



Public opinion fears Big Brother may be about to make a comeback

"Once you've got control of someone's mind, you can open it up like a sponge and pour in anything you want"

er BOOK
Sarah Dunn
...activity, dollars

interwired

WORLD GUIDE; 2058

2nd Edition

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Dave Phelan
Katie Player
Tracey Fleming
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...June date

beta mMLIX

mMLIX Version 2.0 beta

This is the background to the *interwised* cyberpunk world. The first edition of this handbook was entitled MMLV1, and was issued in 1993 for our first event, 'Opening Nite at the Nosferatu'. Since then, much has changed, and there are three years of 'history' to include.

Some of the chapters of the original document remain intact, while others have been substantially revised. None of the information in the original edition is wrong. It is just that we feel it is no longer relevant to understanding the background of the *interwised* campaign. Please feel free to refer to your original edition, if you have one, but please don't feel left out if you don't. We don't think you're missing anything important.

Finally, this is a *beta* version of the *interwised* background guide. Please feel free to inform us of any bugs, problems, or potential improvements.

Thanks,
the *interwised* referees

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mMLIX

The *interwised*
background

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A History Lesson.

Timeline

- 1993 - Then
- 1995 - Microsoft dominates software industry
- 1996 - Internet hype in full swing
- 1997 - The Year of Terror
- 1999 - Plex formed from a number of smaller multinationals
- 2000 - Lotus, Intel & Microsoft merge into UM
- 2001 - Charles III crowned
- 2003 - First public HDTV broadcasts
- 2004 - Fuller Domes Project commenced in UK
- President Schwarzeneger elected in US
- 2005 - The rise of the Zaibatsus
- 2006 - Schwarzeneger opens first MetroPlex in Boston
- 2007 - The year of the Domino
- 2008 - Plexification starts
- President Schwarzeneger re-elected
- 2010 - First public Tri-D broadcasts
- 2012 - President Schwarzeneger re-elected for third term
- 2013 - BT and AT&T merge into AT&T-Concert, the biggest global telecoms company
- 2014 - Middle Eastern 'brushfire' wars erupt into full blown combat, US fails to intervene
- 2015 - The second Oil Crisis
- 2016 - Henry IX crowned
- US constitution suspended
- Plex franchises take over many functions of local or state government
- 2032 - Plexification of Britain complete
- 2031 - First public Sim/Stim™ broadcasts
- 2036 - First Plexcarts available
- 2037 - First Replicant sold
- 2038 - The first Orbital construction commences
- 2048 - Richard IV crowned
- 2050 - Sim/Stim carts overtake all other media sales (by value)
- 2056 - R2tech dies,
- Mexico nuked
- 2057 - 'Red Plague' devastates Luna Colonies, and spreads to Earth
- Camelot theme park opens in Cornwall.
- Sheffield BFA base destroyed by mass driver
- 2058 - Cyber Registration Bill passed
- BFA distributes plague suppressant to SINless
- "The Brown Out"
- Plex Space capture Luna
- 2059 - Now

The Year of Terror

"Judgement Day".

1997 was the beginning of the end. Predicted by seers and fakirs (and maybe even Nostradamus) as the year the world was due to end, the Nineties Pre-Millennial Tension came to a head. Every fool with a divine or insane cause took to the streets, and the hysteria simply grew and grew.

Terrorists of every political or religious belief took the opportunity granted by the burgeoning hysteria to fan the flames of their just causes, and thousands of people died across Europe and the USA in bomb attacks.

Free Love For LA (FLFL) caused major panic across California when it successfully dumped LSD into the LA water supply. The overnight death totals reached 7500 before the police succumbed and the National Guard were called in.

Governments reeled under the onslaught. Each new day seemed to bring a new radical faction with wild demands and 30 kilos of Semtex to back it up. Transatlantic air travel all but ceased. Virgin Airlines went under * and BFA barely survived.

Matters came to a head in September, when the Klan threatened to explode a home-made nuclear device on the top of the Empire State Building unless their demands to limit voting rights to white male landowners were met. Popular opinion called for a witch-hunt, however the President floundered in indecision and contradictory advice. He delayed

mmlix - the interwired background

until three hours before the deadline, requested an extension, was granted it, and three hours later, the Manhattan skyline exploded in fire and death.

World opinion of the US slumped as it was shown to be a "paper tiger". Crippled by the failure of its highest office, and the loss of its second capital, the USA swiftly became the whipping boy of any group with a gun and a cause. In a state of shock, world governments began to clamp down on their citizens, with harder laws and tighter policing. And so the slippery slide to the future had begun.

Curiously enough, the Millennium passed if not quietly, then at least without major incident. The world awoke on January 1 2000, and looked at the mess from the night before. No angels, no Second Coming, no tidal waves and earthquakes, no end-of-it-all. So the world dumped the rubbish in the garden, and went back to sleep. Little did it know what else was in store...

