process will take a few seconds, and your purchases will be untouched by human hands...



cally protected by store-owners. Some establishments actually charge a "processing fee" (about 2-5%) for dealing with cash (the more things change, the more they stay the same...).

**Credchips**

Almost universally preferred over cash are Credchips: also known as Chops, IDs, Keycards, credit cards, credkeys, and expense cards. These electronic cash tickets store up to four different types of identification (depending on the level of security) which are encoded on a liquid crystal matrix microchip: your Personal (or State) Identification Number (PIN), a thumbprint, a voiceprint, and a retina scan. For each type of identification medium, there is a corresponding account classification, transaction ceiling and credchip model. The types of account and credchip (and thus, the type of identification which are

checked) depends on the size of the transaction, and as might be expected, the larger the transaction limit the harder it is to qualify for the account. The identification data must be encoded on the credchip before the owner can make the transactions. That's the law, choomba. An account which will only cover transactions of 1000 Eb or less qualifies as a Standard account and credchip and only requires your SIN; accounts and cards which will deal in up to 10,000 Eb are Gold and require your SIN and thumbprint; Platinum accounts and chops will exchange up to 100,000 Eb and require your SIN, a thumbprint and a voiceprint; the rarest and most coveted type of account gets you a Black credchip—you can make transactions of 1,000,000 Eb and up and requires a check on all identification types. Only the filthy rich and mega-corporate powerbrokers ever qualify for Black accounts, but once in a blue moon a Fixer can get you one which will hold up for a little while. Maybe.

There are several heavily-advertised advantages to using Credchips over cash in 2020's information society. Chops allow instant transactions to be made, without the trouble of counting change and other such "cash hassles." Credit pays regular (though limited, about 7-10%) interest. Credchips can be used for credit transfer through the net, phones, fax, DataTerms and also allow access to ATMs (Automatic Teller Machines). Internet ATMs can be found

in millions of locations across the world, and actual cash (should you need it) can be taken out by using your Credchip. The fact that every chop requires the entry of your PIN (and sometimes other types of identification as well) before a transaction can be made makes it very difficult to use another person's account.

In cases where the user enters the wrong PIN for the chop he uses, most Credit Transfer Devices (CTDs) in 2020 are equipped with verification programs which will "interrogate" the chop's owner. The CTD will access the person's personal data on the chop's LC matrix and display a series of questions on its display screen. If extremely large transactions are made, CTDs will often interrogate the chop owner automatically. If the user fails to answer the questions correctly, or if (in the cases of large transactions with exclusive chops) the user's identification signatures do not match the Credchip's information, the CTD may deny the user's credit, melt the user's chop, or even contact the misrepresented establishment's corporate police. It is a well-known fact that credit-corp police are also well-trained in "interrogation" techniques...

**Forging Credchips**

Since Credchips not only contain the user's current financial balance but also tell the verifying CTD where to look for to confirm the existence of these funds, it makes forging a Credchip very difficult. Since both the Credchip and the financial institution holding the funds contain the verifying information, the in-depth cross-referencing between the chop and the institution will defeat most forged IDs.

Since it would require the information pertaining to the forged chop's false identity to be inserted into the world's data storages, no character has the capability to single-handedly forge a Credchip. There are certain shady organizations and organized criminal elements (such as *Face Banks*, see

below) which can achieve this. These data havens, accessible only through secret, well-guarded channels, are difficult to find and don't work cheap. To create the detail and reliability necessary for a passable forgery usually winds up costing 1D10 x 1000 Eb, half to be paid up front (the cost may be modified depending on the affluence of the buyer, the amount by which the buyer succeeds in his Streetwise task, or the time by which the Credchip is needed). These false Credchips are usually 95% reliable and are detectable only to the most sophisticated of CTDs.

**Face Banks**

(Extrapolated from the *Hardwired Sourcebook* for the *Cyberpunk* system.)

There is one other option open to those who can't meet the credit corps' stringent requirements, other than keeping all their money in a wallet: a *Face Bank*, which is not legally sanctioned and doesn't ask so many embarrassing questions.

*Face Banks* exist only in the Net, in which the money exists only as data. *Face Banks* usually begin as an access code on a system, posing as some small, innocent-looking business. You get the access code through some acquaintance, and if you pass the bank's inspection (which is less demanding than a corporate grilling), are then given a chop coded with a PIN (Personal ID Number—not your SIN). *Face Banks* can be accessed through the Net, through phones, or by fax. However, *Face Banks* cannot be accessed from an ATM, and do not allow access to cash. Prices for transactions involving gems, precious metals and other non-credit/cash transactions (as well as credchip forgeries) can be arranged at the referee's discretion.

*Face Banks* are usually run by some form of organized crime and pay a higher rate of interest than normal credit institutions. Sometimes they even disappear, along with your

money! A *Face Bank* will usually pay an interest rate of about 20%, but there will be a 5% chance that your money will be unavailable when you need it (though you will be able to get it later) and a further 5% chance (only one roll made secretly by the referee is needed) that the bank will one day disappear with all your money in it. You can also get loans from *Face Banks* easier than from regular banks, but the penalties for welshing on a debt tend to be extremely severe (see *Loan Sharks & Credsharks*, pg. 26).

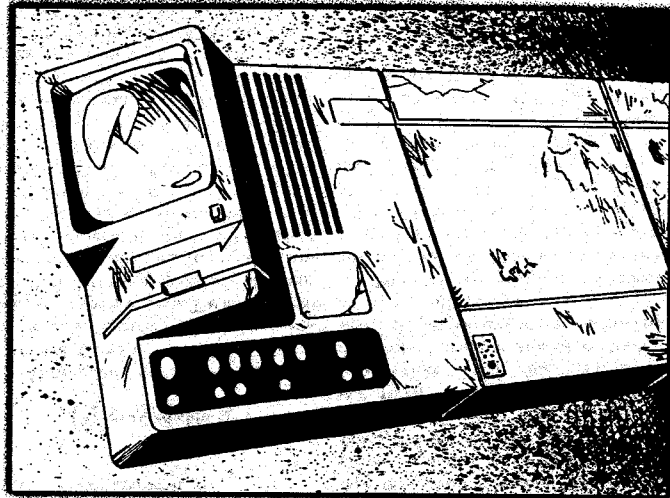
**Credit Transfer Devices (CTDs)**

Present in almost all restaurants, stores, and banks, CTDs are perhaps the most instrumental hardware in 2020's information society (next to the basic computer). A CTD is a mini-computer which can be connected to the Net via any phone jack or cellular link. A slot along the side or bottom of the CTD can read from the liquid crystal matrices of modern Credchips, accessing personal data files, identification prints, and credit history. Most CTDs are equipped with verification programs which can "interrogate" the user if incorrect PINs are given repeatedly. The CTD will access the users' personal data on the chop's LC matrix and display a series of questions on the display screen. If incorrect answers are given, the CTD can deny the credit, melt the chop, or even contact the corporate police of the chop's credit establishment. Several different models proliferate in 2020, varying from pocket-size calculators to desktop computers.

Pocket-CTDs are portable units about the size of a large calculator, with a cellular link which is used for Net access (functions in any city area with an established cellular network). These Pocket-CTDs cost about 100 Eb, and are used by people and businesses which usually do not see transactions of more than 5000 Eb, such as

• **Bad News:** Most muggings end in murder in 2020, unless the victim had some cash on them...what good is mugging someone and stealing their chop if he's just going to get up, go to a phone and cancel the credchip? By killing the gonk, at least the mugger has a chance to take the card to a Factor who can lift the ID and code sequence off the chop's microchip, thereby gaining access to the credit. This is one reason why the murder rate is so high in 2020.

• **You and Your Chop:** Credchips in 2020 come in a variety of flavors—their size and shape are not standardized, they just need to have a standardized interface port for accessing the chop's internal microchip. Chops range in design from wallet-sized cards to key chain tags, tubular sticks and even wristbands. They are made from tough plastic, and bear the owner's name and picture, the name of the sponsoring bank or company, the account number and an expiration date. On the back is the signature line, but there is no magnetic strip—instead the chop has a small ROM chip that records your account number, a digitized signature, pertinent sections of your credit history and identification material in the form of fingerprint, retina pattern and even a genetic sample for big accounts. If you have more than one type of credit issued by the same bank you don't get more than one chop, they just tack it onto your credit account; an Arasaka Bank-backed chop could have AMEX, Discover and Visa credit accounts attached to it, as well as savings and checking account functions.



restaurants, shops, and small businesses. Pocket-CTDs are only capable of checking the patron's PIN, and have a keypad for that purpose. Verification is instantaneous, but they are less secure since they cannot check other types of identification.

Standard vendor-purpose CTDs are about the size of a laptop or desktop computer, with a jack for connection to the Net. Standard CTDs cost around 1,000-2,000 Eb, and are used by almost all businesses and corporations, where transactions seldom exceed 100,000 Eb. These types of ID verification systems are commonly used by security and law-enforcement groups for "spot-checks." These CTDs can check all types of identification, and have separate patron-facing keypads and ID scanners. Verification takes from 5-10 seconds. Executive CTDs are more powerful computers which require high processing speed and major access to Net systems. They cost about 5000 Eb, and are used by elite corporate and private security firms and government intelligence agencies, are capable of handling transactions of 1,000,000 Eb and up. They can and do cross-check any type of verification with multiple databases. These systems are infamous for

detecting even the highest-quality forgeries. Verification takes around one minute.

The Pocket-CTD has seen mass distribution by manufacturers such as Okidata, Lang, Kiyoshiru, and Radio Shack, and new versions are constantly being introduced. A popular CTD is a Cybermodem add-on which allows transactions to be made directly through the deck's interface (this CTD add-on sells for about 75 Eb, and can be installed to a deck with a *Basic Tech* roll of 15+). Even a cyberarm option type is available. All classes except Pocket-CTDs require special vending licensing to be purchased, and possession of unlicensed CTDs is illegal...but a good cyberpunk knows that anything can be found on the black market if you look hard enough.

### Hey, Wait a Minute...

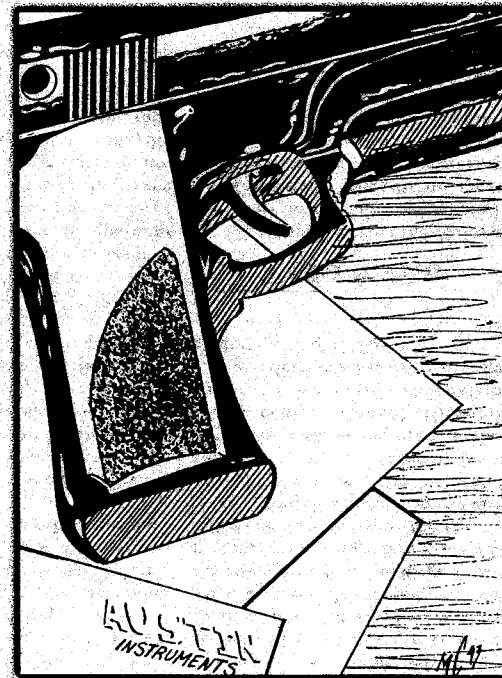
Smart cyberpunks who have read this far are probably thinking, "There's more going on here than meets the eye, isn't there?" Yes. Big brother watches us all, and the electronic economy brings him a lot closer to home. The following is a chapter from the dissertation of Dr. Richard

M. Cameron, an Associate Professor at Harvard University, that examines the consequences and effects of 2020's electronic economy. Dr. Cameron is a well known success story. Once a influential Fixer in the underground of the Boston Combat Zone, Dr. Cameron is now Harvard University's resident expert on the workings of the cyberpunk counter-economy.

## MONEY IN 2020

"Your credit history is vitally important in this day and age. Money is quickly becoming a strictly electronic medium (why not...it hasn't been backed by anything more solid than a promise for over one hundred years anyway), and hard cash is a subject that most upscale stores won't even discuss, and many other stores will talk about only with difficulty (some stores don't even have a cash register anymore, just a terminal hooked into a credit transactor). Hard cash is dirty, crinkly, and speaks of the underworld and crime to most citizens in 2020...at least any citizens worth mentioning.

"Even many of the Homeless in 2020 have a credchip account...no credit as such, just an electronic debit card. They are easy to use, relatively fool proof, and you can't lose the money on them...if you lose the card, just pay a nominal fee at



any branch office and you can get a new one. Even if the card is stolen, you can cancel it with only a phone call...assuming they leave you alive.

"What this means is that every purchase you make with a standard credchip is recorded and can be retrieved...what, where, when, how many, and how much. With time, a profile can be drawn up that shows purchasing preferences, favorite foods and types of stores (supermarkets or mom-n-pop groceries, for example), what weapons you prefer (based on your arrest records, weapon licenses, purchases recorded on your credchip), how you do business...a frighteningly complete profile. Or, it would be if the various institutions in 2020 America didn't have such a hard time co-operating with each other.

"Don't think you can get away with anything by using only Token Account Credchips (see sidebar). After all, you

• **Token Credchips:** Token chops provide a useful method of giving someone an expense account, paying them, or transferring of other functions. A token credchip (also called a Tip) has a small microchip in it which holds a certain amount of "electronic cash" on it. There are two types: WORM (Write Once, Read Many) tips are set with a pre-determined amount of cash at the bank, and cannot be added to or altered except to remove cash. They can be erased and reset, but only with special tools (which are, of course, hard to come by). These are the standard type of token credit. Much more rare are R/WM (Read/Write Many) tips. These can be used like a sort of portable bank account; you can make transactions both ways. Usually they have some sort of limit (on amount per transaction and total balance), and must be downloaded to a master account on a regular basis. Therefore, tips don't exempt you from surveillance, they just delay it a bit. Both types require that the user first plug in their number, and then a selected code (which the user selects at the time of encoding). This makes it hard to crack a token credchip without fancy equipment (an entire criminal industry has grown up around cracking chops and tips; see *Factors*, page 24). A WORM tip costs 50 Eb (you must first have an account with the bank and request the token chop) and can be imprinted with up to 10,000 Eb (the maximum legal transfer). R/WM tips cost 150 Eb, and the user must be a trusted customer with a good credit history (an excess of 15,000 Eb in his account). However, an R/WM tip can hold up to 50,000 Eb at one time and usually only requires that the card be checked with the account (through the Net or an ATM) once a week for the account to remain open. If it isn't, the card locks up until it is read by the bank's computer.

**Chopping:** Cracking a credchip (token or normal) is a tricky procedure. First, you have to decrypt the damn thing (usually a Difficult decryption sequence), then figure out what everything stands for—unlike most datafiles, the info on a chop is designed to be User Unfriendly. Then the right files must be altered and properly re-encrypted (which may or may not be the same encryption sequence). Any failure at these stages will ruin the chop, so most edgerunners leave the job to professional Factors in order to avoid problems. It really bites to mug a guy and then be unable to get any money out of it because you botched the decryption. Most Factors charge 25-50% of the cash on the chop (depending on the amount in the credchip/account, and the difficulty of getting into it). Factors who perform this service need expertise in decryption techniques and banking procedures, or they need to employ Netrunners who know this stuff. Another common job for chopping Factors is taking R/WM cards and modifying them so they don't need to be plugged into a reader once a week.

In game terms, anyone in the business of credchip cracking will need the skills of *Programming, Expert: Decryption* and *Expert: Banking Procedures*. To crack a Chop will require a successful *Expert: Decryption* roll before the *Programming* roll can be made to carry out the decryption, followed by an *Expert: Banking Procedures* roll to alter the files. Then, another *Expert: Decryption* roll followed by another *Programming* roll are needed to re-encrypt the information (the difficulties to be decided by the referee depending on the card).

*continued next page*

aren't real likely to put much more on a Tip than you need for your particular purchase, right? Well, guess what. When an interested party plugs into their little microcomputer such information as: the amount you withdrew (as a credchip), the current market values of purchased items (they have special databases for just that purpose), and your purchasing history, they can get a pretty good idea of what you are after. "But," you say, "I could be buying more than one item, or I could get cash back, or I could be using the token card legitimately, or I could be expecting my Fixer to only pull part of the value of the chip, or I could be building credit..." Sure, you could. But not all Fixers have a credit transactor, some don't like to deal in cash, others aren't trustworthy when "credit" is involved, and people using token credchips aren't likely to be involved with legitimate business...if it was an above-board deal, you wouldn't care if someone had a record, would you?

"So it's hopeless," you say with a shrug, and begin to throw your cards into the recycler. No, not really. Usually no one will be interested enough in your accounts to be doing a detailed analysis. And there are always possibilities; the credit tracing system is by no means perfect. If you don't use a card in your name, it isn't going to show up on your records. This can be done with a Token Chop, or even getting yourself a false identity. (see *SINs Of Identity*, pg. 62). And there's always cash or barter."

### Cash: Dirty Money

Cash is still around, it's just that legitimate businesses don't like to deal with it. Many, however, have no choice (ostensibly, it is still "legal tender for all debts, public or private," but some states have passed laws that say that businesses do not have to recognize hard cash). Cash is, of course, the favorite of the Streets. Some Fixers don't like to deal with it. With a

5,000 Eb limit on unreported deposits, possession of amounts greater than 100,000 Eb being a Priority 3 felony, and money laundering being an uncommon art, cash can sometimes be more of a problem to deal with than stolen credchips. Still, most Fixers prefer cash to electronic funds because while electronic funds can't directly get you in trouble, they are much easier to trace. So you can always use cash...it's less traceable, most places still take it (although they may grumble), and it has the same value. Besides, briefcases and bags full of Eurobucks just feel so good...

### Back to the Beginning

Barter is an even more untraceable means of commerce, but it is very tricky to master and implement. Basically, barter means that you have some merchandise that someone else wants (high-end pharmaceuticals, say), and someone else has something that you want (say, some cases of weapons and ammo). So you trade, right? It's not quite that simple—the other guy might not need drugs. Perhaps he needs some hot cyberdecks. So you have to go and find some cyberdecks. This can get very complicated very quickly. Some cities have barter houses, warehouses where you can register your product, figure out a relative value (based on the current market value, minus a small transaction fee), and place a "want list" of items you need (counter-economy versions, of course, use a wide number of code phrases, false IDs, and pseudonyms to protect their customers). Such barter houses are usually run by Traders, a specialized type of Fixer who acts as a professional go-between. Many corporations, almost all small businesses, and many Fixers are members of the legitimate barter houses (who do keep records and collect taxes, although they are still a lot more anonymous than a straight purchase), and most fixers (as well as some corps and businesses) belong to

one or more underground barter houses. The Corps never know when they may have to dump some stuff on the black market quickly...for whatever reason.

### The Black Market

Also known as the counter-economy, the Black Market springs up anywhere that people want goods which are made illegal, taxed into disappearance, or are just hard to find on the open market. In the 20th century, that mainly consisted of illegal drugs, firearms and sex, so drug lords, gun runners, fences of stolen goods and pimps made up the majority of the Black Market. All of these nasty individuals still make up a good portion of the Black Market but many more have joined in (see *Black Marketeers*, pg. 20). Surgeons, sick of dealing with corporations, medical insurers, and governmental regulation, set up illegal surgical centers or do cybernetic installation procedures on the side, alongside Info Bros selling the most precious commodity of all. The few independent farms sell a large portion of their produce and meat on the black market. (Some people are still getting paid to destroy crops in the Midwestern states!) Whether it's explosives or eggs, memory or meat, the Black Market is the place to go.