* However Virgin later sued the US and British Governments in American courts, for negligence in allowing the situation to develop as it had. The settlement was astronomical, a mere drop in the US budget deficit, but bankrupting for the British economy. Desperate for cash, the British government did a deal: Virgin got the BBC, and the Exchequer took the US administration's dollars. And so the Branson Broadcasting Company was born.

Ecollapse

The rising of the sea, the falling of the sky.

In the early years of the Twenty-first Century, the real effects of the ravages vested upon the Earth's ecosystem were felt. An increasing incidence of skin cancer and sterility caused by the depletion of the ozone layer was felt most strongly in the temperate and polar regions. Global warming raced beyond the predicted limits, as the natural feedback mechanisms stuttered and failed. The sea level rose by as much as two metres in the period 1980-2035, flooding many lowland areas. In South America, the Amazon Basin was devastated through exploitation and ecological damage. In all, 85% of tropical rainforests extant at the turn of the century were no longer in existence by 2043. In Europe, the low countries were devastated, and in Britain, many coastal areas were lost to the encroaching seas.

The British Coalition government, formed of Labour and Conservative parties desperate to maintain their hold on power against the growing Green, Anarchist and Luddite movements, instituted emergency measures. The London flood barrier was permanently closed, and the borders of the capital reinforced, causing the flooding of many areas of Kent and Essex. To counter the growing threat of Ultra-Violet radiation, an ambitious (and financially crippling) program of protection was embarked upon. The Fuller Domes Project envisaged building huge U-V proof domes over all major cities. The central parts of London were the first to be covered, amidst great outrage from other cities. The great Tyneside conurbation was also completed before funding ran out. Partially domed were Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham. Certain richer areas in the south invested in their own protective measures in the disastrous years that followed.

Scottish and Welsh national parties protested, winning election after election in the "provinces", but the "British" government refused to acknowledge any rights to devolution or secession. The seeds of dissension were being sown.

The Domino Effect

The Single Market topples

At the start of the 21st century, world governments spiralled further into total collapse. A failing ecosystem and decades of trade war between the power blocks had taken their toll. As the domino effect caused the economies of the US, CIS, Pan-Afrique League and China to teeter, smaller nations suffering worst of all. Britain was caught in the chain of Euro-catastrophy as first the EC, and then the member states went under. Operating out of the Pacific Rim, megacorporations stepped into the power gap. These Zaibatsus offered financial and management aid to the economies their global markets had crippled.

Plexification

"Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves..."

Plexcorp was formed in 1999 from a number of "smaller" global enterprises. With a mission statement to "provide all possible leisure services at low cost and best quality, to all customers" and a vision to "become the most successful entertainment and retail group in the world", Plexcorp was unlike any company the world had ever seen before.

Jared Matthews, the company chairman, was a remarkable man. Gifted with a unique ability - to find a new slant on things, to get around problems, to innovate laterally. Plex decided that the best way to win and keep dominance in a

market, was to own it, and in the entertainment and retail world, that meant you had to own the consumers.

Taking an economically dangerous step, Plex formed a global division whose prime responsibility was to offer governments "in difficulties" financial and managerial "help". Whether any of these difficulties were caused by the Plex in the first place is now academic. In Britain, Plex UK first offered the British government financial assistance in 2008, following the government's near bankruptcy over the aborted Fuller Domes Project.

Over the next two years, further financial assistance from the Plex, funded by mass marketing in Britain of Plex products, was supplemented by managerial aid. Soon Plex UK executives were entrenched at all levels of government, and little by little, the political infrastructure of the country was privatised.

Plexmalls started to appear at major conurbations, and inner-city funding was diverted to build and improve them. Housing was cheap, but still unaffordable for the low paid and unemployed, who watched their environment deteriorate as the Plex creamed off the profits.

By 2032 the Plexification of Britain was complete. The government was no more than a Plex puppet, retained because it was too inconsequential to remove, and useful, as it was responsible for those parts of the country that the Plex could not profit from. The monarchy had been a pointless anachronism since the death of Elizabeth II in 2001, and the Plex let it continue as a bizarre "real-life soap opera" until it formalised a lucrative deal with Richard IV in 2048.

Today, most major conurbations are Plexmalls providing all necessary goods and services to their captive market. The Plex controls the lives of the majority of the populace through the media, advertising and the supply chain. You either 'live in the megaPlex or don't live at all'. Those who rebel against the mediocrity of their lives, or who are born 'SINless' - without a Single Identification Number - reside in the no-man's land of the 'burbs and the housing projects. Much of the outskirts of major cities is unchanged from the late 1980s, although in a much worse state of repair.

Britain is no more. Welcome to Plex UK.

The Recent Past

"Fiddling While Gaia Burns"

The past few years have been problematic for Plexcorp. Things started to fall apart in 2054-55, when the darling of the Sim/Stim circuit, Aztech, started to flex her contractually-free wings. Recording was halted while she unexpectedly disappeared for weeks at a time. Fannish rumours about liaisons between her and other media celebrities didn't quite ring true. 'Terrorist' attacks on vital Plex installations were at an all-time-high, and numerous 'subversive' groups were springing up from all sides.