### Agoras

Agoras, coming from the Greek word for "Market," are the ultimate in Black Markets. Believed to be founded by a radical Libertarian underground movement, the Agoras are large, organized Black Markets which are preferentially referred to as "Free Markets" or "Counter-Economies." In essence, they are secret marketplaces which serve a private agenda and have their own subversive philosophy. Agoras are always centered in some hidden location, and entrance to these hideouts usually requires a running of

a gauntlet of passwords, recognition signs, secret handshakes, frisks and identity checks. Once admitted, an Agoras' customer finds himself in an environment which resembles an underground convention center. There are believed to be over a dozen recognized Agoras in the United States and Canada. The Agoras utilize gold as a purchasing standard; all official forms of cash are unusable in an

"I grok Glock  
- not your  
father's  
Plastic  
Pistol!"  
- Common  
Radio Adblip

Agoras. This serves two purposes: first, it provides a small measure of protection for the clients (gold is not legal tender in the US, so they are in fact bartering, not buying...it just so happens that everyone in an Agoras is in the market for gold). Second, using a gold standard goes along with the basic economic ideas behind the Agoras of old, which were free markets which utilized a gold-backed econo-

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its owner, its bank, etc.). To do this demands an INT-3 computer or workstation such as the Microtech IIIK (see *Chrome* book 2, pg. 15) with a Credit Transactor package (*Chrome* book 2, pg. 18); not to mention a stolen credchip and the equipment to sample the client's fingerprints, retinal pattern and DNA (this will take materials scrounged from scanner plates, deck security systems or a cannibalized ScanMan or police Black Book computer). A tall order, which is why Factors are just about the only people who can do it.

my. The Agoras' organization has yet to be cracked, although assorted authorities have tried. The task is believed to be so difficult that some corporations have given up fighting and started selling in the Agoras market (such as the cybernetics giant, Raven Microcyb). Meanwhile, other corporations (like Arasaka) have redoubled their efforts to shut down the group. Several Agoras have been closed down, but always at great cost of money and life for the attacking force. During raids, Agoras' casualties are light, but final; no Agoras' operative has ever been captured. Their losses don't seem to have bothered the Agoras much—it is believed that the structures are looked on as being disposable. They are certainly, by all accounts, profitable.

## Hard Currency

Just because the Eurodollar is the world standard doesn't mean everyone uses Eurodollars exclusively. The United States Government doesn't print Eurobucks, they print American dollars. They pay their employees in American dollars and FDIC-backed banks (the few left) are required to pay in dollars. Even though a lot of businesses use Eurobucks, others still pay in American dollars. Listed below are some of the major currencies in the world market:

**American Dollar (\$):** Also known as Dead Presidents, Prezzes, Leaves and Grass, the American dollar has changed little from that of the 20th century. It is a little harder to counterfeit, thanks to holograms, and is made out of a plastic that looks and feels like flanneled paper but is immune to most mundane methods of destruction (this cash you can wash, chombata). American dollars are less stable than before, prone to wild fluctuations due to inflation and the quirks of a credit-based economy. In such cases, the holder of a wad of dollar bills can be left holding a pile of junk

...junk that's hard to burn even! Oh well, it's only money, right?

**Japanese New Yen (¥):** Also called Yen, Characters and Tea Leaves, the New Yen is supported by governmental control and a very strong economy, meaning the New Yen is a growing currency. It is widely accepted in Asia (about equally popular as the Eurodollar), and thanks to favorable exchange rates it is also accepted in most American businesses as well, even though not an official American currency. This kind of unofficial backscratching reflects a growing alliance between the two countries. The New Yen is still a funny currency requiring about 100 of them to equal the buying power of an American dollar (200 to a Eurodollar), but since everyone in Japan is supposed to a zillionaire, who cares? Just remember that if someone offers you a million New Yen for the job, that's not as much as it sounds.

**Russian Federal Ruble (₽):** Also referred to as RedBucks, Junk and Rubbles. While the old Soviet government collapsed over 30 years ago, this damn currency still haunts the new government, and it's still no good! Russia has a semi-decent economy, they just haven't got a real currency. There is a thriving black currency market throughout the United Soviet Sovereign Republics, as everyone is trying to get rid of their rubles for Eurobucks or NewYen. All you've got to remember is that if someone offers you a million Rubles for the job...they ain't paying you nothin', but it's close.

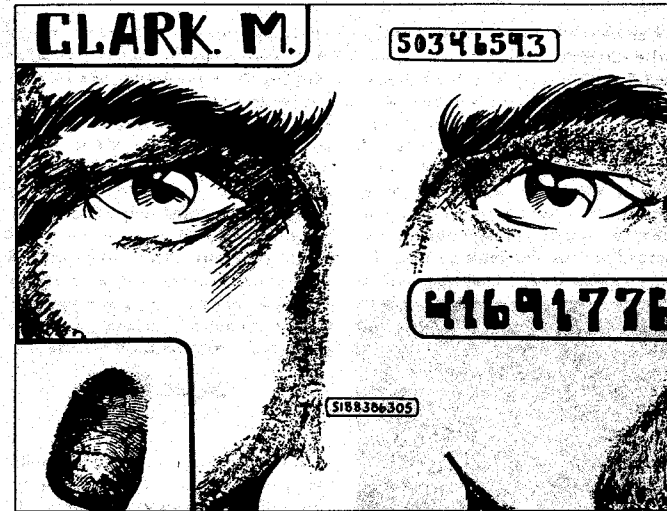
**EuroDollar (Eb):** Sometimes called Eurobucks, Ebucks and Smuggies, the Eurodollar is the result of the ECU (European Common Union) treaty, signed by all of the major European nations (with the exception of Scandinavia) in 1997. At the same time that the EDF (European Defense Force) was formed, they also came up with a common currency based on the most stable moneys of the time. By the

end of the 20th century, it was almost impossible to use any other money in Europe...even the British had finally laid their precious Pound to rest. By 2004, most nations had either recognized the Eurobuck as an official currency, or given it highly favorable exchange rates. The Russians are the only holdouts...you can spend the Ebuck in the USSR, but they don't allow employees to be paid in it, nor is there any official exchange rate, and Soviet banks are forbidden to exchange Rubles for Eurobucks. Outside of Russia though, if you want to do business with the big boys, you either use Eurobucks or Corporate Scrip.

## Corporate Scrip Notes

The first CorpScrip was printed clear back in the 17th century, when many private banks printed their own currencies. This money was accepted by other banks (usually at a discount, depending on how difficult it was to get their money back on it), and by any business in a town that had a bank that would accept it. As government control spread throughout the Western nations and they grew more "civilized," the practice was discontinued.

As the power of the megacorps rose, these corporations had to find some way of controlling their employees. Direct threats on family members are effective, but complicated, time-consuming and frequently messy. Corporations prefer to base their control in economic power; if you haven't got real money, nor the contacts to get real money, it's harder to become independent from your company. Most corporations pay their employees in their own corporate scrip (known generically as CorpScrip). This scrip is accepted by the corporation and its subsidiaries as real money (often with a substantial discount for using CorpScrip), and some companies will accept scrip from other corporations, although usually at a reduced rate. Even corporations that are actively at war with each other



may accept each other's scrip, although the exchange rate will be truly outrageous.

A Corporation's scrip value is dependent on a host of factors. What a corporation values its own scrip at only matters when buying or selling cash within the company. The value of a given "brand" of CorpScrip is influenced by such factors as the corporation's economic power, the value of its goods, its current relations with other corps, governments and its own employees, and even its public image. This makes CorpScrip one of the most fluctuating markets of all.

## Edgerunner Economics

Freelance operatives and modern-day privateers can still demand payment in hard stuff...weapons, drugs, gold, microchips, data or 'wares of the hard, soft, wet, or cyber-variety. Most corporate employers don't mind when the whole job is deniable anyway. What's more, there are enough talented Netrunners and Factors out there to find loopholes in the credit-corps' system—the Cyberpunk revolutions' weapons against the establishment aren't limited to guns and

grenades. It's not easy, and it's not legal, but credit can be stolen, forged, and manipulated. It can be tailored through the underground to serve people instead of the system. And as everyone knows in 2020, with credit comes credibility.

## SINS OF IDENTITY

The Net has been hailed as a boon to humanity, the greatest tool for intercultural understanding the world has ever known. In some ways, this is true. However, the potential for the Net as a route to universal harmony has been overshadowed by its unmatched power to cater to special-interest groups, serve the powers of big business, and make information the ultimate weapon. One of the creepier manifestations of this aspect of the Net is the ability to track people through their electronic identity. This idea represents all the information collected on a person and stored in various databases throughout the Net. The information which makes up a person's electronic identity (or Skele-

• **Hiding Out:** Sometimes the heat just gets too hot, and you've gotta get out of that kitchen. When you need to lay low for a while, where are you supposed to go? You could stay with a friend, but whoever's following you will probably think to monitor your friends. You could sleep in alleys, but that's too dangerous. You could leave town, but all the bus stations, train depots, docks and airports could be watched. What you need is a Fixer. Several types of Fixer (particularly Owners, Smugglers and Sleazes) can help you find a place to stay out your troubles. All of these specializations involve dealing with storage space, invisibility or both; any one can hide you out—for a price. When you do pay, remember two things: (1) give the Fixer a big tip; you can't afford to have him flapping his yap just because he thinks you're cheap, and (2) don't use credit for anything; it can be traced too easily. Also, don't be picky about where they put you; it may not be pretty, but it's safe(r). The cost for a safehouse can vary tremendously, depending on location, cleanliness, furnishing, size and security precautions. A typical safehouse arrangement has one grungy room with a toilet and a phone, with access monitored by a big, stupid, sleepy Solo and costs about 100 Eb per night. On the other hand, a private apartment with full furnishings, sophisticated electronic surveillance and debugging equipment, secret doors and a competent security staff could run you as much as 2,000 Eb per night. One thing you can do to ease such hard times is to plan ahead. A few goodies subtly stashed for a rainy day is

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 referred to as a *bolthole*, and for most edgerunners having more than a couple of *boltholes* is highly recommended. Where do you put your *boltholes*? Anywhere they won't be discovered. The most common choices are bus station, train depot and airport lockery. Other options include secret compartments in vehicles, beneath or behind tables in restaurants and other public establishments, and in the hands of friends or contacts who work in public places. What should you put in your *bolthole*? First Aid kits, weapons & ammo, cash, a pocket computer or cybermodem (with programs), and any thing else you might need in times of trouble. Unfortunately, it's guaranteed to be worth the effort.

ton, as it is called on the Street) starts and ends with a person's SIN (their State Identification Number). A person's SIN is tied to the governmental files of their state of residence and includes all personal identification and classification data, such as their criminal record, known aliases, degrees and qualifications, occupation, height, weight, eye color, retina pattern, and fingerprints (and on rare occasions, a voiceprint pattern and a DNA sample). A person's SIN is sometimes used for state taxation purposes, and without a SIN a person cannot register to vote, get a passport or driver's license, apply for a (legal) job or even rent decent living quarters. The SIN is also a necessary key to tracking down and accessing other parts of a person's Skeleton, such as military service records, corporate files like career histories and psychological evaluations, medical records and particularly the person's credit history (including records of all purchases, accounting and expenditures).

This data, when collected into one block of information, can create a remarkably thorough and accurate profile of the person. A Skeleton exists in the Net almost like a data-only clone of a real person, living its life exclusively in bank databases and government records computers. Knowing that this entity could be "interrogated" or even "kidnapped" by a powerful criminal organization, corporation or government can very easily make a person nervous. As the saying goes, "Forget Big Brother. Everyone's watching you!"

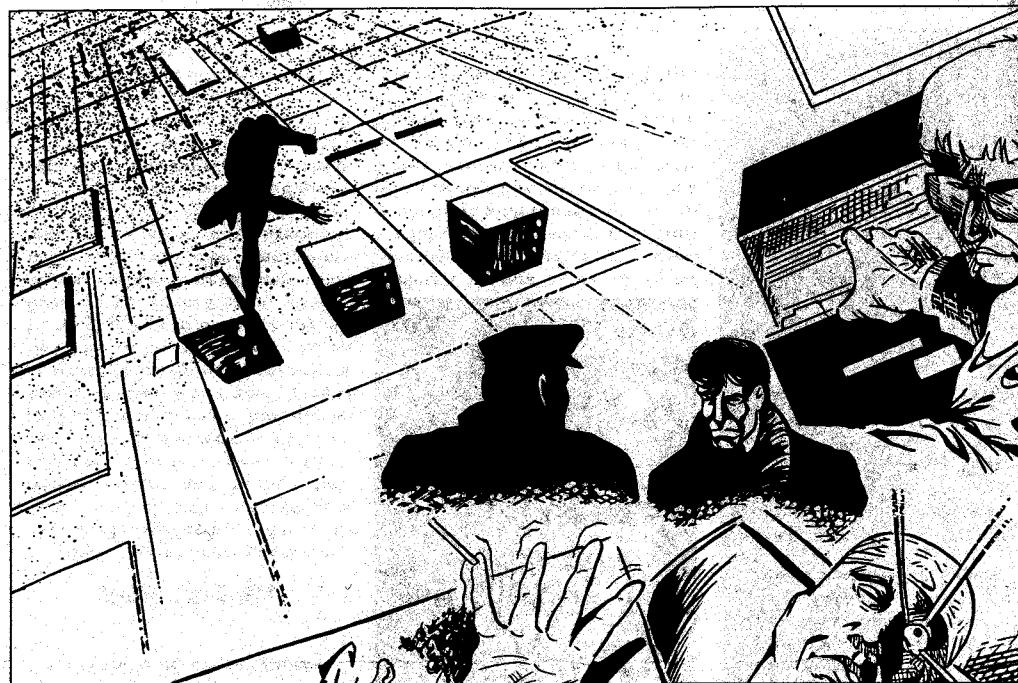
When a likely person (such as an edgerunner) gets nervous enough, he'll want to start tampering with his Skeleton and even his SIN. When the desire (or the necessity) arises, these edgerunners seek out Shoemakers to perform their SIN-surgery. Sometimes they want to be zeroed, having their SIN and all information pertinent to their Skeletons completely purged from the Net. Sometimes they will want new shoes, altering their present identity and getting their Skeleton

rebuilt to suit their needs. Still others want to lead double lives, and will pay to have a second, possibly secret identity created for them. SIN-Lifters provide these services, and this is how they do it.

## SIN-SURGERY

Altering a person's electronic identity takes a lot of work. You need to access a tremendous number of data fortresses (all well-protected), go through their files to find *all* material pertaining to your client, change data in ways no one will notice, and create new documentation, chops and SINcards. All of this is made a lot easier if you have contacts inside the organizations that run those data fortresses. Shoemakers are the only people specialized enough to make all the right moves. Sure, they may hire a lot of Netrunners and Facemen to help them do the job, but they are the brains behind the operation and it is their contacts which make SIN-surgery possible. For this reason, whenever a character contracts Shoemaker's services, the completeness and reliability of the new shoes is, for game purposes, based on the Fixer's *Streetdeal* roll.

Creating a satisfactorily complete identity alteration (creation, modification or deletion) is a Very Difficult *Streetdeal* roll—if you have the right contacts. Basically, for a Shoemaker it is Very Difficult, but for any other Fixer the task is Nearly Impossible (of course, if some non-Shoemaker Fixer has a SIN-Lifter contact, then he can hire them and their *Streetdeal*...at cost). This reflects the Shoemaker's cultivation of the right connections and resources. If the character has not done this (particularly applicable in The Big League system), then it should be Nearly Impossible for him, too. The greater the Shoemaker's success at the *Streetdeal* roll, the better the new identity, and poorer rolls make weaker identities. A base difficulty of 25 will grant a Skeleton that is satisfactory, nothing more. The referee should make sure



that player-character Fixers roleplay their way through this process as well as making the skill roll. Competent SIN-Surgery usually takes about a week to complete. (see TABLE 1 below for details)

The reliability column is a general reference for how often the SIN-surgery will work for you. This should be rolled when any reference is made to the new Skeleton, such as when traveling (passport-related), applying for a job or for licenses, changing your credit services, dealing with the law (having your criminal records checked), or any other applicable situation. If the D100 roll is under the Reliability, then your new shoes hold up and you're fine. However, if the D100 roll was over the Reliability, then your new identity didn't work right and someone's suspicious. The Referee should then make a representative of the party checking the records (PC or NPC) make a skill roll to check the

records for falsification. The skill rolled should be whatever is most applicable: Accounting if the checker is an accountant examining your credit history, Bureaucracy for a politician checking government documentation, etc. If the checker fails his roll, they deny your records-related requests, but do not call the authorities. However, if they beat the difficulty roll for spotting falsification, they know your records are false and you're in *big* trouble.

Listed below are the various services a Shoemaker can perform, as well as other variations on the classic parameters of identity:

### Zeroing

This is the process of having your SIN and your Skeleton erased from Net. Once this is done, you will no longer be part of the system and join the ranks of the disenfranchised; you

TABLE 1.

Streetdeal Roll	Reliability	Difficulty to Spot Falsification
30+	95%	Diff = 30
28-29	90%	Diff = 28
26-27	85%	Diff = 26
25	75%	Diff = 25
23-24	60%	Diff = 20
21-22	40%	Diff = 15
0-20	15%	Diff = 10

### • Identity Equipment:

For use with some types of new shoes and most disposable skeletons, some or all of this equipment will be necessary. Needless to say, all this stuff is illegal.

### • Jack-in-the-Box:

This is a portable electronic device about the size and shape of a small flashlight. One end has a fingertip-shaped, temperature-controlled synthetic pad which, when placed against a scanning plate, will be read as a finger- or thumbprint (depending on what has been programmed in). The other side ends in an orb-shaped matrix which can be programmed to store and display false retina scan images. The device has a fine-tuned digital recording of a pre-programmed voiceprint which is precise enough to fool vocelocks and other scanners. The entire device can be programmed to store up to three full sets of 95% reliable prints, although better models can store more. Weight is about 0.1kg, and the price is around 500 Eb—the devices are cheap, it's the patterns that are expensive.

### • Finger Booties:

These are polymerized sheaths which can be slipped over the fingers to fool print-scanners; a set of 5 booties costs 100-500 Eb.

become a Blank, a Not, an Unperson, a Nosferatu, a Zip. You do not officially exist, and therefore have no rights. If the officials find out that you paid to be zeroed, they are likely to make an effort to track you down, catalog you, and give you a heavy fine, prison term, or mess with your brain in some god-awful way. Note that you cannot have a bank account, a legal job, a driver's license or anything else which involves official confirmation (like marriage), and you also cannot have any officially-documented alternate identities (although you can have a temporary identity). Remember that you cannot access the Net under your own name (no Net Access Codes for you), and to protect your status as a Blank, you must deal strictly in cash or barter. However, the advantage is that there are no records of you in any paper or computer files, anywhere. The system doesn't know about you. Because of this, you are immune to most corporate and government surveillance or harassment. You become invisible to bureaucracies and the system as a whole; if someone tries to dig up information on you, they will find nothing at all—and will probably get confused, frustrated; then give up. Usually.

Zeroing is a negotiable service, but runs around 25,000 Eb and up.

## Spare Skeletons

When you contract this service from a Shoemaker, you are given an extra identity which you have complete control over; your SIN, retina scans, fingerprints, and voice pattern are registered under two names, and you have two sets of licenses, passports, birth certificates, as well as credit cards and bank accounts. Remember, although you will be given new bank accounts, you still have to fill them with scratch yourself! Spare skeletons can be handy (if not vital) to anyone

involved in shady or illegal activities (in other words, most good cyberpunks and edgerunners). You can contract as many spare skeletons as you want, giving you a whole portfolio of identities, but this can get expensive real fast. In terms of government or corporate surveillance, if a background check is made on you using only your prints (without knowledge of your name or face) there is a 50-50 chance that either of your identities (one of many?) will come up; this will not be much of a problem, unless the authorities have a good reason to suspect that you have other skeletons in your closet. If they keep on searching, they will eventually find your other identity(s) and you're busted—once they figure out who you really are, they'll zero your extra identities and you can expect a fast ride to the Brainsdance tanks or the firing squad. One way to avoid this problem is to have your alternate identity use a *false* set of prints. In such a case you could access this identity only with the use of finger booties, voxbox systems and retinal masking-layer nanotech encoded with the false prints and patterns. It is safer but harder to use this type of alternate identity, since you must always have all the fancy gear with, on or in your person, and you can't easily use such illegal stuff in public. The price for a spare skeleton is about 10-20,000 Eb, plus the costs of creating phony prints and the equipment to use them, and whatever else the situation warrants.

## Disposable Skeletons

Spare skeletons can be designed with an expiration date. When you contract a spare skeleton from a SIN-Lifter, you can have it designed to only be viable for a limited time period; the quality of the work is tailored so that the false records are bound to be discovered after a designated length of time. The standard is one week, but is negotiable. After the

time period is up, there is a flat 5% chance per day (cumulative) that the identity will be busted and removed from the system. Disposable skeletons are usually designed to be used with phony prints and patterns (requiring the use of some fancy equipment—see New Shoes), since the identity will be cracked, and you don't want it to be traced back to you! Disposable skeletons often have a Watchdog-type program built into them, which will place a phone call to the owner of the identity, warning him when it is cracked. For double the standard price, a skeleton can be set up as a "sleeper," only becoming active inside the system with a pre-arranged signal. Because of the complicated set-up involved in a sleeper ID, the "active life" of the identity is usually halved, or the post-life discovery chance doubled. Disposable skeletons usually cost about 2,000 Eb, but this is modified by the length of the "life" of the identity and other circumstances.

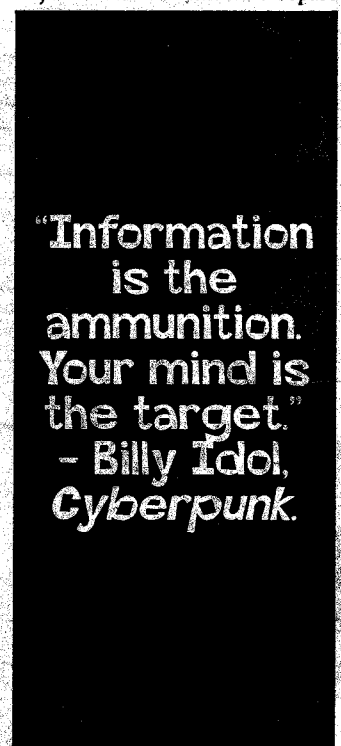
## New Shoes

Many times edgerunners need to actually switch their identities, which involves having a set of "new shoes" created and having their original identity zeroed. This is heavy-duty SIN-surgery, and often requires that the new identity be based on completely new physical characteristics—your appearance will have to be resculpted, and all identifying aspects of your body will have to be altered. Your fingerprints, retinal pattern, and vocal pattern will need to be nanotechnologically tweaked. SIN-Lifters are experts in providing new shoes, but it is very complicated, hideously expensive and super-illegal. Shoemakers and their clients usually receive life with no parole, or death sentences. The going rate for a pair of new shoes is in the neighborhood of 50,000 Eb, including zeroing, a

new identity and contracts with black clinics for the surgery procedures (arranged by the Shoemaker).

## Secret Identity

This is a fictional "person" that is used for actions and operations which you do not want to be linked to your "real" life. This isn't a Spare

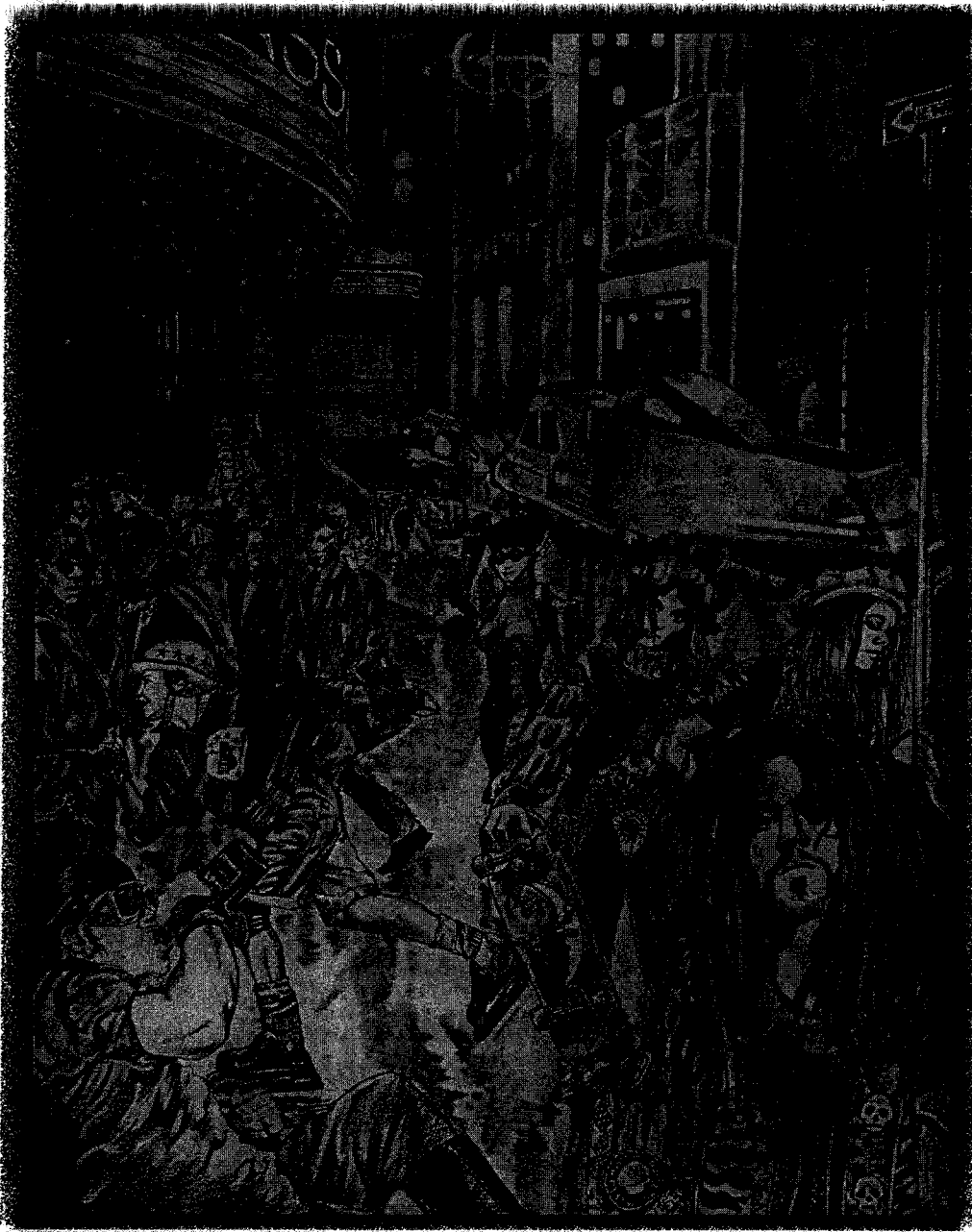


Skeleton or new shoes. A secret identity doesn't necessarily need any false records backing it up (this depends on what you use it for). You don't need a Shoemaker to have a secret identity—anyone who wants to can say they're someone else. Having a secret identity is not technically illegal, but always be aware of the potential repercussions if you are exposed!

### • Cyberware and Bioware:

Having your fingerprints surgically altered (or erased) costs 100 Eb (erase), 200 Eb (alter) and is N surgery per pair of hands, while having your hands covered with syntheskin laced with pre-programmed nanotech which can register a different set of prints at will (20 seconds to change) costs 550 Eb, 1HC and is M surgery per pair of hands. Altering your retinas with a layer of nanotech which produces a different pattern is 800 Eb, 0.5HC, M surgery (per pair), but a programmable layer which can project different (pre-set) patterns at will (1 minute to change patterns) is 1,600 Eb, 1HC and M surgery per pair of eyes. Altering or having switchable voice patterns both require that you have an AudioVox with the Voice Pattern function (GP2020 pg.85 & Chronobook 1 pg.35); 1,050 Eb, 2D6+2, M surgery. Altering your DNA requires a tailored retrovirus which will run you 3,000 Eb—no, you can't get programmable DNA, you gonk.





## CH. 4

## THE STRIP

**E**very city on the face of the planet has one bad section of town, a place where anyone can buy anything at anytime—that place is the Strip.

Whether it's High Street in Night City, the Chiba district of Tokyo or the Minsk goods market, on the Strip the action runs full steam around the clock. This action, sometimes called Biz, is pure, concentrated capitalism. Funny thing about capitalism; being a concept, it's not reliant on a physical location. This means that Strips are more of a mental state than any particular physical environment. A Strip could be a sprawling outdoor bazaar just as easily as it could be black market complex hidden in a secret location. Most commonly, a Strip will manifest itself in a heavily trafficked part of a large city.

How a Strip gets started is largely a mystery. Sometimes a Strip will spring up from the remnants of old commercial zoning. Other times, it seems like a sort of economic Bonsai tree; someone cuts off several branches of a growing economy and the Strip manages to develop with a mind of its own. However, the majority of Strips are landmark-oriented. A tourist attraction, a spot with an

impressive view, or any other area of that draws people can metamorphose into a Strip. The transformation starts with an increased presence of common street vendors and the hustlers. As the Strip's reputation grows, more and more people go there to move their wares. Eventually, the big-time Fixers move in, buying and selling nearby property at greatly inflated prices. If they can, the Mob tries to move in and exploit the area for its own purposes. Edgerunners start hanging around, and a Strip is born. These market zones fall in and out of fashion—the big ones rarely die, but new Strips can burn themselves out, like fleeting stars. The remains of a dead Strip is a promenade of vacated shops and burnt-out husks...the combat zone of tomorrow.

No matter what shape the Strip takes, there is always something to buy and someone to sell it. Like sharks, Fixers prowl the Strip, searching for an opportunity; they're rarely disappointed. The same holds true for those shoppers seeking rare

goods. When characters need to find the impossible, the Strip is where they go.

In a sense, the Strip is the center of any city's economy. While not nearly as glamorous as the corporate towers, the streets of the Strip house the same kind of businesses. As a sidewalk mall, the Strip presents nearly infinite opportunities to sell and buy all types of commodities. In effect, every city needs a Strip because this is one of the few socially-acceptable places for the classes to mingle (even if only for a short time); on the Strip, Corporates and other wage-slaves can buy hand-crafted goods made by families of Nomads or squatters, view art videos made by local street performers, and feed their various addictions. Occasionally, the exchange of goods goes both ways and a shipment of experimental corporate products will hit the Street. In addition, the majority of any city's stolen goods re-surface within its Strip. Local merchants seem to have an uncanny ability to stumble upon the most interesting of the city's hot wares. Moreover, the pawnshops that litter the alleyways of the Strip insure a constant recycling of all products, no matter who they originally belonged to.

**Famous Strips Around the World:**

- High Street Strip, Night City, Free State of Northern California
- The Chiba (Chiba located in an outer district of Tokyo, Japan)
- Alphasrip (within one of the few fully-walled CZs), Detroit, Michigan
- Minsk Goods Market in Minsk, Russia
- The Harbor View Strip, Hong Kong, China
- Kolonnen Street, Greater Berlin, Germany
- Piccadilly Circus Strip, London, England
- The Bangkok Measuredrome, Bangkok, Thailand
- Pungang River Boardwalk, in the shadow of the Kilimajaro Mass driver, Tanzania
- Nile Delta Bazaar, Cairo, Egypt
- Havana Strip, Havana, Cuba
- Rio's Pearl, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Cyberia Data Exchange, Wilderspace, the Net
- Orbitsville, Interface, Crystal Palace, L1 Point, Low Earth Orbit

**The Edge of the Strip:**

The terms "Strip" and "Edge" are not synonymous. The Edge is purely a state of mind, namely the intensification of activity and running on full steam. The Edge is anywhere an Edgerunner goes. The Strip is merely an "Edgezone" (namely, an area between areas); maybe it's got the stuff and maybe it doesn't. If the tech is new and the action's sizzling, then the cyberpunks won't be far behind. And if it isn't, there's always somewhere else to be, Neh?

**So how do you get around, anyhow?** You don't drive. High Street is easily accessible by Night City's subways and buses. Like many cities, the growing population and mass urbanization has forced an increased reliance on public

continued on page 70.

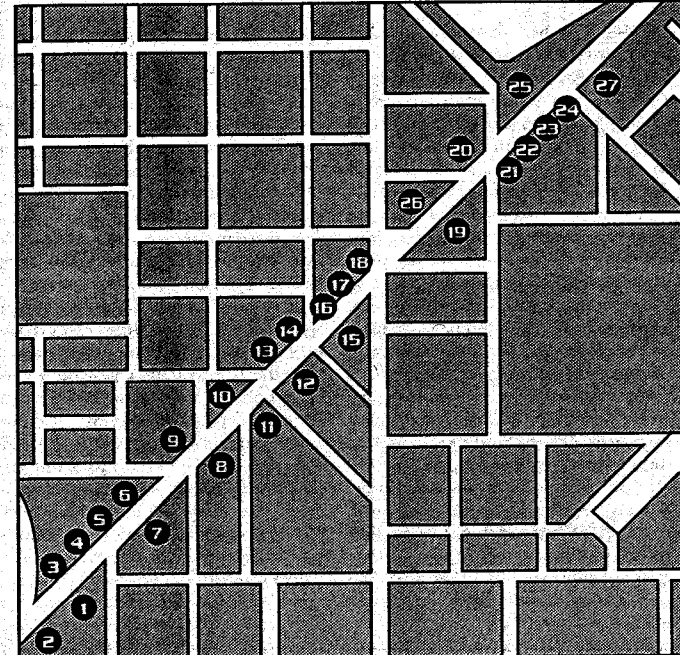


**A SAMPLE STRIP: NIGHT CITY'S HIGH STREET**

For those unfamiliar with Night City, High Street is a large, busy thoroughfare which begins at the fringes of Japantown (at the corner of Williams and 16th) and runs all the way to the San Morro Bay Bridge. Because of the bridge's proximity to the heart of the Night City traffic grid, three times a day, High Street's traffic slows to the pace of non-electronic mail delivery. In fact, traffic is so slow that airships (you know—balloons, dirigibles) often outpace the hundreds of sports cars on the streets below. Most people see this as a problem, but Night City's Fixers and assorted entrepreneurs see this as an opportunity. The rush hours create the perfect conditions for commerce. Thousands of people stuck in their respective cars for hours on end provides a captive, yet varied audience. After an hour or so of a complete standstill, who can resist an ice cold Beer or the latest Inla Ganger porno Braindance?

The part of the High Street Strip located near the corporate section and Japantown is well-protected by locally-hired security and the NCPD, both of whom are ready to chase off anyone who even looks at a good citizen in the wrong way. Most hustlers push relatively legal goods in this area, albeit at a higher price than normal. After all, the corporates can afford it.

As High Street crosses the Night City Convention Center, the Strip jumps into high gear. If it weren't for the Municipal Criminal Justice building, this section of the Strip might have degenerated into a virtual combat zone by now. As it is, Cadigan Avenue (which runs between the convention center, the Afterlife bar and the main Night City bus garage) is the best-known hangout for prostitutes in the city, drawing johns largely from the out-of-town convention crowds. The many alleyways off of Cadigan Ave host a variety of other criminal activities which pander to the needs, or at least desires, of both a white- and blue-collar clientele. In an attempt to clean up one of these crime-ridden backstreets, the Amerline Depot was forced to wall in an entire alley. After a group of boosters blasted a small entrance hole in one of the walls and turned it into a temporary home, Amerline filled in the entire alley with solid



**Businesses Fronting The High Street Strip In Night City**

- 1] Medical School-Night City Med Center
- 2] Night City Tech College
- 3] Ashcroft Hotel high-class
- 4] Safe Child childcare
- 5] Plaza Medical Services high-class clinic
- 6] Ashcroft & Hammersmith luxury store
- 7] Hotel Hamilton mid-class
- 8] University of Free Calif. Health Science Center
- 9] EurasiaBank Plaza
- 10] Night City Post Office
- 11] Night City Convention Center
- 12] The Afterlife solo club
- 13] The Central mid-class hotel
- 14] The Grand Illusion major rock club
- 15] Bay Bridge Residential Hotel/Night Owl 24-hr. bar
- 16] Night City Fire Station #1
- 17] Long Lost Books indie rare book store
- 18] StreeTemps private employment service for edgerunners
- 19] Medicross Preservation N.C.'s main "bodybank"
- 20] Night City DMV
- 21] Night City Today! screamsheet publisher

**22] Cleanroom secure office maintenance and Unfilled Space**

- 23] 24 Hour Cafe and Unfilled Space
- 24] SensuTours travel agency and Unfilled Space
- 25] Night City Harbormaster's Office
- 26] Unfilled Space
- 27] C. Donut Express Co. shipping company

**Shop/Stall Ideas for on the Street and in the empty buildings:**

- \*Fast-food stall with ramen, sizzling \_\_\_\_\_ on a stick, whatever...
- \*Fortune teller. Electronically-driven Tarot and I-Ching.
- \*Beer-barrel bar selling cut-rate homebrew to the Streetpunks.
- \*"Cyber-maintenance While Yu Wait"
- \*Abdul and his box o' MRAM. Cheap Mexican copies and knock-off Vend-Mods.
- \*Organized streetwalkers; your pleasure—in under an hour.
- \*Some Nomad outfit just in with fresh produce from the countryside...
- \*Quickee Acupuncture, straight from Hong Kong.
- \*A political stand representing exiled refugees, recruiting revolutionaries, a radical offshoot of the

New Federalist Party, etc.  
 \*"Deus is Now, merge with DDI today!" A techno-religious proselytizing storefront.

**Night City Strip Encounters**

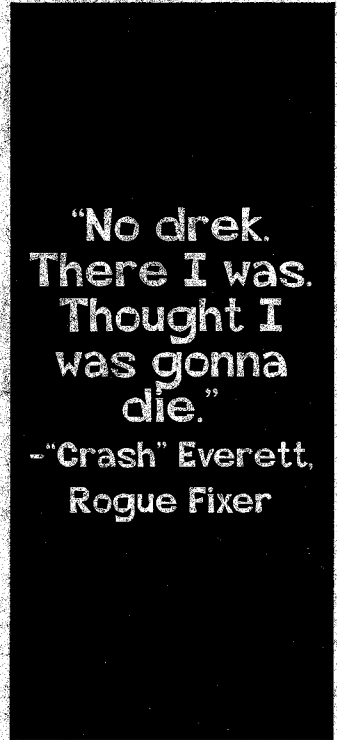
- (1) Small-Time Vendor—A low level Fixer approaches, offering to sell the Players a stolen watch, cigarettes, crappy electronics (maybe already broken), knock-off perfumes/drugs, a copy of the Watchtower, a guided tour of the city, or perhaps a book.
- (2) Sit-Down Vendor—The players pass a small table covered with goods; the owner sits with his back to a wall. The table contains numerous items, including illegally copied vid chips, religious material and incenses, the latest pamphlets on some human rights violation in another country or an assortment of children's tapes.
- (3) Argument—A driver takes a few minutes out of his busy commute to engage a city resident in a conversation concerning the merits of paying attention to the crossing signals. This "conversation" can be heard for blocks—and could turn nasty.
- (4) The Heat—A six-man foot patrol of the city's finest march past the players. When they're out in patrol numbers they must be looking for trouble; hopefully the players won't give them an excuse.
- (5) Gutter Rats—The players pass a group of small, grimy street children playing with what looks like a bloodstained cyber-foot module...
- (6) Ranting Raver—A person stops one of the players and shouts "God said Bob's going to take this city!" This nut needs a few breath mints.
- (7) Loud-mouthed Punks—A bunch of chromers leaning a building and heckle any "normal-looking" players. These chromers are far more annoying than guns or bombs.
- (8) Salesman—A mid-level Fixer calls one of the players into a side alley and offers to sell him some illegal service and/or goods. Pick from weapons, drugs, black market soft- (or cyber-) ware.
- (9) Slavehunters—A group of gangers grab an attractive young streetboy, right in front of the players. They probably intend to sell the kid to reps from the S.E. Asian Slave Circuit.
- (10) Drug War—A rival drug lord decides to off his competition; the players are unlucky enough to be nearby. Use 2,3 random thugs armed with M9s (Chromebook 1, pg.50). Due to traffic jams they plan to escape into the NCART system via nearby station.