Aztech returned to the fold, and commenced recording what was regarded as her spectacular magnum opus, "A Night in Chiba". Then, disaster struck. Aztech, who had been the popular face of the Plex to billions of consumers, was allegedly slain when a spectacular fireball enveloped her trailer. The Plex media bandwagon went into overload, with suicidal fans throwing themselves off buildings, and Plex executives appearing on all media appealing for calm. Most of the rioting was not reported. Sales of Aztech stim cartridges rocketed.

Shortly thereafter, global events took a turn for the worst. Parties unknown unleashed a full nuclear strike on Mexico. The Plex claimed it was the BFA, a so-called Ecoterrorist group, while the 'subversives' claimed it was the Plex. Millions of people died in horrific circumstances. There was no outcry. There were no reprisals. The culprits were never found. Curiously enough, a large part of the (previously) surviving Mexican rain forest had been owned by Aztech.

Globally, the affects of this strike are still being felt today. For months radioactive fallout rained down over Southern America and the former United States. Thousands of survivors fled central America, forming a radiation-burnt convoy travelling north. The environmental damage was severe. The last surviving major tracts of old-growth rainforest were laid waste. The whole globe suffered increased levels of radioactivity for years, with Northern Europe picking up more than it's fair share on the Trade Winds.

The Rise of the Plague

Worse was to happen in 2057. A strange virus started attacking the replicants and other 'artificial persons' who made up the majority of the Independent Confederated Lunar Colonies. This virus was fatal within weeks, causing horrific scenes of death throughout the tunnels and residences of the colonies. Pure bred humans seemed immune. Plex put a blockade on all flights to Luna until the situation was dealt with.

Somehow, and nobody knows how, the plague found its way to Earth. Plex called it the 'Replicant Plague', and for a while it seemed to be so. Then the number of deaths of so-called rogue replicants continued to rise beyond all reasonable limits, and it was realised that the disease was not so selective. As people crashed and bled out throughout the world, it became known as 'The Red Plague'.

Tens of thousands of people died before the cause of the plague was discovered, and it took a hero to find a way of stopping the disease. Johnny Helix, geneticist extraordinaire, synthesised an inhibitor to prevent the plague becoming active in a person's system. The plague was airborne, and highly infectious, but only fatal when a healthy immune system attempted to remove it from the body.

In short order, the BFA informed the streets of the planet how to synthesise the suppressant, and began shipping synthesisers to back street clinics. With the plague everywhere, the need for suppressant was constant - one dose was required every four hours, and a batch only had a shelf life of a month.

Today, the Plex have still not officially recognised the non-replicant nature of the plague, and cases amongst its immunologically-weaker employees and customers are few. But it still kills, and no cure has been found. The demand for suppressant exceeds the supply by a factor of 2 to 1, so many of the poorest continue to suffer a slow and agonising death. The origins of the plague are as yet unknown.

"The Brown Out"

The Truth is Out There. Way Out There

April 2058 saw one of the greatest blows ever to strike Plexcorp. For a period of a number of hours, virtually all power was lost to the Western hemisphere. From Delhi to San Francisco half the globe was in darkness, and chaos reigned supreme. It is still unknown what caused the failure of multiple independent power sources, or what took Plex (and its competitors) so long to restore the power. What is known is the death toll. Millions of people died across half the planet, killed in rioting, equipment failure, or during the clean up operation. Many of the poorest perished, but many Plex citizens died too. And everyone is scared it will happen again...

Later in 2058 came scanty news of the long-quarantined Luna colonies. With thanks to Plex science, the plague had apparently been brought under control, and a grateful Lunar populace had returned to the fold. A few curious souls maintained that the colonists on Luna were now all Plex citizens, the original colonists having either died of the red plague, or been slaughtered by a Plex invasion force. The truth of these tales remains uncertain.

It is now 2059. There's only one way out. In a box.

Get used to it.

The State of the Union

Politics

All is not well in Plex UK. The British Free Army is increasing its activity. Since they deprived a large proportion of London's populace of drinking water by destroying the desalination plants on the South Coast, the Plex has started to consider them a major threat. Every day dozens of disaffected youths flee the horrors of the projects to join the BFA in the wilds of Wales, Yorkshire and Scotland. As yet, they are but a thorn in the side of the Plex, but the wound is turning septic, and starting to hurt.

Plex increasingly blames any unfortunate accident, or random gang activity on the BFA. While the loyal citizens of Plex UK believe every word, the SINless know better. The BFA sponsors and organises soup kitchens, and increasingly supplies the plague suppressant free to those in need. The SINless are finally starting to regard them as heroes, and the Plex appears to view them as more of a threat than ever.

The disaffected youth of the SINless populace, with little education, and absolutely no prospects or rights, band together in increasingly violent gangs. Some, like the various neo-nazi factions, have always been with us, while others, such as the bizarre Clowns, are wild mutations of street-teen culture. 'Vanity' gangs are de rigueur, with such groups as the Stormtroopers, the Easy jocks, and the Thotters.