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transportation. Pedicabs are abundant along High Street as are numerous pedestrian walkways. These covered sidewalks form a complex grid through which someone could travel the entire length of the Street and never get wet from the rain. But then there's driving. In a metropolis like Night City, driving is the longest distance between two points. Although motorcycles may be faster, most road traffic suffers from nearly continuous congestion. If it's not a traffic jam, it's a protest march, a gun battle or a broken traffic light. Many cities partially alleviate the problem by constructing Gridways—complex suspended highways that connect the entire city. Even in those cities that have Gridways, small jams are still extremely inconvenient. The only time a city resident would even think of driving a short distance is during the 4 AM traffic lull. Ironically, it precisely at these times, when the roads are less crowded, that carjacks have their most successes.

• **The Jam Culture:** In 2020, cars are designed for more than just getting you from place to place; they're also designed around the times when you're standing still. Modern auto designs take into account the growing occurrences of gridlock zones and traffic patterns that are absolutely certain to halt during periods of heavy use. Cellular phones are no longer options on standard model cars—they're standard equipment. In most cases, options range from TVs to microwaves, VRs, office equipment and porta-toilets. For many people, the automobile has become a temporary home. It's a shelter from the muck and grime of the streets outside the car door. While hesitant to break out of their automobile cocoons, the average driver will sometimes stop for a good price on a used Braindance player.

concrete. Although it is nicely maintained, the side streets around the Barbican Building are the unofficial center for illegal software selling. Ironically, the section of High Street which connects with Cadigan Ave is actually quite safe due to its proximity to the police station and constant patrols by the Silver Slash guardian gang (who happen to enjoy a 10% discount with most Strip salesmen).



"No drek.  
There I was.  
Thought I  
was gonna  
die."  
—"Crash" Everett,  
Rogue Fixer

Undoubtedly, the most marketable area of the High Street Strip is the Upper Marina area. The Upper Marina surrounds the mouth of the San Marro Bay Bridge and is the most traffic-congested delta of the entire city. In addition a small, pierlike landing underneath the bridge serves as an ad hoc open market. The City and Harbor Police tolerate the market mainly because the vendors prevent the site from becoming a permanent homeless shelter.

## Mob Rackets and the Strip

On the Strip, organized crime is as pervasive as the roaches and rats. Whatever criminal syndicate controls an area, whether it be a gang of Tong thugs in service of the Triads, or the local branch of the Mafia, it collects its profits by supplying "protection" to the local vendors. The stronger and more organized groups keep a stranglehold on the Strip. They dole out individual parcels of Strip territory in exchange for an unfair percentage of the business' profits. In some cities, such as Las Vegas, the criminal syndicate has been recognized as being the actual government. Las Vegas' Strip is highly organized, with drug dealers kept away from the Mafia's nicer casinos and prostitutes operating out of special hotels near the large convention centers. Only in rare exceptions, such as Night City, are the Strips free of complete domination by criminal groups. Far more common are the situations where decades-long balances of power allow independent vendors and operators to play the larger criminal syndicates off each other.

When an organized crime group moves into a region, they target individuals and organizations to offer their "protection." In general, organized crime groups avoid businesses owned by corporations or those that contract private security. Once under the wing of any particular syndicate, the individual streetdealers will be forced to pay a percentage "cut" of their total operation to the Mob. These charges apply to the individual no matter what they do—legal, illegal or a mixture of both. Depending on the nature of the business, the syndicate may also expect certain favors. The Yakuza usually treats its "hospitality services" (protection) as a straight business relationship, while the Colombians may declare a small cafe its regional headquarters and staff it with seven local members. These local members will expect courtesy in the form of free food, lodging and whatever else they want.



## Strip Culture

Strips are the mutts of city districts, combining any number of styles and social elements in a haphazard fashion. Many Strips incorporate sections which could rival mallplexes in their sheer volume of popular culture. Movie theaters, VRcades and Braindance parlors abound. Even more common are the trappings of counter-culture. In its simpler forms, counter-culture mentality reflects a variety of diverse tastes. On the Strip, counter-culture is just another source for sales. Many shops specialize in goods that only complete freaks (and *Cyberpunk* characters) would be interested in—things like nipple rings and bulletproof condoms. However, the true soul of the Strip is anti-culture. Keep in mind that the Strip is about commerce, and money can't be bothered by any type of objective standards or morals; if someone is willing to pay for it, it's good. In fact, some Strips have become glorified testaments to bad taste while others, almost by luck, fall into an understated film noir atmosphere. Regardless, any type of activity one could want is on sale in a store, office or alley nearby. The only exception (and a minor one at that) to the above rule are the "Wanna

Be Strips," usually located near college campuses or corporate compounds. These pseudo-Strips tend to be friendly, strictly patrolled and pre-approved clumps of shops almost always called "Something' Emporium."

## Modern Crimes for Modern Times

Wherever or whatever it is, the Strip houses certain criminal activities that could be held in few other places. Because the Strip balances illegal services and conventional goods in an atmosphere that is just safe enough for adventurous Corporate types, many moderately-priced illegal services can be made available to an audience with sufficient funds to pay for it. Obviously, the Strip also contains all the conventional criminal activities such as houses of prostitution and drug dens. In those cities where the local police are weak or totally corrupt, these activities are advertised openly and sometimes even legalized. However, the competitive spirit of the Strip has recently lead to the creation of new, more exotic criminal pastimes. The following is a selection of these modern crimes:

- **Steppin' Out:** The Strip is packed with interesting establishments. Shops and hangouts litter the sidewalks, inviting you to buy or do anything. Check out them out—you've got cheap beauty salons, body clinics, restaurants, gypsy psychics, computer centers, art studios, autobody workshops, bazaars, craft centers, flea markets, ripperdocs, warehouses, VRcades, drug labs, pushcarts, cyberware dealerships, nightclubs, pawn shops, weapon stores, bars, body banks, music stores, martial arts centers, recording studios, drug dens and caves. Whatever you're into, it's here.
- **The Pig Posse:** The Mob can be an oppressive force on the Street, and the gangs make everybody's lives miserable. But depending on where you live, there may or may not be one crew who are even worse—the police. In some cities or states, the police are so crooked and dirty that they make the gangs and the punks look friendly.
- **Ever wonder why** all these apparently lone-wolf Edgerunners clump together in four-to-six person packs during your *Cyberpunk* games? The answer is freetime herding; lifelessness is as common to the cyber-elite as it is to the quietly desperate droves of wageslaves and streetcum—we all suffer to some degree.

**PITFIGHTS** (Priority 3 crime in most areas, Priority 4 if gambling is not involved): Pit fights have been around a long time—they are events in which pairs of dogs, specially-bred fighting roosters, weasels or large city rats are placed in fighting arenas. These animals are provoked into fighting each other by use of drugs and/or abusive treatment, while the audience places bets with ringside bookies. However, the modern version of this activity is to use animals with certain cybernetic enhancements, including pain editors, carboglass teeth and sharpened alloy claw-implants.

Sentence: For proprietors and staff, 100-3000 Eb fine and/or 1-5 years Low Security Block. For audiences, 10-200 Eb fine and/or 1 week to 1 month Low Security Block.

**EXOTIC PITFIGHTS** (Priority 2 crime in New York State and by Statute in many other areas): In 2018, the Rochester Police Department raided a Monroe Avenue book store suspected of

being a front for drug trafficking. Instead, they found a secret doorway leading to a basement combat arena. Initially, the police suspected either a Pit-fighting ring or some sort of Bloodsport. Instead, they found four Exotic males, three of whom were dead. According to the case file, these individuals had been held prisoner and kept drugged until they were forced to fight each other. Bets were placed by the audience on the type of exotic that would win (the snake exotic had two-to-one odds over a bear exotic). This arrest received a lot of media attention and copy-cat offenses are expected.

Sentence: For proprietors and staff, Death. For audience (requiring minimal proof that the person knew the nature of the event), 500-10000 Eb fine and 5 months to 1 year Low Security Block or State Exile.

#### LOW IMPACT BLOODSPORTS

(Priority 5 — Priority 3 if betting is involved, legal in certain areas): Low Impact Bloodsports are those sports where death may occur, but is not the goal. This includes such favorites as Full Contact Martial Arts, Full 'Borg Wrestling, Combat Soccer, Bikergang Races and Demolition Derbys (using either cars or junked AVs). When legal, these activities are regulated to prevent fixed competitions, but the Mob tends to influence the Bloodsport scene. Participants in these sports are almost always willing. Winners take a percentage of the entire betting

pool. A good Low Impact Blood Fighter can average more than an average nomad family can make in a month. Furthermore, Bloodsport tradition dictates that a sum of money be given to the next of kin of any fighter that doesn't make it. In the eyes of the law, if the participant acts willingly (as in "not by gunpoint") he may be sanctioned in the same manner as the game's proprietor.

Sentence: For proprietor and staff, 500-10,000 Eb fine and/or 1-5 years of Mid Security Block. For the audience, 10-200 Eb fine and/or 1 day-1 week of Low Security Block.

#### HIGH IMPACT BLOODSPORTS

(Priority 2, legal only in Texas and in certain areas of Mexico and Canada): High Impact Bloodsports are any type of illegal sports-like activity which is likely or certain to result in the death of a participant. This includes Competition Knife Fighting, Monoblade Fencing, Taser Boot Kick Boxing, Land Mind Rugby and Saucer-Grenade Jai Alai. Like Low Impact Bloodsports, the participants get a percentage of the proceeds if they win and can be arrested as participants in the crime.

Sentence: For Proprietor and Staff, 5000-150,000 Eb fine and/or 10-30 years in Mid Security Block. For the audience (requires minimal proof that the person knew the nature of the event), a 50-1000 Eb fine and 5 days-3 years Low Security Block.

**GROUP VOYEURISM** (Priority 5, although it may be lower depending on who is spied upon): Group Voyeurism, also known as "Peeking Parties", is a social event where the host (often a Netrunner or Techie) electronically stalks a victim. Using numerous public security cameras or even their own remotes, the host can invade the person's privacy rights as established by the Privacy Act of 2002. Selling the resulting footage is a separate crime with an additional sentence.

Sentence: For host, 200-2000 Eb fine and/or 2 months-1 year Low Security Block plus a possible civil suit (though not likely). For Audience, 10-100 Eb fine and 1-5 days in Low Security Block.



**PERSONA TAMPERING** (Priority 2): Persona Tampering is any unauthorized alteration of another individual's personality. Commonly referred to as "brainwashing", this crime often involves the purposeful use of mind-altering drugs, induced Cyberpsychosis, and use of certain Black ICE programs such as Liche and Psychodrome. The most common convictions under this crime occur among posergang leadership, negligent Ripperdocs, underground wetware programmers and inexperienced chemists.

Sentence: 2-20 years in Mid Security Block and possible civil suits and fines.

#### PERSONA APPROPRIATION (Priority 2)

Persona Appropriation is actually the lesser in a series of crimes. Grand Persona Appropriation is a crime that applies to the possibility of virtually copying or stealing a person's mind. While no actual occurrence of this crime has ever been reported, the theoretical possibility has people very scared. The lesser version, Persona Appropriation, is designed to punish the practice of using a person's image in Virtual Realty sales (yes, it's illegal to sell VR individuals based on real people without their permission). This crime occasionally crosses with copyright infringement when the Simulation is of a famous person.

Sentence: 100-5000 Eb and/or 1 day-10 weeks Low Block Security and possible civil suits.

#### UNAUTHORIZED GENETIC OR BIOCHEMICAL MANIPULATION (Priority 2)

This crime is related to Persona Tampering, but Unauthorized Genetic or Biochemical manipulation also applies to any changes, whether mental or physical (short of death, which constitutes Murder), that are inflicted upon the victim by the other person. For example, tampering with someone's chromosomes so they prematurely age would be criminal under this category. In addition, unauthorized cloning is covered by the section. Several cases have been recorded of the use of cloning technology by unscrupulous persons who have manufactured copies of unsuspecting victims (this is possible with detailed genetic samples, which are actu-

ally rather easy to obtain). These nearly mindless clones could be used for target practice, personal entertainment and other unmentionable purposes. Note that these technologies are always heavily regulated and there may be additional fines for merely using these sciences without the proper permits and licenses.

Sentence: 1000-10,000 Eb and 1-20 years Mid Security Block.

#### CANNIBALISM (Priority 3)

With 2020's increases in population growth and overcrowding (combined with vast reductions in the standard of living), Cannibalism has become a potential problem. While the ordinary flesh-eater is some whacked-out booster, Cannibalism is becoming a sick fad among the wealthy. This crime's definition has been changed to include human flesh from cloned bodies.

Sentence: Psycho Block, Personality Adjustment or Death depending on the extent of the meal.

#### HOUND TIPPING (Priority 3 on paper, but actually Priority 2)

Hound Tipping is a crime placed in the books after several pranks were played on the Night City Police Department by local gangs including the Bozos and the Philharmonic Vampires. Hound Tipping is performed in the following manner: first, gang members commit petty crimes in front of police officers on patrol with Robohounds. Some of the gang members distract the police officers, while the other punks microwave or EMP the hound into robotic unconsciousness. Then, the gang quickly switches some of the Robohound's program modules. Once the reprogrammed, the Robohound is restarted and the punks run away. Several days later, the new programming kicks in and the hound starts reading anyone in a business suit as a cop-killer (or some other equally "humorous" scenario). It goes without saying that this prank has cost Night City and police departments around the country great embarrassment and a fair share of civil actions/bad press.

Sentence: 2000-10,000 Eb fine and/or 2-20 years High Security Block (and most certainly an instant beating

#### "Let the Rave begin"

Raves are parties formed by planned spontaneity. Often these parties start with a group of rave 'hosts' who do most of the planning. The large quantities of readily available psychedelic drugs always draw a large, chaotic crowd. However, Raves aren't all about getting high; they're about meeting people even more bizarre than yourself (which may be a challenge for some Cyberpunk characters). They're also about loud music—typical Rave music ranges from modern industrial techno to reggae. But most importantly, Raves represent total reckless freedom. A long-time Rave tradition is to hold the party on someone else's property, especially corporate property, adding the element of danger to the mix of music and drugs. The new century has produced many new variations on this theme. VRaves are the party lines of 2020; via the Net, partygoers can mingle with the hip crowd from the comfort of their own homes. No need to get dressed up. Of course, any Rave-Runner's Icon can be modified to provide complete anonymity. Unlike real-space Raves, the VRaves allow even the most straight-faced corporate to cut loose. Because of this relative safety, VRaves have a reputation of being lame. Some Netrunners claim that anything done in the Net is better than the physical world, and to prove it they will occasionally host a VRave inside a Corporation's data fortress.

• 10 Sample News Stories

- 1) "13 die in horrible ...."
- 2) "The Detroit Gladiators beat San Francisco Firehawks 15 to 7; The Firehawks' star player Ron Smith died in double overtime."
- 3) "The 5 day forecast calls for intermittent light rain with pollution indexes reaching only .09 of air quality ...."
- 4) "In financial news, Taiwan sold Que Moy Island to mainland China for 120,000,000 Eb and concessions with local water rights ...."
- 5) "Human interest story: Edith Smith won 4,500,000 Eb in the United States Bond Lottery ... In a related story, Mrs. Smith's two children were kidnapped and are being held in exchange for the winning ticket."
- 6) "The Defense Attorney Action Group claimed responsibility for the assassination of Leon Batty. As some younger viewers may not remember, Mr. Batty was convicted of inciting a massacre of 31 lawyers during the purges of 1996."
- 7) "Raven Microcyb has announced a recall for all Cyberhands in the F 24 series. Apparently, these hands tend to over compensate for gripping action. Several injuries have been credited to this problem...."
- 8) Movie review— "Dizknee's Sleeping Beauty II: The Witch Strikes Back, is yet another bourgeois exploitation of the screen to fill the empty minds of American viewers with even more unnecessary violence. Don't producers realize yet that their irresponsible use of the media is perpetrating violence among our peaceful youth!?"

continued next page

upon arrest); Night City has promised a civil suit in addition to criminal prosecutions.

## UPSIDE DOWN TOWN

The Strip is just one urban location where the players may find themselves. Although the Strip serves as an excellent setting (especially for Fixer Campaigns), *Cyberpunk* action is by no means limited to that one setting; the Edge is where you find it! A group of players might find themselves on the Street, in a corporate boardroom or even in Low Earth Orbit. However, the "classic" *Cyberpunk* setting is the concrete wilderness of the city. In these types of "classic cyberpunk" campaigns, the Referee should constantly try to paint the players an image of the modern cityscape.

## City Texture

A city is more than just a place with too many people in it. Cities have a type of "texture." Whether it's the grainy feel of the street or the sewer-like smell, every moment in the city is loaded with vivid sensory input. Corporate skyscrapers block out the sun making it seem like twilight even during the day...not that it matters, since it's almost always overcast or raining anyhow. No need for streetlights though—the extensive use of neon illuminates all but the darkest alleyways. Noise pollution has risen to the level of a science. Bars, movies and videoboards compete for your attention; if not with volume than with sounds designed to jar the listeners attention. Even the air has a frenzied feel to it.

Like the city itself, urban dwellers have their own flavor to them. The sheer density of city populations creates a learned defensiveness. Those who travel the urban pathways on a regular basis know just where to look when they walk. They know to look at others low enough so that they don't make eye contact, but

high enough to see if the person is going to suddenly change his direction. These defenses come in handy—crime, disease and the occasional cyberpsycho make city life interesting but hardly secure, unless you make it that way.

The largest percentage of any city population in 2020 is Streetscum (for a full description of citydwellers, see *Night City Sourcebook* pg. 39). While some Streetscum filter into gangs or cults, the majority of these indigents merely continue to live another day, scraping together what they can to eat. In city life, flashy cyberpunks and chromed streetpunks are rare exceptions, not the rule. Many more people are just struggling, but these mass poor have become the outcasts of the modern era. In *Cyberpunk* games, plenty of "Yonos" (poor) are always around, but a *Cyberpunk* character may not even notice their existence.

As always, Streetscum tend to congregate around ethnic-specific areas like Combat Zones and ghettos. Names like "Little [ethnic group name here]" or "The [ethnic group name here] Quarter" litter the unofficial maps of most cities. In the 20's, this trend still holds true, although overcrowding has caused these ghettos to become inflamed. In 2020, these ghettos and racial turfs can intersect and even overlap at some spots, allowing minor incidents to ignite racial tensions. Naturally, racial tensions are minor to the true *Cyberpunk* societal divide—class. Most turfs within the Combat Zone (except for those controlled by race-hate groups) are at least marginally open to all races, but if a Beaver or Corporate enters the Zone, he'd better be packing.