Others group in poli-clubs, loosely related to the political parties of the 20th century. Now UKGov is a wholly owned subsidiary of Plex UK, democracy is more of a sham than ever - you can vote for the government, but who you vote for makes no difference to who wins and forms parliament, and that parliament has no power to affect anything anyway. I merely acts upon the wishes of Plex executives. Mostly the poli-clubs just bottle it out with themselves and the gangs in the war zones around the outskirts of the major cities.

In the home the nuclear family is an anachronism, maintained only within the secure bounds of the corporate arcologies. In Britain, marriage is only prevalent amongst those holding to the ancient faiths. The typical home consists of an unemployed or low-waged parent plus one (or very rarely two) offspring. They live either in an apart^{ment} in the projects, or a dilapidated house in the 'burbs.

At^mspheric pollution makes venturing outside in the conurbs a risky business. Respirators are cheaply available and next to useless. The spreading gaps in the ozone layer mean that skin cancer is a rising problem. UV screens are widely available, and certain major conurbs have their inner cities covered by polymer geodesic domes which shield out the harmful radiation, but also act as greenhouses and raise the local temperatures to 30-40 degrees in summer, and 10-20 in winter. In addition, the domes trap pollution, and in more deprived areas are black with the soot of burning fires. At the junctions of multi-dome systems, condensation pours from the joints in a perpetual rain.

The Red Plague kills four street orphans out of every five reaching the age of ten - It lets their immune systems develop, and then as they grow stronger, it wipes them out. It is unheard of for someone with access to suppressant to die of the Plague, but loose that access to suppressant, and you are lucky to survive.

2056	Life Expectancy	Fertility Rate (%)	Number of children	Number of children surviving	Incidence of cancer (%)
Corporate Male	110	67	-	-	6
Corporate Female	125	72	1.35	1.32	8
Unemployed Male	55	45	-	-	35
Unemployed Female	70	52	3.71	2.17	28
SINless Male	39	27	-	-	47
SINless Female	47	33	5.82	1.05	51

2059	Life Expectancy	Fertility Rate (%)	Number of children	Number of children surviving	Incidence of cancer (%)	Incidence of plague (%)
Corporate Male	115	67	-	-	5	<0.01
Corporate Female	129	72	1.54	1.53	6	<0.01
Unemployed Male	52	45	-	-	36	0.1
Unemployed Female	65	52	2.19	1.34	30	0.1
SINless Male	31	27	-	-	52	37
SINless Female	37	33	3.07	0.63	52	38

There has not been any government-run education in the UK since 2032, when the last state school was closed as 'uneconomic'. The Plex has provided TVschool[™] since 2029, and in 2034 it was made mandatory (but unenforced) for all 5 - 14 year olds. The UN ran a number of schools for the children of the SINless in deprived areas of Britain prior to its collapse, and there are still schools run by stalwarts of the various religious groups, but the only way for most to gain a decent education is to pay for it. All higher education is corporate funded, and it is a rare company that offers a "strings-free" sponsorship these days.

There are no more state-run hospitals either. If you have a job, you may be able to afford the medical insurance required for treat^{ment} in a private hospital, but if not, then you're in trouble.

For those without a SIN, things are even worse. The SINless used to be able to get free healthcare (all be it of a minimal standard) and education from the United Nations funded hospitals and schools. Unfortunately, with the collapse of the UN earlier this year with billion credit debts, these facilities are without funding and in danger of

There is a wide split in the levels of health in the populace. Curiously enough, the split is most noticeable between those who have corporate jobs and housing, and those who do not.

Law And Order

In 2059, what actually is a crime is poorly defined. Those who own the police own the law, and the police have three masters in Britain: PlexUK funds the PlexPolice, UKGov (the Plex's puppet government) funds the British Unified Regional Police service, and then there are the Pay Cops, available to anyone who can pay the fee. In addition, most corporates have private security guarding their conurbs and arcologies.

The PlexPolice are responsible for security at Plexmalls and in public conurbs (including the majority of domed areas, and some undomed feeder 'burbs for regional Plexmalls). Well resourced, they are oftimes used by the Plex as a military force, and are regarded by their opponents as unnecessarily brutal and cruel.

PlexPolice are also responsible for maintaining the security of all Plex personnel and installations. In addition, there is a "reservist" organisation of adequately trained volunteers who will be called up "in times of war". PlexPolice are the nearest Plexcorp maintains to a standing army. In times of conflict, and otherwise, they are deadly effective.

The British Unified Regional Police service is a poorly funded, under-resourced force, responsible for policing those parts of the country the Plex has no interest in. Ranging from the traditional village bobby through to Special Patrol Groups with responsibility for policing the remaining Toll-free roads. Increasingly useless, and maintained for 'political' reasons, and as a tourist attraction.