## TECH EFFECTS

Technology doesn't exist in a vacuum. In fact, quiet the opposite—it reshapes the world to fit its needs. A *Cyberpunk* city should not only follow this rule, but exemplify it. Cities, especially *cyberpunk* ones, literally digest new technologies and inventions. In the process, new applications and uses for the tech are found. The impacts of new

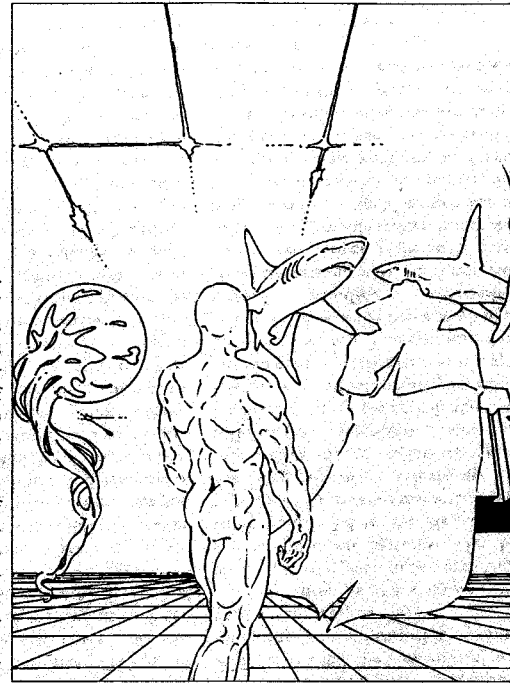
technologies on city society are described below.

## The City Never Sleeps

"It's always daytime somewhere." This expression is overused in 2020 as a rationalization for the irregularity of people's sleep schedules. Nightlife is practically an obsolete term due to the advent of such modern technologies as cheap but powerful stay-awake drugs and sleep inducer systems. Besides, with pollution the way it is, it's hard to tell the difference between night and day anyway. Fixers in particular know that action can be found any time of the day or night; biz knows no downtime. Sleep inducers (see *Chromebook I*, pg. 11) are widely marketed and relatively cheap, allowing one to get a full night's sleep in 2 hours. This device has revolutionized work schedules, and to an even greater extent, play schedules. Clubs party at full tilt all the night through, and the number of 24-hour stores has increased geometrically with each passing year.

Despite modern technology's best efforts, humans are still biologically designed to go to sleep every sixteen hours or so, rather than every 22. For this reason, numerous pharmaceutical concerns such as Biotechnica have made tremendous profits from affordable uppers and stimulants designed to promote wide-awake activity for 22 straight hours. Perhaps the most well-recognized brand name for this class of drug is Xoma Pharmaceutical's "Catch-22,"

which is available in convenient 30-capsule containers for 4 Eb each; a year's supply only costs your typically overzealous corporate weasel 48 Eb. Stylishly modern lifestyles are based on cheap consciousness and fast naps, bringing to a screeching halt the days of mallplex which closed at 10:00 PM and waiting for banks to open. However, staying awake longer is not all convenience and customer service. Sociological studies have found a correlation between exposure to darkness and psychological unrest. Much like the well-documented "light deprivation depression" which people manifest during the week-long nights of Alaska, the general temperament of 2020 society has taken a grimmer attitude thanks to its increased exposure to the night. The effects are felt all the way down to the family level, where there is no standard time for rise or rest—no morning breakfasts, no family dinners, all due to a lack of coherence in anyone's schedules.



continued from previous page

- 9) "Long Island Borough President, Casper Fortis, announced today that the Borough has developed a new bio-chemical weapon. The President vows to use the device unless NY State agrees to recognize Long Island as an independent entity."
- 10) "International Enquirer— I had Kerry Eurodync's quintuplets, says mother, and they all have lizard skin and speak in tongues."
- The Wummers of the 2019 "Tele-Media Diamond Award" Most Innovative New Shows of 2019
- 1) [107] The Mom Channel— They say you can never go home again. They were wrong! "Did you have a nice day at work? Have some chicken soup, dearest!"
- 2) [186] Johnny Silverhand TV— 24 hours a day of pure Johnny!
- 3) [94] That Crazy Guy!—a sitcom based on four friends living in a Salt Lake City apartment. One of them is Cyberpsychoic and has a bad habit of dismembering the neighbors.
- 4) [15] The Board—a TV drama based on the exciting lives of members of a small subsidiary corporation.
- 5) [95] Bulgarian Blood Boxing— World Championship.
- 6) [47] The Spiky Kids hour—a fun-filled, hour-long children's show. The show is hosted by Spiky, a cynical, overweight clown, known for his colorful ties and contrastingly dark view of the world. "How are my wage-slaves-to-be today?" & "Don't worry, by the time you're old enough to drive there won't be any air left, so you don't have to bother buying a car!"
- 7) [96] Knights of Old — an escapist show based on a nice, medieval fantasy land full of elves and dragons.

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- ...continued from previous page
- 8) [192] Nature World Exploration—Although this show relies mostly on file footage, it manages to present an interesting variety of the beauty inherent to this planet.
  - 9) [VNI] SOLO!—A free footage show based on the real life experiences of actual street samurai. Available in 3D.
  - 10) [MON2] Jeff Murphy's Talk Show, episode titled: "Men and Women whose Cyberware is possessed by the Devil."

#### • Ten Sample Advertisements

- 1) Yes, you too can now own an actual fragment of the rock that destroyed Colorado Springs!
- 2) Drink Smash, Drink Smash, Drink Smash, Drink Smash, Drink Smash, Drink Smash, Drink Smash... Drink Smash!!!!!!!
- 3) The Sleepy Acres Extramasa Center—because no one likes to see their parents suffering.
- 4) Budget Arms Auto 5—11mm of pure stopping power!!
- 5) Leave your earthy realm—visit Liana 2!
- 6) InterNet—Sure, we have a complete monopoly on the Net, but we still care!
- 7) Car commercial featuring 3 different pairs of men and women making love, a dozen black panthers running in tall grass and a river running through Northern Canada... but no shots of the car.
- 8) Kentucky Fried Mc Burger Wendy's announces its new Squirrel Roast Crossant Sandwich.
- 9) Lose weight while you sleep—the Centrifugal Force Method.
- 10) ChicShot designer ammunition from Chasports: "Who says deadly force can't be fashionable. Caseed or caseless, many colors and styles to choose from."

The fragmentation of society (diagnosed as another facet of "Future Shock") has been accelerated by this artificial separation from time, but most people still adhere to a day-night schedule, as TV ratings studies conclusively demonstrate. It is undeniably true that the majority of corporate employees still work traditional 9-to-5 hours, but their ability to work late (and thus collect overtime bonuses), catch up on paperwork at home, and generally put in extra effort has expanded, and correspondingly, corporations' potential profits in employing human beings has also expanded. Other than being able to cover more work-related ground, the common man can also play longer and thus harder. Having to sleep so little grants people much more free time—perhaps too much free time. Most clubs, bars and restaurants stay open 24 hours and see few lulls in business at any time during an evening. Larger and larger segments of many people's lives are lacking in purpose or direction, so they pointlessly waste energy in a desperate search for direction...any direction. Those who do manage to find their own direction become the true Edgerunners of *Cyberpunk* society. In fact much less than one percent of the population are street-smart, tough-talking, gun-toting, edge-running, film-noir personalities like the archetypal *Cyberpunk* player-character. The rest are either tedious corporate wage-slaves or hopeless lowlife scum. These people kill time by cultivating addictions to Braindance, VR or other drugs, diving into the depths of drunkenness, partying themselves into a frenzy, participating in no-holds-barred orgies, and committing random acts of violence.

The social malady of "Lifelessness," much like homelessness which was a serious problem in the 20th century, has ballooned into a kind of plague for the 21st century. Whether they are facing monotonous corporate jobs or wallowing in unemployment, the majority of the population suffers from having too much idle time while being over-stimulated by media images and merchandising ploys. These people feel a lack of "life" in their

existences, and seek a cure for this lifelessness in one form or another. Many people have made virtual careers out of finding things to do with their free time, such as turning to the various pointless diversions mentioned before. Only the lucky ones find some sort of niche, slowing down and developing a kind of schedule. Most bars have clique-like crowds of regulars which may or may not be comprised of close friends (the Forlorn Hope in Night City is an example of this phenomenon), and many clubs develop very long, but very specific, guest lists. This phenomenon of "Freetime Herding" is especially common among young corporates, who get together to drink and relax, but while kissing each other on the cheek are planning to stab each other in the back.

Much of the distinctive color which characterizes the *Cyberpunk* streets of 2020 is fallout from this Freetime mentality. Every night of the week, police riot squads are called out to break up illegal parties ("Raves") which have ambled onto someone's private property. Although usually harmless, these raves sometimes degenerate into mass vandalism or low-powered street rumbles. Other common street diversions like underground gambling houses, bloodsports (such as knife-fighting competitions), slamdancing, whorehouses, VRcades and gang warfare are all thriving thanks to the unrest of the modern man. Drug manufacturing is up, Body-Lotto is paying record prizes, and meat-wagons have never had a busier season.

While this unfocused chaos abounds, Fixers are hard at work in the background, fueling the frenzy and making a healthy profit. The thing which sets a Fixer apart from the rest of the crowd is that when he's partying, he's working. Mingling with people at parties and installing oneself in the social network is a day at the office for a Fixer. Fixers make the connections which keep this system going, bringing the corporates from their conapt to the streets and setting the joyboys and girls up with their johns. Without the efforts of these covert capitalists, the innumerable freetime diversions wouldn't work. Fixers are a

kind of lubricant necessary to the economic machine, making sure that the wealth and the grease are all spread around evenly. They can also be likened to human circuitry, connecting nodes with the necessary data; carrying impulses across a vast social body, like neurons in a very nervous system. In 2020, everyone is a junkie for something...sex, drugs, power, money or thrills, so everybody needs a Fixer. Fixers are your friends.

## Cordless Contact

Cellular technology has changed the communication patterns of modern society. In the old days of stationary phones, communication was tied to a particular location. If you weren't home you might miss your messages; therefore people paid even more money to get answering machines or services. But even machines and services tended to be too much of a delay for some people. As cordless phones became cheaper and smaller, the emphasis changed to the individual. Cellular communicators had evolved into truly personal technology; portable enough to be carried 22 hours a day and in any situation. No longer would someone try to catch you at home or in the office, but rather they would call you directly—where ever you are. In continuing this trend, the corporations have created the ultimate in personal communication, the cyberaudio phone splice. The popularity of these implanted telephones has created a cultural phenomenon of public mumbling. In any public place you can spot people carrying on subvocalized conversations with some distant person. By connecting cyberdecks, computers or faxes, a person can effectively carry their offices with them. This business-out-of-a-briefcase mindset allows corporate types to perform their business anywhere. Occasionally, the screamsheets report on a multi-million dollar deal completed in a building's bathroom or during a subway ride. Sociologists and psychologists have even classified this growing phenomenon of universal con-

nection as a scientific unearthing of the group subconscious; a kind of cybernetic telepathy...

## The Box

As the concept of an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) blossomed into the establishment of the world-spanning Net, many previously unrelated media were blurred together. Telephone lines, cable television, satellite broadcasting and computer networks all became components of the globe's emerging electronic highways. In 2020 the Net combines all of these services, granting universal access to almost any form of electronic media. Television, cable, pay-per-view, home shopping services, telecommunications and computer information services are all available through *one cable*. The end result of this super-integration is that it is possible to have one machine which handles all of these functions. Although there are still tons of dedicated phones, computers and TVs in 2020, the concept which has emerged as the best word in consumer media technology is The Box.

"The Box" is the common term which has been given to Personal Digital Media Universal Systems. The Box, when connected to the Net and any automated home systems performs the following functions: television, VCR, braindance player, stereo, computer, full-function telephone, answering machine, video game and virtual reality system, screamsheet printer, and home systems manager (climate control, appliances, lights, etc.). The Box would provide full access to the Net and all its services, including video-phone communication, 500+ channels (standard service; over 1000 costs extra), online video rental services, home shopping, party lines, digital radio broadcasting, virtual realities, library services, newsgroups and anything and everything else. Of course, the owner of the Box would still need to pay for all these services, but the benefit would be that they would never need to leave their home. Ever.

## Techno-Acceleration and Future Shock

One idea that sets the *Cyberpunk* genre apart from most other genres. Science Fiction (commonly manifested as Space Opera), on the other hand, often involves static or slow technological changes. At any rate, Space Opera technology usually evolves in a linear fashion, one invention leading only to another in the same field and on. The Techno-Acceleration principle is easy to see in the history of the western world as we know it. Changes in technology lead to come in interconnected spurts—once someone invented the printing press, mass media wasn't far behind; the cotton gin and steam engine were invented, and boom—you have the industrial revolution. The information age we now know is the result of computers being less than fifty years ago. Now think about the *Cyberpunk* world for a second. Nanotech, Cybernetics, AIs and Cloning—all of these new sciences compound on each other in some manner. After all, with AIs doing all the computations and automates all the building, invention is easy. One result of this accelerated technology curve is TechnoShock. Also called Future Shock by the *Cyberpunk* pioneer Alvin Toffler, TechnoShock is an irrational (but perhaps natural) response to change (particularly technological change). Future Shock results in a feeling of helplessness in the face of increasingly rapid changes in the person's living environment. This is the phenomenon which spawned the Neo-Luddite movement, Nihilism and the philosophies of Technohumanism.

• **Solos in the Net?!**: There is a small issue which needs clearing up for all *Cyberpunk* players. It seems that only Netrunners (a small percentage of the population) are able to make use of the worldwide, economically gigantic Net. Such is not the case. As *Viva From the Edge* states, "While other characters can use computers and other cyber-assisted tools, only Netrunners have the training and ability to think at the lightning-fast speeds required for cyberdeck hacking." The exclusivity of Interface lies in hacking, not in usage. For this reason, any character with Net access (through a DataTerm™, a cybernetic terminal, etc.) can use the Net for legitimate purposes. Such purposes may include:

- Interactive Television
  - Music Transmission, Subscription, and "Net Jams"
  - Newsgroups and other info services
  - Data Havens
  - Education and instruction
  - Video Games, Braindance, and VR simulation
  - Pay-per-View Movies
  - BBSs, Databases & Chat systems
  - Fax Communication and Publishing (of streamersheets, zines, books)
  - Telecommunications (Customer info, line routing, call monitoring, and other procedures)
- The idea behind the Net lies in the connection of almost every data management and retrieval system in the world. Such a network is very complicated, and using a text or menu-based interface for this system is far too difficult for most people. For this reason, the sensory illusion that is the Net was put into effect. By generating "physical" analogs for data procedures, the net allows anyone to be a passable computer op. Using the Net effectively gives anyone who lacks in automatic skills of Library Search +1, and System Knowledge +1 (not a bonus, just a base level).

The Box is still uncommon (similar to HDTV or DATs in 1993) but is rapidly growing in popularity, especially in the suburbs—it allows the locals of Beaverville to insulate their lives even further. The easy access to such concentrated mass media is drawing 2020's society into ever-greater depths of consumer culture, and has been linked to growing illiteracy rates around the world. Easily recognizable, standardized icons are replacing written communications entirely. Even more disturbing is the potential for alienation and dehumanization—face-to-face, human interaction may soon be obsolete. However, if The Box appeals to you, a typical PDMUS costs about 2,000 Eb and is about 2'x2'x1' in size; most have voice-operation as a standard feature.

## If This Is a Book About the Street, Why Are We Talking About the Net?

Because the Net is only a video screen's distance from the Street. In *Cyberpunk* information is the key to all things, whether you're the president of EBM or a common street thug. The Net represents access to all forms of data, instantly. Whether by use of a DataTerm, computer workstation, cyberdeck or telephone, almost everyone uses the Net on a regular basis. Regardless of the individual's choice of interface, the Net's icon-based system allows even beginners to easily operate basic systems and to find requested information nodes. In game terms, the virtual icon system gives every user regardless of experience a basic knowledge in the following skills: *System Knowledge* and *Library Search*. (These bonuses are the equivalent to a +1 chip and do not add to any skills that the person may already have.)

The Net is used for all kinds of communication. Virtual Conferencing allows one party to communicate instantly with others no matter where on the face of

the planet they are. Only communication outside of earth's orbit has any real lag time (two to three seconds delay), creating a slightly annoying telegraph-like conversation; "How's the weather down there? ... [stop] ... O.K. ... [stop]". The preferred method for communication with outer space is the use of Electronic Mail (usually under the trade name Message Mail—see *Night City Source Book* pg. 184), which is also used when the other party isn't available for Virtual Conferencing. Public utility word-processors are available, for a small per hour fee, to compose letters and messages later sent by E-Mail. Other public utilities include: The Yellow Base (basically, Net phone books), phone patches (allowing someone in the Net to call someone outside the Net on a cellular or fiber optic channel), World Weather Info, and Translators. The last utility is only available to people jacked into the Net. It allows near instantaneous translation of languages among individuals in the Net. The Net translates human brainwave patterns into machine language to operate in the first place; from that starting point, it's easy for the Net to interpret that data into whatever language the other party understands (Translator gives the user an effective +6 language skill, but only with others in the Net). Privately owned utilities include virtual shopping networks, VRcades and private Net schools. Of all the possible uses of the Net, actual criminal Netrunning is only a small fraction.

You don't have to be a Netrunner to find out what time your hated enemy's Maglev gets in. Much information of the Net is free access. The Net's designers wanted public data to be organized so that it would be easy to get at (although they didn't always succeed). How one uses the information is what sets the powerbrokers above the world's gonks.

## The New Industry

Perhaps the single greatest economic force to emerge from the Street is the New Industry. Using rental autolathe technologies, many clever entrepreneurs

have built street-level companies with profits large enough to attract the attention of the Corporations. Here's how it works: Street Techies are always designing interesting little trinkets that somehow make streetscum life a little easier. These designs are often made with a Computer-Aided Design And Manufacturing (CADAM) program. Then, the producer simply rents some time in any one of several robot-operated mini-factories, such as the world-famous Malorian Firearms autolathes (See *Night City Source Book* pg. 163). Autolathe factories charge reasonable rates and a standard fee for raw materials. A surcharge is added for rarer materials and permits may be required for the use of dangerous materials such as explosives or gunpowder. Since autolathes can run with only very minimal human staff, permit difficulties may be overcome with well-timed bribes. The entire process is quick—even complex machines can go from disk to final product in a few hours.

While autolathes still can't match the huge corporate factories for per-product construction, the flexibility open to the New Industrialists allows them to compensate for their higher prices by offering individualized products. Many of these New Industries are based in the Net, functioning like a BBS with dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of autolathe programs posted for sale. Users log on, credit the BBS for a design, and then take the design program to a rental autolathe. As one might imagine, many underground BBS deal in black-market CADAM programs which will produce knockoffs of copyrighted products and other illegal wares. New Industry groups such as Phoenix Armatech and Urban Technologies practice this blueprint techno-piracy.

One of the tenets of the Cyberpunk Revolution is "information wants to be free." Another buzzword of this movement is Appropriation. These two themes come together in the traffic of electronic product piracy as practiced by renegade programmers and cyberspace vandals. These particularly anti-corporate Netrunners have managed to "liberate" some of the more popular designs

for common household appliances and other mass-produced corporate products (home electronics, digital music, communications equipment— even cars). These designs are broadcast through the Net via specialized Worm programs. Eventually, some autolathe-happy New Industrialist gets hold of one of these designs and goes into business producing knockoff products. Although these replicated products are generally made with cheaper materials, they are in all other respects identical to the original product. The street industrialist doesn't have to worry about advertising, insurance or legal fees, and can easily turn a profit by piggybacking on the success of any particular design that he happens to have.

## Throw-Away Tech

They say that the future is disposable, but it doesn't end there. As the global population swells and urban centers clot with desperate consumers, mass-production and mass-marketing go into overdrive. In 2020, there are vending machines everywhere. A *Consumer Digest Magazine* survey taken in March 2019 reported that in America there is a vending machine for every seven people. This disposable society needs refills, and for the majority of people (the poor), streetside vending machines are the only reliable and affordable source of basic supplies. Cigarettes are only the beginning; cheap, 24-hour machine-printed clothes dispensers dress a good 20% of America's populace. Name-brand drinks, simulated foodstuffs and mood-booster pills can all be bought from armored, automated sales-units. Cheap chipware with a 3-day shelf life is sold from Vend-A-Mod machines in most cities, turning out simple maps and infochips at discount prices. Beer, booze, smash and "soft" drugs can also be bought from corner machines—the prices are inflated, but no questions are asked. Ammunition and cheap, disposable weapons can also be bought from vending machines. Many juviegangs are armed with plastic switchblades and polymer one-shots spat out by their neighborhood Auto-Armory unit.

• **Technoise:** The revolution in music today is Technoise. Based on early experiments with tunes generated by computers using DNA strands as sheet music, Technoise artists have rushed to find the next big "source." Using computer mixing programs, some musicians have managed to create the first sub-class of Technoise, "Overlay." Overlay programs allow the mixture of unrelated music forms into a single coherent song. Back in 2005, the Llamaboyz produced an album which mixed old favorites the Beach Boys and chanting Tibetan Monks—it went double platinum. The popularity was written off by most street musicians as corporate computer trash. It wasn't until 2017 that Technoise earned any respect among these critics. NetWerk, a German Technoise band, released their *EchoNet* chip. This music chip was a computerized compilation of random data signals from the Eurotheatre section of the Net. EBM tried for months to stop this chip's release, fearing the "echoes" might actually contain some EBM data. When the chip went public (nine months after the scheduled release date), the new sound shocked the music world. In 2020, Seppuku (a heavy metal Technoise band), wishes to claim the title of Lords of Technoise with the release of *Cold Cuts*, a Frock chip. Frock is a computer-interpreted music form which uses fractals as the basis for the rhythm section of the band's music. Mallpexs around the world are already pre-ordering. In terms of innovation, the 2020's are becoming the New Jazz Age.

• **Murphy's Algorithm:** If something can go wrong with any given technology, then eventually it will. Perfect technology only exists on TV. In a Cyberpunk world, malfunctions are ever-present. At least once per game, referees should enlighten the players about this truism. Especially when players attempt to use their equipment beyond their design parameters. Also, system failures don't always have clear-cut causes: have an elevator break down and don't tell the Techie why unless he or she makes a really good tech roll. Even then, blame dust in the circuitry. Malfunctions aren't always imperfections; rather they are often intentional, but unwise programming choices. Such as the Cleveland Emergency Dispatch System (a 2020 version of 911), where the system asks several minutes of unimportant questions before letting the caller talk to a human operator or dispatching any aid.

Candies of a thousand noxious varieties and worthless trinkets still sell well, but Music-Box machines will burn off a cheap music chip in under 50 seconds. Aspirin, heartburn-medicine, and other pharmaceuticals can also be bought 24 hours from automatons, but beware of their quality—raucous vandals and gangers sometimes mess with AutoRX supplies just for fun. Often urban predators will hang around the vicinity of a machine just to pick on its customer, but this depends on the unit's surroundings. The lobbies of corporate towers, hotels, and transit stations are all well-equipped to meet almost any short-term need with an army of autonomous sales outlets. Many "vendies" are tied into the net to convey sales information, supply requests and damage reports to their parent corporations, and many a Netrunner has run "Control Remote" on these units to cause havoc or get away with a free packet of Grape Crispies. All these vending boxes generate a lot of loose trash, which urban wind tunnels blow across the streets like a plastic tide, and some even have limited computers which bark slogans and sales pitches to pedestrian passers-by. Don't completely ignore these corporate pushers, since you never know when you might suddenly need a quick boost. Almost any product which comes from a vending machine would be hard-pressed to last more than 36 hours, but when you can just buy another one from another machine, who gives a byte? And you can't beat the prices.

### Life on the Pharm

Pharmacology (chemtech) is the promise to future generations, or so Biotechnica would have you believe. To date, the greatest chemtech success has been DiPhostamine Hydrochloride, an effective pain killer used in brand name products such as Painaway and Phosterin. This drug works on the same principals as 'dorph, but is not addictive if taken in small dosages (it's also not as strong, but will temporarily stop pain from tooth aches, headaches and small burns). Occasionally, someone takes more than the

recommended amounts, resulting in a temporary pain block. Like other pain blocks, such as 'dorph and pain editors, overuse has resulted in some serious injuries. According to urban legend, a housewife on Phosterin accidentally cut off one of her fingers and didn't notice until her husband found it in the chopped salad.

On the Street, chemtech is present in the common form of designer drugs. Pharm programs allow street chemists to synthesize innovative drugs for almost any purpose. The latest street craze is buying chemically-induced psychoses. These mental disturbances are produced by purposefully creating bio-chemical imbalances which the body usually corrects in 2-11 hours. Paranoia is the top seller, with an average cost of 100 Eb. Despite the potential for the death penalty, some Pharmacists sell cyberpsychosis (in the form of human-hatred) to already deranged boosters at about 200 Eb a shot. Other mental diseases available include Technofetishism, Futureshock, Necrophilia, Stress Syndromes, Phobias (anything from cats to phones), Cataonia, Delusions, Narcolepsy, Hyperactivity, and Multiple Personality Disorders.

Then there are the street drugs. The nasty, nerve-rotting, brain-frying candy that nobody wants to want. Some drugs are relatively harmless, being mere sleeping pills or contraceptives, but there are just as many mood alterers, psychedelics, endorphins and euphorics. Underground laboratories crank out new concoctions faster than the authorities can classify them—modern pharmacology is such a rapidly-mutating industry that the pushers and drug lords are at an advantage. Some localities have given up entirely on the war on drugs, and instead have semi-legalized all drugs under a system of "registration." Under this system, one must pay a fee to the local government to be licensed for a particular drug. Licenses cost anywhere from 10 Eb per year and up, per drug (the really bad drugs cost the most, in an attempt to legislate them out of existence). Registration systems usually include a "blanket" license of 25 Eb per year which includes alcohol, tobacco and typical medicines like aspirin

and Retin-A. The system of registration, practiced by San Francisco and Detroit (among others), brings about a whole new world of troubles with such kinks as license dodging and the near-impossible task of keeping classification up to speed with production. Experts agree that the drug problem won't be going away anytime soon.

What's worse, when you buy on the Street, you can't be totally sure of what you're getting. Sometimes a drug may have gotten mixed up with another, so you wind up buying Widow's Breath instead of Happy Pills. Other times, a drug may be tainted with some foreign substance, like particles of another drug, dirt, industrial cleaning agents, whatever. The name of the game is purity, and it's what portable drug analyzers were really made for. In game terms, whenever a character buys a supply of illegal drugs (of whatever kind) the Referee must roll a Purity Check. This is a roll which determines if the stuff you're buying is really worth the money. Since the results can have serious repercussions for the player, the referee should make this roll secretly. If the Purity Check was successful then the drugs are safe, but if the roll failed, check TABLE 1 below.

If the character buying the drugs has a portable drug analyzer with them, and it is loaded with an up-to-date database on street drugs (not always a sure thing), it will correctly identify the purity level of the drug with 95% reliability. If you don't have a drug analyzer with you, you can either test the drugs when you buy them and take your chances, or buy the drugs and them take someplace where you can have them

analyzed; in that case, if the drugs are bad you've already lost your money. Oh well.

Also remember that not all drugs are poisonous euphorics. Every once in a while a street lab comes up with a brew that's actually useful. Some of these underground drugs are of particular use to Edgerunners in general and Fixers in particular. Some samples are listed below:

**"Mr. Ex"**  
 Type: Stimulant  
 Strength: +1  
 Difficulty: 27  
 Cost: 675 Eb  
 Duration: 1D10+1 Days

Mr. Ex is a powerful stimulant which increases metabolic processes to such a level that the character may stay awake for very long periods of time. It is used primarily by busy Corporates and Netrunners, but it is gaining in popularity across the board. Its side effects include -1 to COOL for the duration of the drug's effects and psychological addiction. Mr. Ex also induces a raven-

ous case of the munchies. Users are always stuffing their faces with kibble and soyburgers. The drug causes eyes to become very red and puffy, but does not impair vision, and prolonged use of Mr. Ex can lead to extreme weight loss.

**"Twitch"**  
 Type: Euphoric  
 Difficulty: 12  
 Duration: 1D10+1 Minutes  
 Strength: +2  
 Cost: 300 Eb

Twitch is very useful for Con Men and habitual liars. The drug's euphoric effects are very slight—only a small increase in self-confidence is noticeable. However, the drug affects physical reactions and responses slightly, causing occasional facial ticks and the like (these reduce REF by 1, but it's not painful). The side effect which makes Twitch so popular is that Voice Stress Analyzers and Lie Detectors cannot be used on a person on Twitch, and Human Perception rolls against people on Twitch are at -2.



**TABLE 1.**

**Purity Check:** 1D10 lower than the Pusher's Streetdeal.  
**Optional Rule:** Another way to perform a Purity Check is to add the Pusher's Streetdeal to the buyer's LUCK, add 1D10 and compare to 15.

**Check Failed By: Drug's Purity Is:**

1-2	A Bit Low; duration of effects is reduced by 1/3rd.
3-4	Poor; duration is 1/2, STR drops by 1.
5-6	Bad; duration is 1/3rd, STR -2, roll BOD vs. 10 or be sick.
7-8	Real Bad; duration 1/3rd, STR -3, roll BOD vs. 15 or be very sick.
9-10	The Worst; drug either does nothing or causes some kind of physical or mental damage (referee's discretion).



• **"You're askin' me what it is"**

Stuffed if I know. Choomba. The bolt and action are sorta like an M-16, but this thing is bullpupped and chambered for 7mm plasticase. The magazine looks like it's adapted from an Israeli SAW, but it's too long... what did you say, 60 rounds? Man, gotta have problems feeding. The under-barrel is a 10-Gauge shotgun...but some gonk bored it out so they could fire those new Militech microgrenade shells out of it. Don't look so pleased...I'm real surprised they didn't blow themselves up. It ain't safe to mess with Mother Munnition that way. The smartchipping... hmmm... Dreck! That's the processor off an old T-14 scartgun!"

— From a conversation overheard in Friendly Frank's Autoweapons Hut, Chinatown, San Francisco.

**"Char"**

Type: Cool Booster

Strength: +3

Difficulty: 20

Cost: 500 Eb

Duration: 1D10+1 Minutes

Char is the iceman drug. It induces an inhuman calm, confidence and self-control. People on Char are imposing, authoritative and never lose their temper. The trick is that the +3 to your COOL is complemented by a -3 to your EMP, so that you are not just cool, but cold-hearted. Char has no physical side effects, but it is strongly addictive in the psychological sense; everyone likes being an ice-cool gato.

## Appropriationist Technology

From A Dissertation on the Counter-Economy (Chapter 6) by Dr. Richard M. Cameron, an Associate Professor at Harvard University:

"The street is alive and humming, a vital place that gets you what you want... if you can afford it. A lot of people can't afford the latest weapon upgrade, or the right interface, or can't afford to feed their Polynesian rifle that bizarre 6.32mm ammo, or whatever. There's also the fact that most people on the street can't afford to just throw everything away—the future is only disposable for those who can afford it to be. So the M-1 carbine that your Grandfather used may show up to haunt you, but you might not recognize it. The Street is filled with canny gunsmiths eager to reconfigure, rechamber, refine or rebuild almost anything, and a whole bunch of fools are willing to build dangerous conversions that smart Techies wouldn't touch (like rechambering 10-Gauge shotguns to fire 25mm grenades).

"This means that when one runs into 'Irregular Forces' (the military designation for almost anyone besides military or police forces, whether governmental or corporate), it is likely that the weapons they're using will be modified to their particular needs. Whether this is as simple as a laserscope or sawed-off barrel, or as sophisticated as integral silenc-

ing, a constant feed magazine, smartgun interlock with variable frequency scanning lasers and a Dynaport custom recoil compensation barrel depends entirely on who is carrying it.

"Modifications aren't the only thing, either. When people want something but can't afford it and don't want to steal it, they make their own. Probably the only thing more common on the streets than a modified gun is one that's been pieced together out of the usable bits of one or more broken weapons. Barrels get rebored for new ammo, actions and bolts get modified to handle caseless ammo, magazines are jammed or tamped to load smaller rounds. Shotguns are mounted under ordinary weapons, or SMGs are duct-taped to a shotguns to provide some extra firepower. Actions can be converted to allow full auto or burst fire. Whole weapons can be scratch-built with a minimum of effort, if you have the right facilities. Just plug the details into the autolathe, and press the ON button.

"There's also the concealed, cloak-and-dagger-style stuff. The armored briefcase with the tear gas sprayer, the watch with the dab of C-6 in the casing, the camera in a ring. How about the mirrorshades... you know, the ones with the light intensifying CCD coating and auto-stepdown features. When you don't advertise your assets, you can get away with a lot. If everyone knows you have a monowhip, then they're going to plan for it. But if it's hidden in your ring, and you rarely use it, then they may not be expecting it. And every advantage is needed when you're walking "these mean streets."

"That doesn't just go for weapons; almost anything found on the streets can be (and frequently is) modified to better suit the user. A cellular cyberdeck could be built into a nylon combat helmet for a Netrunner who does a lot of B&E jobs. Another Netrunner might have his deck built into a wrist guard, along with a 10 shot needler. A Techie's phone might also be linked into his techscanner, so he can download readings into a database for reference and comparison. Or he might be using it to link into a 'Deck to

run analytical software and a Virtual Reality, where he can perform real-time tests without actually doing any work on the actual goods until necessary.

"Of course, this kind of modified equipment is sometimes a little more difficult to repair, especially if the Techie doesn't know about the modifications. It also means that if he hasn't got just the right piece of equipment or part to fix your gear, he might get ideas about forcing something into fitting right... Hey, you just dropped it on his bench and said "Make it work," right? You never said anything about original parts. You should know better than that, or you may end up with a gun that requires the owner to whistle Dixie to get it to fire. On the other hand, you might end up with an extra +2 to your Deck's speed because of the Neocyb 9099 CPU that Techie used to replace the old CPU with. The one that stopped the bullet.

"The plain fact is that Street techies mostly work with what the corporations and the government have thrown away. This means that there is a wonderful mix of cast off equipment and weapons available to those who are willing to do some scrounging—and occasionally a little retrofitting and rebuilding. Then there is the stuff of past generations; a Beretta M92F is still a good gun (and frequently all that you can get) but rechambering it for .41AE plasticase, adding an integral laserscope and a barrel comp to help with recoil makes it a better gun... and almost unrecognizable. Many home built parts and modifications are thrown together without any concern for looks or future modifications. The only requirement is that they work (for the moment). Duct-tape and super-glue seem to be the most common bonding materials used; electronics and equipment are often patched together with no regard for safety or utility. Just because an underground gunsmith said he smartchipped your weapon doesn't mean he tested it to make sure it works under all possible conditions.

"Everything works this way. Got an incandescent light fixture, and all you can find is fluorescent tubing? No sweat—just run some contacts from the

fixture to either end of the tubes, and power it up. Maybe it won't explode.

"The future is disposable only if you let it be. Thanks to the ingenuity of underground Techies and Scavengers, the future is recycled and jury-rigged (why do you think that it's a Techie's primary skill, Choombata?). The Street makes do with what can be stolen, begged, or broken so the rich folks uptown don't want it anymore. The high-tech wizardware like railguns and lasers are still gadgets for Highriders and the army. These gizmos are just beginning to trickle down to the Street, and most of the ones on the Street now are cheap copies, powered by laser crystals adapted from mining and cutting tools. Down on the Street, a Glock-17 is still a valid weapon, even if it lacks penetration against modern armor. You use what you've got and what you're familiar with, but that doesn't mean that it's left the way it is. Smartchipping, some recoil compensation, maybe a little accurizing, and you've got a 20th century wonderline that performs right up there with the modern stuff. That's appropriationist technology, Street-style."

## TALKING THE TALK

City folks speak their own language. They have to. As mentioned before, the ghettoization of many areas leads to a city made up of many small groups who communicate in their own languages. These trends are reinforced by the reliance on gangs, local education systems and religious organizations to educate the next generation of Streetseum and urban youth. However, these individual groups are not self-sufficient and not completely isolated. When members of these ethnic quarters travel into other areas to trade, steal or purchase goods, they have to communicate with other groups; that's where Streetslang came from. At first, Streetslang across America was a class of unrelated hybrid languages indigenous to any given area. Then, the Media got hold of the idea.

• **Trademark and Copyright Infringement:**

Under the Uniform Civilian Justice Code, these type of crimes are usually considered low priority crimes (see *Protect and Serve* pg. 65). Indeed, prosecution of these types of crimes would be few and far between if it were not for the Corporation Criminal Cooperation Act of 2008. This act gives corporations the power to make arrests and gather evidence on those who infringe upon their trademarks and copyrights. The usual procedure is for the corporation to deliver their prisoner to the local authorities within 24 hours after the arrest. After turning over the suspect, the government may press either civil or criminal charges depending on the amount of evidence presented by the arresting corporation. In either a criminal or civil trial, corporate hired lawyers may serve as assistant prosecutors. In practice, many detainees show up at local police headquarters days after their initial arrest. Often, they are quite willing to give complete confessions. Occasionally, these prisoners are shipped directly to corporate property where they are arrested pursuant to the company's jurisdiction. Concerned relatives may apply for extradition. Extradition procedures as per the CCC are usually successful after a 14-18 month delay for red tape. Similar statutes have been passed to allow corporations to enforce anti-scrumming laws and prosecute the crime of impersonating a corporate official.

**New Skill: Hand Jive (INT) (1):** Hand jive is a common offshoot of Streetslang, used by many gangs and other street dwellers. Employing primarily hand signals and touch communication, Hand Jive allows completely soundless communication (while the signs are simple and direct, they should not be confused with the American version of Sign Language). With a skill of +2, you can jive many simple and popular expressions as well as express concepts like "run!" at +6 and above; most fixers will be greatly impressed by your ability (and you'll be able to understand their complements). With this skill at +9 or +10, your signs will be adopted by others as part of the language. Many individuals and groups develop their own signs, and most gangs have secret hand shakes and recognition signs unique to their sets.

**Optional Rule:** When using Streetslang in a foreign country, the Skill acts at 1/2 (rounded down) its usual level.

**Optional Language Rule: No Interpersonal Communication Skill** can be used at a level greater than the speaker's skill in that language. Note: When overseas, Streetslang and languages which share Linguistic Families (see *Cyberpunk 2020*, pg. 48) may operate at 1/2 level.

In the 'teens, TV shows began playing with Streetslang as the common language for anyone not wearing a tie. Some of these shows became extremely popular, and Streetslang soon became acceptable for leading characters too. Streetslang was "hip." As TV shows with Streetslang hit the shores of Europe, Asia and Africa, lower-class citizens seeing their own condition and struggles reflected in the Streetslang adopted it. These cultures also changed it, and sent it back to the Americas in the same way they got it—TV. Despite these formative years, the Streetslangs of different countries have taken separate paths and are increasingly influenced by their resident country's native tongue (See the *Streetslang* section, pg. 93 and *Culture and Language* Rules, pg.86-87).