Paycops are not found in Plex-managed areas. They roam the violence-prone outer city areas, driving armoured vans or riding on heavily protected motorbikes. Should you wish the assistance of a Pay Cop in an "ongoing crime situation", or in a "post-crime resolution phase", be prepared to pay. Most Pay Cops accept credits, but prefer cash. Of course, they can always refuse your custom...

Culture Jamming

Streetlife.

Life on the streets is hard and dirty. If you're on the street, you have no SIN, at least that you're prepared to admit to. Which means no source of credit. Hard cash or barter are the only things between you and starvation. And when you run out of cash, or things to barter... But starvation is the least of your worries.

There is the Red Plague - a fatal airborne disease that, start like a back dose of the flu, and, if left untreated, kills within weeks. A painful, demeaning death. And there is no cure - only regular doses of 'suppressant' can keep it at bay.

There are the Go Gangs - neo-tribes of youths who run wild in the decaying bordertowns. Easily identified by their colours and their propensity for violence, the gangs vary in nature from neo-nazi organisations to the foolish (but dangerous) Clowns. Recently, the more stable gangs have started to work with the BFA to distribute plague suppressant.

There are the PlexPolice, who seem to believe that being SINless equates to being a criminal. While not illegal yet, it is increasingly difficult to survive on the streets without breaking a few of the Plex's laws. And there are the Paycops, who will only hassle you if you look like you can afford to pay them off.

You watch

Pirated R2tech Sim/Stims, stolen Tri-D channels, pirate 2-D TV

You read

NewsNet, FTL (before it folded), Job adverts, not very well

You buy

Food, drugs and alcohol (when you can afford to)

You eat

Whenever you can, cheaply and poorly, mostly tinned food.

You believe

Survival of the fittest, religion of choice, information wants to be free, whatever you want to.

Life in the Plex is easy and dean. If you're living in a Plex conurb, you have a SIN, and all the benefits thereof: access to credit, healthcare plans, unemployment insurance, or an instant trace on you whereabouts.

A Plex citizen (or consumer) is likely to live in a conurb associated to a Plexmall, unless they reside in a MetroPlex, where the whole city centre is one huge Plexmall. They will have a job, often with Plexcorp, but possibly with another corporate. Larger corporates provide their own living and working spaces within the conurbation - they may form part of the community, or more likely, be totally self-contained ecology.

Being a Plex citizen is easy - as long as you don't think too hard about who you are or what you want. Follow the crowd, be average at your job, don't stand out, and don't ever complain. You might just make it big one day.

You watch

Aztech Sim/Stims, Tri-D Oprah Runs, How to Get a Promotion sitcoms, Bob Violence

You read

NewsNet, Catalogues, Very little else

You buy

Clothes, fancy meals out, a new entertainment console every year, more clothes, presents for your boss and his wife, anything you want

You eat

Whatever you want, when ever you want, frequently at restaurants

You believe

Whatever you are told to

Money

Credit

In 2059 the most common form of money is the credit. All transactions are carried out through electronic funds transfer. Everyone has a Plexcred account by virtue of citizenship, and if you're not a citizen, you're nobody. A Plexcred account is keyed on the owner's SIN number. If you're SINless, then you can't own credits.

The "White" (i.e. legal) market runs on credit. Invisible, indivisible, a credit is no more than a bit of information, stored on a smartcard or hoarded in a banks mainframe. As "everyone" has a Plexcred account, credits are used for all expenditure - at least that's what you're supposed to believe.

The smallest unit of currency supported by the Plex for Plexcred account to Plexcred account transfer is 0.01 credits. Greater than 2 decimal credit, however, may appear on bills for services or goods charged to an account and settled (in 0.01 credit units) at regular intervals (i.e. a "tab").

New Yen

The New Yen would have become the global currency, had not the Plex intervened. It is still legal to own and spend New Yen, but its really hard to buy anything legal with it. The New Yen was the currency of the Grey Market, until a massive crash in the New Yen's value in 2057 brought the currency into disrepute. As the prime currency of the grey market, it had been widely used in semi-legal and illegal trading. It is untraceable and forgeable (although not easily).

Before the crash, one New Yen was worth roughly half a credit. In 2059, if you can exchange them, you'd probably get 0.01 credits for a single yen, but the actual rate of exchange varies depending on who, whereby and when the transaction takes place. The only way to exchange credits for New Yen is by purchasing Yen for credit, or vice versa, from a suitably disreputable agent. The supply of New Yen bills in any one area is finite, so (unfortunately) the rich cannot convert all their credit into New Yen to avoid taxes. It is speculated that the value crash was caused by parties unknown flooding the market with fine forgeries or hoarded notes. The crash stated in the UK, causing massive hardship for those outside of the Plex's control.

New Yen bills are often used in small stakes gambling, often halved or quartered to provide suitable stakes. The smallest denomination is one New Yen, and the largest, one thousand. There is no coinage associated with the New Yen.