Streetslang was not the first mode of communication which grew from the seamy Streets. Graffiti has been around as long as there has been spray paint, and earlier, cruder forms of written vandalism have existed since the days of the Renaissance (and before). Graffiti is as common as concrete in a modern American city. "Tags" (as Graffiti signs are called) can be found on walls, sidewalks, streetposts, trashcans, DataTerms, dead cars and inside bathrooms. Sometimes they are just meaningless scribble, but oftentimes they are saying something and that something might be important. Some Graffiti qualifies as full-blown art, while other kinds voice public sentiment against the corporations or government, and many Tags mark gang territory. Street-smart characters should know what they are looking at when they encounter Graffiti, since it might be telling them to leave before the Blood Razors eat them for dinner. Recognizing the general nature of a clump of Graffiti requires a successful *Streetwise* or *Streetdeal* roll (granting such information as "gang territory marker," "vandalism" or "art") but to accurately identify the nature and origin of the Tag requires a successful roll of *Streetdeal* or an applicable skill such as *Expert: Area Knowledge*, *Expert: Streetgangs* or *Gang Rank* (the Streetpunk role's Special Ability). So when you step out for a walk in the city, make sure you look at the walls every once in a while...

## Urban Legends

Like the campfires of older times, the Net and mass communication systems have given birth to a series of stories. Urban Legends—the new campfire stories. No one knows where these stories came from or even if they are true or not. The classic Urban Legend is the infamous "crocodiles that live in the sewers of large cities." In 2020, urban myths have become more important and more direct. In an age where VR images are indistinguishable from reality, good old down-to-earth gossip can be a lifesaver. For example, people still remember the Kibble Scare of '16 and consequently everyone knows a friend's fourth cousin who ate some kibble and had a kid with some awful disease. Other Urban Legends border on philosophy. Some examples include the widespread beliefs that God lives in the Net, President Kress is a VR simulation and Cyberware sometimes has a mind of its own. Whether or not any of these legends are true is, of course, unknown and in some cases unprovable. Very often, these street legends descend into the realm of pure rumor mill and tabloid stuff, such as the beliefs that the EEC is working with aliens to take over the world and that the Corps are sponsoring space research so that they can leave the stagnant Earth and rule it from orbit.

## IT'S A SMALLER) WORLD

In 2020, two cities separated by an ocean's distance may be better connected to each other than either are to rural areas less than forty miles away. This interconnection makes other countries interesting sites for *Cyberpunk* campaigns, like a sort of a sightseeing adventure. *Eurosource* and *Eurotour* are good sources for these types of games; additional material and rules are supplied below.



## The International Fixer: A Redundant Term

The *Cyberpunk* Fixer of 2020 knows no bounds, literally. A typical well-connected Night City Fixer's day would consist of such trivialities as calling contacts in Sweden, zapping some E-mail to near orbit, having a virtual meet in the Net with crime lords from Hong Kong and London, sending an overnight package of rare chromosomes to a medtechie acquaintance in Bonn, and doing lunch at a nice little Bistro in San Francisco. Any connection between your business and the ground beneath your feet was severed the day you were dragged into the 21st century. Travel? Long Distance? Non-issues. Your only limit is your credit limit.

## Around the World in Eighty Nanoseconds

The 21st century saw the mushrooming of information technology into a monolithic enterprise. The coalescence of the Net and the galvanization of a

mega-corporate political environment has led to a "shrinking" effect on the global community. Corporations have taken on as much, if not more, character than most sovereign countries, so that products, political agendas, philosophies and ideologies are no longer defined primarily by geography. For example, American cities and Japanese cities bear a close resemblance to each other in most ways; consider Night City and Tokyo. They are both harbor cities, centers of light industry, information and business, and they share common ties in terms of social and political systems. They have similar, if not identical, architectures (such as the arcology designs of 2010's architect Thomas Yung Chin), corporate influences (most notably Arasaka, but also Internet, WNS and WorldSat) and criminal elements (such as the Yakuza). The amount of international trade, immigration and refugees have made an ethnic hodgepodge of both cities, creating Night City's Japantown and Tokyo's all-foreigner Nintai district. The Chiba Strip and the High Street Strip are, at least visually, almost identical. The number of languages spoken in both cities is beyond counting, and the Eurodollar is their common standard currency.

**Culture Shock:** One could even draw a distinction between streetwise and corporate high-society fixers, but we have not done so in the main text for the purposes of game simplicity. But for *Cyberpunk* players who wish to really stress the differences between the corporate world and the Street, use the following rule: Corporations with their headquarters in the same country are treated as a CLOSE culture and corporations with their headquarters located in a foreign country use that country's culture, using plus one shift to the right (you can't really get worse than ALIEN).

This rule reflects the fact that corporations have become nations unto themselves. Far from a surprise, this result confirms years of predictions from economists and sociologists. In the lean years after the crash of '94, those corporations that survived reorganized and came back twice as efficient as any corporation that had preceded them. This new breed of corporation used Japanese organizational techniques coupled with American production schemes, Korean middle management and German statistical analysis for quality control. However, the real change is even more basic. Corporations have gone out of their way to create a community-based mentality. Every employee believes the company has their best interests at heart. These employees are skeptical of outsiders, especially those from competing corporations. The corporate mentality even extends to dress codes. Corporate employees wear their logos not only on their work clothes, but also their leisure wear.

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In some corporations, legal concerns over trademarks have caused the creation of hybrid languages specifically designed to eliminate common usage of competitors' copyrighted materials. Repeated use of these hybrid languages has further strengthened the corporate mentality. In fact, corporate demeanor is often carefully cultivated in their PR departments by Psychology executives, and those in the know can usually tell you what company a person works for by the slang they use. In addition, corporations often develop a pseudo language called "PC-Speak." PC-Speak is a language designed by corporate committees to avoid being insulting to any group—ever. It avoids making any value judgments, often at the expense of linguistic efficiency. For example, in PC-Speak, "Cyberpsychosis" has become "Humanity Impairment Syndrome" and "Nomads" are now "Environment Non-Specific Individuals." PC-Speak and other corporate slang are not exactly new languages so much as they are accents; they are inserted into whatever language is the corporation's standard. In game terms, players who speak the language used as the corporation's standard will be able to understand that corp's slang and PC-Speak perfectly well, but they will need a lot of patience. However, players who speak Streetslang or a language which is in the same Linguistic Family as the corporation's standard will be able to speak and understand that corp's PC-Speak at only 1/2 their skill level (rounded down) minus two skill levels.

Thanks to the evolution of the Net and universal communication standards, the global community shrank to the global village, and in 2020 it would be more accurate to refer to it as the "Global Apartment." The Net allows access to any other part of the world as if you were walking into another room. Telephones and videophones long ago made face-to-face conversations a non-issue, while pagers and portable comlinks allow anyone to get connected and STAY connected. Fax and electronic bulletin boards allow unobstructed exchange of images, stories and ideas, with online translator programs picking up any inter-lingual slack which may occur. Seemingly hyperactive courier corporations have largely replaced governmental mail systems, so that automated Sphere Courier robo-vans ensure that daily visits from the neighborhood postmaster are a thing of the past. Transit is no longer a chore or hassle, but an expected part of one's day. SSTs make "jumping the puddle" as easy as going across town, and with civilian AVs like the Mach selling well, having lunch in a different time zone is standard for those who can afford it. With full virtual reality and braindance systems readily available to the general populace, the novelty of actually GOING somewhere to have a change of scenery has become obsolete. Why spend thousands on a vacation to Bermuda when you can pay 5 Eb per hour for DPC's super-realistic *Tropical Paradise & Harem Romp* personalized vacation package? In 2020, travel and communication are the same thing; your only obstacle is the phone bill.

### When in Rome...

However, there are times when a simulation won't do. Whether you're a Corporate with an international lifestyle or an orbit-skimming Smugger, you will have to interface with different cultures and languages sometime. To simulate language differences in game play, the blanket rule is that when are communicating in another language you cannot use your interper-

sonal skills at a level higher than your language level. The interpersonal skills affected by language are: *Charismatic Leadership, Credibility, Streetdeal* (in terms of dealmaking), *Interrogation, Oratory, Interview, Leadership, Social, Persuasion & Fast Talk*, any INT skill which would involve the translation of material from or into your language (*Composition, Library Search, etc.*), *Teaching and Forgery*.

As important as knowing a language is knowing that language's corresponding culture. It is all too easy to offend someone from another culture without even knowing that one has broken any social taboos; for instance, it is decidedly unwise to order a hamburger in India, or for a woman to wear a miniskirt in Yemen. To deal with situations such as these, one uses the new INT skill of *Culture*. Culture functions much like the EMP skill *Social*, but is for use in unfamiliar cultures and is more broadly applicable. Remember that you do not have to leave the country to need a Culture skill—it could come in handy when you have to cut a deal with the local Tong in Chinatown. Culture is a skill which must be specified, exactly like the INT skill *Know Language*. In fact, the rules in the sidebar on Page 39 of the *Cyberpunk 2020* basic rules for Linguistic Families apply here as well; if you have Culture (Bantu), you also have other African cultures at 1/2 your level, rounded down. So, on top of the limitations of language, there are many times in which one will also need to make a Culture roll.

The difficulty number of the culture roll is determined by the disparity between your own culture and the culture of the other party. There are four categories into which all cultures can be grouped, and it is advised that the referee use his best judgment (and perhaps even a little research) in such matters. Using American culture as a standard against which other cultures will be judged (how typical!), the differences would break down as shown on the next page in TABLE 2.

This list is not meant to be comprehensive or definitive by any means; if

you are an anthropology major, feel free to use your own opinions. The best source for accurate inter-cultural communication rules is to try it out for yourself, but it may be difficult to find someone of Zambian heritage before your Thursday night game. So we suggest the local library, under the reference section.

Culture rules are used in specific situations where one's behavior must be checked in order to see if it is acceptable within the cultural context. An example might be a meeting between an American Corporate and a Japanese Yakuza. In this case, the American Corp would probably be trying to satisfy Japanese etiquette, but in many cases both parties might be trying to satisfy each other. Once one has decided a Culture roll is needed, the roll is put into effect is by (1) determining the difficulty number, (2) making an INT+Culture+1D10 roll, (3) checking to see if the roll was successful, in which case everything is fine, or subtracting the amount the roll was failed by (up to -6) to any subsequent skill rolls used in the dealings, such as Persuasion or Street-

deal—if the roll was failed by 7 or more, go to the Faux Pas Table. The only way to remove the negative modifiers incurred by a failed Culture roll is to make another Culture roll which succeeds by the amount you previously failed by. Sometimes it's better to just give up...

Let's say that the American corporate is meeting the Yakuza (who is blackmailing the corporate) for the first time. He must make a culture roll, and since the Japanese culture is Alien to the American culture, the corporate must roll a 20 to maintain a pleasant atmosphere. However, with his INT of 8 and his Culture (Japanese) skill of +4, the corporate must roll an 8 to keep this discussion comfortable. He rolls a 5, for a total of 17, which is 3 less than the difficulty number, so he receives a -3 penalty on all his dealings with this Yakuza, much like a failed facedown roll. If the difficulty number had been failed by 7 or more, a roll on the Faux Pas Table (TABLE 3, below) would have been required. For situations which would require a Culture roll, see the sidebar.

TABLE 2. CULTURAL SIMILARITY TABLE

SAME CULTURE (0)	SIMILAR (10)	DIFFERENT (15)	ALIEN (20)
American	Germanic	Russian	Highrider Culture
English	French	Israeli	Zulu
Australian	Finnish	Jamaican	Aboriginal
Canadian	Swedish	Columbian	Japanese

TABLE 3. FAUX PAS TABLE (1D10)

- 1-4 = Minor error of etiquette. No real damage other than the -7 to your Skill rolls.
- 5-7 = Obvious error. You come off as a simple-minded foreigner. Not only do you keep the -7 penalty to the Skill roll, but you also get an additional -1 to any further culture rolls made with the same party.
- 8-10 = Major insult! You totally blow it. In the mind of the other party, you are a barbarian who absolutely cannot be dealt with. Don't even bother making the Skill roll and add (-3) to any future Culture rolls.

Note: Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances. If the corporate had the only vial of the antidote to a poison he just put in the Yakuza's drink, and the Yakuza knew it, the meeting would go on no matter how offended the Yakuza was.

• **Optional Rule:** Referees may decide to grant their players Culture skills which match their Language skills. We suggest that the Culture skill be given at 1/2 the level of the Language, but sometimes the full level may be more appropriate (such as for natives of a foreign culture campaigning in America—but then they'll need American Culture skill)

• **Situations requiring a Culture skill roll:**

- The first encounter of the parties
- Any use of the following skills: Reputation, style, facedown, Authority, Charismatic Leadership, Credibility, Wardrobe and Style, Oratory, Streetwise, Interview, Leadership, Persuasion, Perform, Education and Gen. Knowledge, History (not really dealing with the facts, but the cultural perception of those facts), Seduction, Human Perception, Disguise and Teaching
- Any critical interaction: A fancy dinner, tense negotiation, funeral or simply saying good-bye.

• **Racism in 2020:** Obviously, racism still exists. However, it is no longer fashionable among the corporate class and high society (it's not good for business). Corporate schools stress multiculturalism and interpersonal sensitivity skills (see *PC-Speak*, pg. 85-86). On the ground level, racism varies from mere indifference between races to full blown race wars (as the residents of Boise, Idaho well remember).



# CH. 5

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: RELIGION AND POLITICS

Two things that affect the Street, but are not of the Street...

#### GODS IN THE GUTTER

As technology makes the world too diverse and complex to deal with, religion and politics have become important stabilizing factors in many people's lives. 2020's epidemic of Future Shock has lead many to seek refuge in religion. Religion allows one to order his or her life and gives the person an automatic "family" within the church. This influence is especially evident in cults and religion-oriented gangs. The other side of the same coin is, that as technology moves, even religion gets caught in the waves. Many religions of 2020 incorporate societal and technological changes, forming new dogmas. Those faiths that can't adapt often split. It is in these fissures that many of the small cults take root.

Religion in America as found within *Home of the Brave* (pg. 33) covers most of the major religions and even a few fringe groups. Included below are additional religions and some updated notes to tie some of the previously explained groups more closely to the Street.

#### Islam

Islam has spread rapidly through many American cities. However, it currently faces a serious theological question which reaches to



the base of the Muslim faith. During the Middle East Melt-down in 1997, Mecca was cut off, and many of the other important sites of Islamic worship were destroyed. One of the basic tenants of Islam is that worshipers perform (if not constrained by poor health) a pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). For the last two decades, the Hajj hasn't been possible except with expensive decontamination cautions; the Rad levels surrounding the city are still lethal. There has been much debate amongst the religious leaders of the Islamic Sects on the proper interpretation of this terrible situation. There has been talk of moving the Kaaba (the cubical building containing the black stone given to Abraham by the Angel Gabriel). But no clear-cut decision has been reached. However, the few surviving fundamentalists wandering through the irradiated sands believe that Mecca's near-destruction is a clear demonstration of God's displeasure. They swear to redouble their efforts to do what they believe will restore His faith in us. The Jihad continues...

#### Voodoo (Vudon)

Despite its reputation as mysticism, many people in the western hemisphere practice Voodoo and related religions, such as Santeria. Although Voodoo and Santeria are based in Brazil, other South American states and even Africa, its influences can be felt in modern cities around the world. These faiths are often based on concepts of a spirit world controlling various aspects of nature and humanity. Ritual dances allow believers to ascend into a state from which Voodoo spirits may enter and take over the dancer's body. Once contacted, these spirits are asked to perform services for their followers, in the form of spells. As popularized in flat-reel



films, Voodoo spells often include various curses, from mild sickness to death, along with potions for love and mind control. These spells are also often cast by use of simple animal sacrifices or the use of symbolic representations (like dolls, etc.).

Voodoo's iconistic system and relative lack of writings makes it an ideal religion in the new age of the Net. Furthermore, Voodoo practitioners see interesting parallels between their teaching and the modern world. They argue that jacking into the Net (thereby dislodging the focus of one's consciousness) is similar to the practice of channelling or accepting a spirit into one's body. Modern Voodoo curses are not cast with dolls, rather the caster merely burns a memory chip containing a VR simulation of the spell's effect.

### Buddhism



Buddhism is not a religion, philosophy or psychology. It's all three at once. Based on Eastern thought, Buddhism is a troubling concept for many Westerners since its goal is for the believer to abandon his or her sense of self in the quest for enlightenment. The basic tenets of Buddhism are: life is a never ending struggle to achieve the unachievable, contentment can only be achieved by stepping outside the concept of self, and removing one's concept of self can only be accomplished by following the eight practices (such as meditation, focusing one's attention on seeking enlightenment and purity of thought). Buddhism also preaches non-violence, hence most cyberpunks aren't Buddhists. However, many Americans are becoming Buddhists. In addition, the influx of Jainists from India and the popularity of Zen philosophy has made Buddhism a new religious trend in the U.S.

Buddhists have a fascination with the Net, which they see as an ideal setting for intense exploration of thought; their own electronic equivalent of the Buddha's tree. In 2020, many Buddhists meditate by indulging in directionless exploration of the Net. They believe that this act represents a temporary denial of self within the "oneness" of the Net.

### Satanism



Satanism is not a new religion to the U.S. It has been practiced in numerous locations for years. Satanic worship is more of a rejection of, or opposition to, Christianity than teaching of another dogma. In modern times, this faith has been espoused by both Boostergangs and Rockerboys. However, no notable central church has ever formed. Thus, most worshippers meet together in small cadres, each with their own separate variation of Satanism.



•Every known Satanist sect has declared war on the Coalition Against the Satanic Fellowship of the Gods (CASFG, see *Home of the Brave* pg. 35). While the CASFG sees "Satanism" as any type of evil, Satanists just don't like groups that take pride in trying to wipe out their hard-earned lifestyle. A player group might be caught in-between these groups, trying to stay alive or protect others. A particularly weird group could chose sides, but neither of these religions exudes authority.

### Digital Divinity



Digital Divinity Incorporated (DDI) was founded upon the idea that the Net is the first thing made by man which is infinite, and thus it is proof of mankind's own godhood: The Net is therefore the center of this godhood: it is the divinity and the nativity in one. The DDI faith preaches that interfacing with the Net is like communion with the true self; that thought in pure electronic form is a heavenly or nirvana-like experience. According to DDI, their beliefs are unlike those of any other religion, and prove all religions wrong, canceling out their external gods—it is touted as the Ragnarok of "old" religion. In fact, DDI preaches that it is the next step in man's spiritual evolution. As the physical world deteriorates, the Net is man's destiny, a sort of advanced existence. By embracing the Net now, while there is still an Earth, one accepts and knows the way of the universe—it is Godlike.

Not to be outdone by the old religions, DDI has established Deus, an entity in the Net claiming to be a divine entity. There has been trouble in paradise recently. Markus Manigault, founder of the ideas behind Digital Divinity, was ousted from the CEO position by his long-time rival Dwight Fray in a boardroom battle for control of the corporate church.

Today, Digital Divinity is a sensation, the "in vogue" religion, with its following growing every day. Since it is such a remarkably multi-faceted phenomenon, with technological, philosophical and religious implications, it is perfectly suited to its age. It is the perfect blend of spirituality and technology, wrapped in a marketable, multi-media package. DDI is based in San Francisco, and therefore its sphere of influence is primarily North America.

### Realism



The Realists are a relatively small religion based on tightly connected small churches spread among many of the more technically advanced cities. Realists have one unifying doctrine: they all believe that the reality everyone takes for granted is actually a huge, perfect Virtual Reality simulation and the "real" universe is something entirely different. Realist sects are divided on what exactly the "real" universe is, but many believe that all the

religion's members are actually gods who are bored with their never-ending existence and have created this simulation just to pass the time.

### Malism



Malism is a religion based on the concept that the world is perpetually evil. Everything is evil. Humans were born in sin, live in sin and die in sin. In Malism, there is no redemption, no savior and no afterlife. The Malist theology is steadfast in its perception of the inherent evil of this universe to the extent that they actually pray for Armageddon to end the suffering. Ironically, this religion is most widely accepted in Europe, although some splinter groups have made it to America. These sects embrace Nihilist gang members and desperate street scum.

- Religions are always great for adding another dimension to characters. A Cyberpunk doesn't have to be an atheist. Note: If you are going to use a very religious character, we suggest you do some research. After all, we couldn't possibly do justice to two thousand year-old religions in a few paragraphs. Besides, there's a lot of interesting reading on the (real) religions.
- Some other religions that aren't as popular in America, but may be of interest to Referees and players include:
  - Hinduism
  - Taoism
  - Confucianism
  - Many variations of Protestantism (Baptists, etc.)
  - New wave pseudo-religions (EST, Transmeditationist, etc.)

### THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

In a society where life seems almost completely arbitrary, some individuals seek to extend their influence by joining grassroots political groups, terrorist cadres and even the national government. These activities help a person to center themselves in a fashion similar to identifying with a particular religion. In addition, political life can bring material rewards. Political positions can mean power, fame and wealth, or just a lot of paper work. It all depends on how one plays their hand.

In 2020, the real political power is based in the states. Correspondingly, national politics is widely fragmented. The basic political party molds itself to the particular interests of its resident state. Occasionally, these individual state groups will unite with their out of state counterparts (or at least marginally similar groups) and form national political parties. These national parties attempt to use federal power to boost

er their strength in their respective home states and spread their ideologies inter-state. Also, the national political parties can do united what the individual state groups can't do alone, such as start media networks or influence Presidential policy.

The following are explanations of the largest of some three hundred American political parties; the ones that make the evening Screamsheets regularly.

### The Big Two: Republicans and Democrats

The Republicans and Democrats parties are the dinosaurs of old, still ever-present in federal issues. However, on the state level their names are usually a little less than media-labels. Republicans in some states experiment with Socialist theories, while the Democrats of Texas are staunchly anti-gun control.

### The Helix Party

The Helix Party's motto is "Superior Leadership Through Superior Genetics." This group makes no secret of its intent. The Helix party wishes to rid the U.S. of "problem" elements by the use of genetic cleansing. Rumor has it that the Helix party has offered several million dollars to the geneticist who can produce a sterilization virus that will avoid the "genetically pure." Helix defines purity not only as a function of being Caucasian, but also as meeting certain minimal physical and mental standards. Amusingly, a recent Net 54 piece exposed the fact that 71% of registered Helix supporters fail to make the grade. Helix has yet to achieve much power in the federal government, with the exception of minor positions in the National Institute of Health.

### The United Sectarrians

In 2020 America, the righteous have to stick together. No major religion has survived this modern era without some critical challenge to its dogma. God made man in his image? Cybernetics can make you better. What's worse, every possible solution could cause a fissure within the group itself. Religious leaders are constantly forced to walk a tightrope between accommodating new ideas and keeping more staunch members. Forty years ago, the Church was only up against drugs and rock 'n roll. Now, people are beginning to worship the Net. Its getting harder and harder for a few bibles to compete with electronically spun realities.

These common problems have brought former theological adversaries together in the enterprise of retaining some faith in the world. Members from over seventy different

Protestant sects, representatives from the Catholic Church, the National Hasidim College and the United Islamic League have joined in one political party, the United Sectarians. Their agenda: political subsidies for religion and certain ethical restraints on the spread of technology.

## The Neo-Monarchists

Citing the never-ending gridlock inherent to democracy, Neo-Monarchists rally around the concept of returning to a monarchy. Supported by historians, political scientists and sociologists, the Neo-Monarchists suggest that a benign monarchy can be sustained by psychological testing, genetic planning and sensitivity training. Because the group's final goal is far from being accepted by the general public, the Neo-Monarchists work towards re-establishing a strong executive branch as an intermediate step.

## The New Federalists

The New Federalists, allies of the Neo-Monarchists, wish to re-establish the sovereignty of the Federal Government. This group sees most of America's problems stemming from its lack of central decision making. They believe that with a strong centralized power, the U.S. can attain its former grandeur and reassert its influence over the rest of the world. The New Federalists recruit their members from corporate stock, usually attracting those who grew up hearing about the American 20th Century. The New Federalists have almost no support in the "free states" and only slightly more in the other states. This group's power base comes from their ground-up approach to the bureaucracy. Many New Federalists are career politicians; joining the individual agencies on the ground floor and through years of work moving into positions of power.

## The One World Party

The One World Party (also called "Simons") are the graduates of the elite business schools around the U.S. Their guiding principal is business doesn't stop at the border. Strongly internationalist and pro-corporation, this political group advocates an international free market. Simons don't make good media images; most Americans don't trust people who use words like "Kensyan Marketing Heuristics" and who actually wear bowties. However, what the One World Party lacks in votes, it makes up for in political appointments. Simons are indispensable to the modern workings of the cabinet and remaining bureaucracy, because elected officials realize it still takes people who use words like "Kensyan Marketing Heuristics" to run the ground floor operations of government.

## The Independent Party

Commonly referred to as the "People Party", the Independent Party began in 2008, during the political reorganization period. The founders of the Independent party decided the reorganization was a perfect time to drastically change the direction of the American political system. They saw the problem and saw the solution, a new national political party to end the political gridlock. Using a combination of resources, the People Party created a media and political empire to advertise their agenda. Sparing no expense, the People Party hired the brightest stars and media personalities to act as political Facemen. However, they quickly found out that while the public may allow their problems to be reduced to sound bytes, solutions must have more meaning. The votes are still coming in, but with each election the party is being increasingly challenged to produce results. The Independent Party is now suffering from a schism similar to what it had previously caused in the Republican and Democratic Parties. In the ensuing chaos, the Party has been largely paralyzed.

## The Constitutionalists

The Constitutionalists are radical libertarians willing to fight and die for individual freedoms and self-autonomy. This party sometimes acts as the voice for existing free states and encourages other states to take the same route. The Constitutionalists' name is not a reference to the suspended federal charter. It is a nickname that the group earned by its continuing practice of helping or forcing states to change their state constitutions by incorporating certain protections for individuals. This group has been known to start actual armed rebellions against state legislatures that don't cooperate. These practices put the Constitutionalists at odds with the powerful, corporate-backed One World Party and the federal government itself.

Critics of this party point to their open-ended protection of civil liberties. For example, some Constitutionalists want to make all information in the Net public access, which would destroy all of its commercial value. They also want unfettered access to cyberware (cyberpsychosis notwithstanding).

## The Humanity Party

The Humanity Party is the closest thing to a party for the homeless there has ever been. It hasn't really won any major victories, but in the political world it's known as a perpetual photo-op. Just about any political party can temporarily boost its popularity ratings by appointing a Humanity member Dog Catcher. Despite these failings, the Humanity Party does occasionally manage to squeak some supplies down to Nomad families in need.

## Gaia's Guardians

Founded by the survivors of the Two Year Agriwar (from 1994-1996, the Corps clashed with conservationists for control of protected lands), this group is fiercely protective of the environment. They have connections with Europe's 3000 and other "green" groups throughout America. This group is so radical that its political section is considered the fringe group. Openly supportive of Eco-terrorism, Gaia's Guardians constantly battle with the One World Party. Their greatest sphere of influence is the Free State of Northern California.

## The Vanguard of the Protectorate

The Vanguard is the strongest of the Communist political parties drawing partial support from the Wyoming Senators. The Vanguard has had little success pushing its agenda: conversion of the U.S. to a Communist political, economic and social system. Instead, the Vanguard is a constant dissenter. Any elected member of this party given a chance to speak turns a simple introduction into a twenty minute speech on the faults of capitalism. Reminiscent of the Russians at the height of the Cold War, the Vanguard often uses KCB-style intimidation techniques. These forty-year-old methods are seriously outdated and often result in the unopposed arrest of the participating members.

## APPENDIX B: REFERENCE MATERIAL

Below is a partial list of sources for Fixers, the Street, and other things from the Wildside.

### Films & TV

*The Fixer*, *Catch 22*, *Operation Petticoat*, *The Third Man*, *Lethal Weapon 2* (for Joe Pesci), *Goodfellas* (for Mobsters), the *Godfather* series (for Mobsters), *Casablanca* (for Owners), *Wall Street* (for Factors), *Deep Space Nine* (for the character Quark, a Fixer through and through), *Other People's Money* (for Factors), *the Crichtons* (for Con Men), *the Sting* (for Con Men), *Sneakers* (for Prowlers), *Dr. Detroit* (for Managers/Agents), *Reservoir Dogs* (for Mobsters). Most of John Woo's Hong Kong Gangster films have a Fixer as main or supporting character, with plots involving deals gone sour (and what to do about it).

### Novels & Comics

The first few chapters of *Neuromancer*, *Hardwired*, the 'When Gravity Falls' series, Clavell's *King Rat*, *Alongside Night* (for the Agoras), *Crygender*, *Crying Freeman* (a translated Japanese comic), *Sanctuary* (another translated manga).

## APPENDIX C: STREETSLANG

Cyberpunks live in cynical times. The influence of internationalism and the pervasion of technology in all facets of everyday life have created new expressions for new ideas. Foreign word technical jargon and general callousness are the earmarks of 2020's slang.

<b>2020 Hindsight Alien</b>	The wise act of watching your back. Derogatory earther term for someone who lives in space (a highrider).
<b>Bennie Boga</b>	An out-of-towner (see Gajjin). Vogue, that which is in-fashion (from the Spanish).
<b>Bourgie or Bourgy</b>	Common, low class (adj., from bourgeoisie).
<b>Brain Potato</b>	A Braindance addict.
<b>Bridge &amp; Tunnel Crowd</b>	Commuters.
<b>Chop</b>	A credchip.
<b>Chopping</b>	The process of cracking a stolen credchip.
<b>Chunking</b>	Eating on the run, eating as a secondary activity.
<b>Corpse</b>	A Corporate, an executive, a CORPORate Sleaziness Expert.
<b>Culture-Vulture</b>	A Media.
<b>CYA</b>	Used as and sounds like "see ya," stands for "Cover Your Ass."
<b>Cylon</b>	Corporate security officers.
<b>Deckhead</b>	A Netrunner.
<b>Dirty</b>	Low-tech (derogatory)—pencils, paper, walking, etc.
<b>Downtime</b>	Free time, time off the job (also Freetime and Passtime).
<b>Doughboy/girl</b>	Someone who is wearing too much armor (an SP20 overcoat in July).
<b>Draga</b>	Expensive (from the Hungarian).
<b>Edgezone</b>	A strip, a gray area, an area of potential coolness; Dinford's Edgezone Hypothesis defines an Edgezone as the area between two other areas that touch.
<b>Facemman</b>	A sub-Fixer in the employ of a boss-Fixer, supporting the boss' network.
<b>Fodder</b>	Fixer term for Solos.
<b>Gajjin</b>	Derogatory term for an alien, and outsider (from the Japanese).
<b>Gato</b>	A smooth operator, a cool person — also a Fixer (from the Spanish).
<b>Gewalt</b>	Violence (from the German).
<b>Gibson</b>	Someone who tells the future, a psychic.
<b>Giri</b>	Honor, duty, obligation (from the Japanese).
<b>Gomi</b>	Junk (from the Japanese).
<b>Gonk</b>	An idiot, fool, schmuck.
<b>Hard</b>	A flattering term, like cool, hip, def, tough, etc.

- Indexed** Having cyberpsychosis — also, being obsessed with the Net.
- Found-Tipping** Popular street practice of ambushing and reprogramming police robohounds.
- Indie** Independent, underground, self-employed.
- Info Bro** An information broker.
- Jack** Money (see **Scratch**)
- Jeptoid** Thief, Prowler.
- Metalhead** Someone whose whole body is mechanical — a Full 'Borg.
- Mob (the)** Organized crime, any organized crime syndicate.
- Mr. Who** Also "The Who," a name for an employer or person of higher authority.
- Mushi** Computer glitch (from the Japanese for "bug").
- Yeh?** An expression which means, "Right?" (from the Japanese).
- Organitskaya** The Russian Mob.
- Paranoid** Someone who has all the facts.
- Porky** Someone who loves or collects weapons (from "porcupine").
- Proles** The lower class, streetscum.
- Ram** Personality (from the computer jargon, RAM).
- Recycling** Environment-friendly act of killing someone and taking the corpse to a body bank.
- Reality Junkies** Addicts of Virtual Reality, Braindance, the Net, or video games.
- Simbo** A gun-toting sex kitten (a rambo/bimbo).
- Sardine** A Powered Armor Trooper.
- Scratch** Money (see **Jack**).
- Skeleton** All the collected electronic records kept on a person; their electronic identity.
- Straphangers** Commuters.
- Swoluch** Someone without honor, without *Giri*, a bastard (from the Russian).
- The Metro** The underground.
- Tip** A token credchip.
- Tin Can** A suit of Powered Armor.
- Throwbacks** Exotics.
- Tono** A person who is scum, lowlife (from the Korean, *Yonomosaki*).
- Vidiot** A Virtual Reality or video game addict.
- VRcade** Virtual Reality, Braindance, and vid-game arcade or parlor.

## APPENDIX D: ATMOSPHERE TABLES

Chromed nights and neon lights, that's what good Cyberpunk games are made of...

*Cyberpunk* is a unique genre. It is not just guys with guns who happen to have parts of their bodies replaced with cybernetics. It's a mood...an attitude. In a good game, both the ref-

eree and the players are in the *Cyberpunk* mind set. Atmosphere is the key. As a Referee, Atmosphere will help you and your players get into this attitude. The List is by no means completely comprehensive and as always the Referee's imagination should guide the game.

- (1) Setup: (Describe this list to the players at the beginning of the game).
  - Date (Year, Month, Date, Day of the Week, Time (at beginning), Weather.)
  - Broad Location (the Strip\*, A city—perhaps, specify State, the Combat Zone, the geographical area when in other, less familiar countries )
- (2) Getting Between the Scenes: (When interesting or the trip is relatively long, describe the following:)
  - Mode of transportation (Cab, Planes, driving etc.)
  - Elapse or changes in the Setup
  - Random Encounters\*
  - Problems that may arise from transportation— Traffic\*, Breakdowns\*, Random Events\*

- (3) The Scenes: (Describe to players at every new important location or where necessary)
  - Any changes in the Setup
  - SIGHT
    - More Specific location descriptions. If indoors, describe dimensions, decor and occupants. If in the City, describe Video Screens & TVs\*, Genre Atmosphere\*, Cultural landmarks (Churches in religious areas, etc.).
    - City People, Random Junk\*, etc.
    - Other atmosphere may be necessary depending on the location (for example, desert — sand and lots of sunlight or the sewers — muck up to your waist, little visible light except through grates and man-holes, etc.).
    - Cybervision (seeing beyond the normal senses due to cyber-enhancements)

- SMELL**
  - Any particularly strong smells (Sewers, Dead People, Rotten Foods, etc.)
- HEARING**
  - Noise: Random Noise generator\*
  - Music (Technoise\*)
  - Differences in Language (or dialects), Culture\*, etc.
  - Cyberaudio (hearing beyond the normal audio range of humans due to enhancements)

- TASTE**
  - Distinguish between kibble, scop and real food. (If you do this more often, players will actually try and buy real food)
- FEELING**
  - Exhaustion, nervous shakes, alcohol/drug-induced reactions, Claustrophobia, the "denseness" and quality of the air, etc.

\* Indicates that the subject material is explicitly covered within *Wildside*.

### The Urban Milieu

Below is a list of elements of modern life that a *Cyberpunk* character will encounter while in a city, particularly while on The Strip.

1. Neon— In Cyberpunk, you just can't have too many neon lights.
2. Solar panels—On every roof and windowsill, even on car roofs.
3. Steam—Billowing from rooftop vents and rising from grates in the street (or any other type of obfuscation, such as fog, cigarette smoke or smog).
4. Video screens—Advertising boards, commercial airships, computer screens and TVs everywhere.
5. Claustrophobia—Taking the form of crowds, sleeping coffins and traffic.
6. Internationalism—Everything comes from somewhere, why not somewhere else?
7. Brand Names—It's a corporate world and everything is copyrighted. New names are becoming increasingly scarce as ideas are recycled for the umpteenth time. 'I Can't Believe Its Not Fruit Juice!™'
8. Squalor—From dirt to grease, rust, or garbage, and those who have to live in it. Cyberpunk ain't tidy.
9. Hyperactivity—Focused and unfocused energy formed from desperation, always one nanosecond away from lashing out.
10. Technology—"It's the technology, stupid!" That's been our motto.

### Scraping the Bottom of the Barrel

Below is a quick random chart of junk or garbage a cyberpunk character might encounter—this stuff gets in everything, from cracks in the sidewalks to the glove compartment of your car.

1. A small TV with the screen smashed in.
2. A half eaten bag of Kibble.
3. A soda can
4. Used drug paraphernalia
5. A corpse
6. A discarded screamsheet.
7. A few old brass cartridge casings.
8. A fast food wrapper.
9. A wad of chewing gun.
10. A burnt out data chip.

### A Hot Night in the City Tonight

Here's a list (or a random table if you want) of things that can happen to a city which may either mess up things for the players or give them a great opportunity at something.

1. Riot, Protests or Rants
2. Really Bad Weather— such as Monsoons, Thunderstorms, Earthquakes, and Tornadoes.
3. Big Fires
4. Parades (Arasaka Appreciation Day!?)
5. Power outages and mass public technology failures (perhaps a section of the Net, god forbid!).
6. Spontaneous concerts or demonstrations
7. Drag Races— Usually at night, but one never knows...
8. Gang recruitment drives and raves
9. Corporation-sponsored events (Large street demos of new products and even an occasional hand-out or sneak preview)
10. Street performances and Soap-Box Orators

### Things That Go Bump in the Night City

Use this random noise generator any time the action gets slow; it's designed to depict one of the more annoying facets of city life. Wait for one of the players to start talking to another, and then abruptly interrupt him with...

1. "Vroom!!!!" An AV passes overhead.
2. "Honk! HONK!!! Screeech - Crash!" Player's witness a nearby traffic accident.
3. "Meow - Clatter!" Alley cats foraging around in some trash cans.
4. "Bang, Bang, Bang!" A drive by shooting off in the distance.
5. "Aaaaaaaa ..." Someone falling off a building, either from jumping or being pushed.
6. "Eeeeeeeek! Help, Help!" Someone in distress, yelling loudly.
7. "@\$\*%#&!!" An argument between two street vendors — the volume and cursing knows no bounds.
8. "Boom-Shaka-Laka-Boom" A nearby chromer with a suitcase-sized boom box.
9. "Ahwooooo ... Ahwoooo ..." A police car whines by.
10. "THE JETSETTER EXECUTIVE BRIEFCASE from ARASAKA...CARRY OUT YOUR BUSINESS WITH STYLE AND SECURITY ..." A videoboard advertisement with audio on maximum.