Illegal to own, difficult to exchange, but completely Plex free, hard cash is the currency of the Black Market. To own pounds, dollars, deutchmarks or francs is to brand a person as a complete subversive, outside the domain of the Plex and refusing to be subject to its laws. "Real" money is only ever used, and can only be used, for illegal purposes. All coinage or banknotes are valid in the Black Market, which sets its own prices and its own rates of exchange. It is usual to find that £1 = \$1 = 1 FF = 1 DM etc. £1 is roughly worth 0.25 credit.

The crash of the New Yen has seen a rise in the usage of Old cash, effectively criminalising the spending patterns of a whole segment of society previously reliant on the New Yen.

Barter

When cash is illegal, only outlaws will use cash.

Old-fashioned barter has made a massive comeback, especially since the crash of the New Yen. Some parts of the grey economy operate almost exclusively on a barter system. Barter means only trading you goods for what you think they are worth, and effectively eliminates the increasingly despised money-changers out of the equation. However, it is, as always, a cumbersome method of trade.

Technology

Cyberware

Cyberlimbs vary from simple prosthetic replacements, all the way through to high-chrome 'bionic' limbs with enhanced strength, reflexes and stamina. Anything beyond a prosthetic replacement start getting very expensive.

Internal organs may be replaced with cybernetic devices. The most common modifications are replacement eyes, enhanced hearing, and glandular hormone/drug pumps. Most internal organs are replaced with organic spares, either vat-grown or organ-legged.

A persons reflexes may also be enhanced with cyberwear - small neural processors are patched into crucial points in the nervous system, enhancing reaction time. Smart-linked weapons also fall into this category, and the technology used in a netrunkers datajack is very similar to that used in a hardwired reflex boost.

Weaponry

Military combat technology is suited to only one thing - killing people efficiently. In 2059, there are far more people to kill, so it has to done more efficiently. A corporate war machine is an elite fighting force of highly trained grunts, armed with smartlinked weapons, automatic targeting systems, cyber-enhanced senses and physique, and doped up to the eyeballs with combat drugs.

On the streets the technology is more mundane. The traditional handgun is the weapon of choice, supplemented in many quarters with some form of blade. The ammunition used is typically standard or some form of armour piercing round. High Explosive rounds for handguns are available, but are difficult to obtain. Depleted Uranium is exclusively used by Bloderunners. Smart-links allowing semi-autonomous aiming systems are occasionally seen, but few can afford the expense.

Heavier weaponry is rare, usually carried only by PlexPolice, militia units, and some of the better equipped gangs.

Transport

Who needs to travel when your local Plexmall "provides for your every need"™.

Travel in 2059 is limited. For the upper echelons of society, telepresence has made physical travel almost non-existent. When actual motion from A to B is require, air travel is the mechanism of choice. Airborne Vehicles (AVs) with VTOL capabilities are predominant in this arena.

As the hierarchy of society is descended, the vehicles cease to be airborne and return to the roads. PlexPolice use a combination of AVs and ground-based transport, usually similar to a hovercraft, but with a number of wheeled pursuit vehicles.

The rail network is all but closed, and the long-haul motorways have not been maintained for over twenty years. Within a city's limits, the roads are generally pitted, but not impossible to travel over. Some cities still run a 'light rail' network, either above ground, or below. The tubes are generally poorly maintained, and full of homeless folk.

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The transport of the average person (outside of a conurb) is either the bicycle or the skateboard. Simple, cheap to run, and highly manoeuvrable. Unfortunately, they are also easy to steal.

Biogenetics

"I've done ... questionable things"
"Nothing the God of biomechanics wouldn't let you in heaven for"

The field of biogenetics has advanced significantly by 2059. There are artificial people available (at a high cost) and vatgrown organ replacements are also available to those who can afford them.

Elective surgery is readily available at a moderate cost. It is relatively safe, and much used among the youth of the richer elements of society. In the poorer sectors, surgery is available, but is much more risky, and tends to be used more as a disguise or as gang colours.

The cutting edge of biotechnology is bioware - biological enhancements instead of cybernetic

Nanotech

There is no nanotech. Well, that's not strictly true. There are rumours of nanotechnology (the mechanics of molecular assemblers and dis-assemblers) from many state of the art labs, but the scientific community regard it in much the same vein as cold fusion.

Those who claim the existence of nanotech, believe the scientists working on it are based in small orbital laboratories, in order to isolate the planet from the dangers of a grey ooze meltdown - the ultimate successful nanotech. The same people are also likely to believe in alien abductions and the existence of vampires.

Micromechanics (the science of very small machines) is much better developed, and many of the benefits attributed to nanotech are achievable in 2059 with micro machines - minimal disruption surgery advanced cyberwear, and even neural splicing.

Other nanotech-like behaviour can be seen with biochemical products such as 'toxin binders' and 'system flush'.

Synthetics

"More human than human..."

Replicants

A replicant is bio-engineered lifeform, usually created from human tissues and constructed via an advanced biogenetic assembly process. This process, and the replicants themselves, were created by the Tyrell Corporation in 2035. They have progressed in design and capability until today, in 2056, they are almost indistinguishable from real people. Their only drawback is their limited lifespan, as determined by the Turing Registry in the 2048 Artificial Persons Act.

The Nexus 6 range was introduced in 2051. Physically and mentally of a similar ability to the previous Nexus 5s, the 6s were created with a past, to cushion their emotional responses and provide a greater stability. Brainmapping was not sufficiently advanced to allow pre-"birth" imprinting, so a personality and memories were hard coded into a biochip, with neural feeds into the brain. Experimental models had the biochip placed at the base of the spinal cord to facilitate easy removal. In addition, the experimentals automatically backed up their memories to a store on the biochip, in case of damage to the brain. Turing insisted upon a termination method for the Nexus 6, that could be timestamped with an expiry date at "birth", to prevent the development of "real human" emotions, and so avoiding the problematic moral dilemmas that would ensue in defining what was human anyway. The favoured method of termination of a Nexus 6 was via a cortex bomb, which would destroy the brain totally, but cause no damage to the surrounding area. Tyrell often augmented this (in experimental models) with a custom virus that would unravel the Tyrell-designed genes to prevent clonal copying.

Terminators

Cyberdyne Systems is Tyrell's major competitor in the military standalone wetware market. Cyberdyne's original market was in security technology, but by 2031 it had expanded into robotics and cybernetics. Cyberdyne was first to market in 2033 with the Defender - an android canine that mimicked a guard dog in ferocity and loyalty. When the CSE had obliterated the canine population by late '34, Cyberdyne had cornered the market, and was looking to expand.

Cyberdyne had spent 12 years in research on the development of a human android. By 20 the only fruits of this

research had been the (enormously profitable) Defender "robocanine" models, and the Cyberdyne board was contemplating cancelling the expensive program when Tyrrell's first replicant was announced. The board got excited and then scared. They accelerated the research with the aim of putting a product to market.

Cyberdyne initiated unfriendly take-overs of companies with suitable technology: AUR in late '37, and US Robot and Mechanical Men Inc. in 2038, late in '39, they released the first mechanical humanoid security system: the T-400. In 2043 Cyberdyne bought out OCP, utilising technology from its "RoboCop" programme to develop the T-800. In addition, Cyberdyne cancelled OCP's unreliable ED-209 models, a move that brought the company much public acclaim.

T-800: The "Terminator". Reworking OCP's research, Cyberdyne replaced the plastic skin of the T-600 series with human flesh, blood and skin. The T-800 was completely self contained within the armoured endoskeleton, and all the externals were purely cosmetic. Introduced in 2048, the Terminator made Cyberdyne's name, supplanting Tyrrell's Nexus 4 and the newer, but unstable Nexus 5 in the top levels of the covert security market. Still in production today, the T-800 still competes well with Tyrrell's latest, the Nexus 6.

Rumours persist of "made to measure" T-800s, with a living person's appearance, retina prints and voice patterns. Cyberdyne repeatedly deny the existence, or the possibility of such a model, and cite the expense and technical difficulty of manufacturing a Life Model Decay (LMD).

Clones

At this juncture, a word must be said about cloning. Still legally a grey area, most of the issues regarding cloning are settled in the copyright courts. A person's genetic code is regarded as their personal property, and they have sole copyright over it (assuming they are legally citizens). Cloning is technologically simple compared to designing and biologically manufacturing a replicant. At its simplest level, a clone can be created in vitro, and implanted into a surrogate womb (natural or artificial). However, all that will result in is an "identical twin" of the subject, without the subject's mind or memories.

Even given the above, successful cloning is still an expensive and longwinded task. To prevent replicative degeneration, a clone must be grown at normal rates, requiring at least 15 years to mature. For use as a transplantation donor, little more needs to be done, except for rationalising the moral ambiguities that ensue when the clone achieves self awareness as part of the natural growth process. Would you take your healthy twins heart (and probably life) to save your own?

Individual organs can be grown in "vats" of nutrient and used for transplant purposes, but at a higher per organ capital cost than cloning, and a much higher cost than purchasing from organ-leggers or body banks (both globally illegal).

For a more permanent restorative, how about a whole new cloned body (including brain, the only organ that cannot be replaced by transplantation, and the most subject to ageing damage)? A clone is created, and then grown in a vat, as for a singular organ. Again, the clone must be matured at natural rates to ensure an uncorrupted copy. During this period, the brain must be carefully stimulated to lay down suitable pathways for brainmap implantation. Once the clone is fully grown, a brain to brain copy may be attempted. These are successful no more than 20% of the time, as the veracity of the copy is difficult to determine, due to the low level of understanding of brainmap structures. Even given a successful duplication, problems can arise with the original subject refusing to believe the "awakened" clone contains their mind and memories, and legal difficulties are almost certain to ensue. Never the less, cloning is a favourite method of immortality for the hyper-rich. Popular, however, it is not.

Artificial Intelligence

Despite the usual rejoinder that AI is a contradiction in terms, there are a number of computer generated constructs that can mimic human thought processes, and a slightly larger number of constructs that are regarded as sentient, but it is found that classifying such intelligence is nigh on impossible.

All AIs are limited by the Artificial Intelligences Act 2036, and the Turing Registry are required by their terms of reference to inspect and secure all AIs. Inspection ensures that the free will of the intelligence is limited to one or two degrees of freedom, and securing the intelligences ensures that all AI systems have a fail-safe shutdown method, should a rogue occur. Said shutdown system is likely terminal to the intelligence concerned, and certainly expensive in replacement hardware, as it usually involves physical destruction of the core memory and CPUs.

AIs are used for many purposes, and some have limited citizenship under the limitations of the AI Act 2036. Most major corporate data structures are ICC'd by AI-generated code, and many R&D labs use AIs to evaluate and extrapolate data.

"Born to be Wired"

In the late 20th century, the global computer network known as the Internet grew until it had multiple points of presence in every nation on Earth. At the turn of the century the advent of multimedia and virtual reality transformed it into more than just a data network.

Computer man-machine interfaces have advanced beyond the twentieth century's graphical and VR-based state-of-the-art. The standard interface is via a consensual hallucination generated by a cyberspace deck. Plugged directly into the brain's sensorium by head mounted electrodes or direct-wired sockets, this graphical, auditory, tactile representation of data virtually images the global network as a web of lines and neon data structures. It is here in the Net that crime can really pay.

The Net is not a single entity, instead, it is a largely unmanaged amalgamation of a hundred thousand networks, with tens of millions of machines connected. While the underlying hardware of the Net is as varied as the colours of the butterfly, the perception of the user portrays it as a homogenous whole, through the medium of the consensual hallucination that is cyberspace.

The Net can be accessed in a number of ways, from a simple character-based terminal (as has been used for nearly 100 years), through the possibilities of multimedia and on into the state of the art: direct neural input, via a tradeset or jackplugs. Direct neural input (DNI) allows the user to perceive the Net as pure sensory data, in a similar manner to Sim/Stim™. This is cyberspace.

Everyone uses the Net, whether they know it or not. Transferring credit from one account to another, using the phone or vidphone, watching cable, buying on Home Shopping Channel, or getting a parking ticket, all rely on data traversing the net. Printing off a statement at an ATM, or buying a screamsheet at a news terminal are both uses of the Net, and traces of activity are left in records on systems and logs on monitors.

Netrunning is the use and misuse of the Net. A netrunner may be a legitimate trouble-shooter seeking flaws in systems or installing code patches remotely. A netrunner may be a hobbyist searching out that elusive piece of data on public access databases across the planet. Or a netrunner may be a thief, a hacker, a data bandit hijacking information or credit transfers and selling them on for profit.

All the information that is, and has ever been captured electronically is somewhere in the net, be it your childhood school records, or your complete genetic profile. Someone, somewhere can profit by it. To maintain data security, corporate databases and mainframes hide behind walls of security programs known as ICE. ICE is usually benign, merely preventing unauthorised access to the systems it protects, but netrunners tell tales of Block ICE - lethal security that can scramble neural pathways or flatline your heart. Most of these tales are regarded on the same level as 20th century stories of electrocution by telephone.

Netrunners are usually hardwired to their decks - sophisticated computer systems that generate the virtual sensory environment that is cyberspace from the underlying protocols, transports and data. They disdain the tradesets of casual users and corporate professionals for many of the same reasons the dedicated Sim/Stim™ junkie prefers jack plugs - lack of static bleed through, better signal quality and faster response times.

Software is available, illicit and illegally to make a netrunner's life easier. While the very best can hack through standard ICE using nothing more than their deck's firmware programs, and their own brainpower, most require some form of ICEbreaker - a program specially coded to divert and disable ICE. The very best (and most expensive) ICEbreakers are developed for military or espionage use. Get your hands on a copy of one of those, and the world's your oyster.

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Bibliography

"Use what you can, then chuck the rest away..."

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Manifesto

Clubbing

Things That Should Not Be is a Live Role-Playing Club, run on a strictly non-professional basis. Things That Should Not Be runs 1920's, Gothic and Modern-Day horror weekends at sites throughout the country. Contact Martin Jones (address available from the *interwired* referees) for details.

The Adventurers' Guild is an organisation dedicated to all aspects of Live Role-Play and associated hobbies. It provides an information service, insurance, affiliations for clubs, and some of the best fantasy interactive scenarios currently available in the UK. Contact the AG Secretary (address available from the *interwired* referees) for more details.

Time Games is high quality highly interactive Live Role-playing Group, running scenarios in many different genres, from fantasy through to 1930s mystery. Responsible for the 6 year long totally wonderful 'Forgotten Sorrows' Khadorain fantasy campaign. Contact address available from the *interwired* referees.

WIREDDD also run cyberpunk Live Role Play, although in a more fantastic 'Shadowrun' style setting. Running many small events throughout the year, with larger ones twice a year. Their contact address is available from the *interwired* referees.

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