

# REBOOT THE FUTURE

*CYBERPUNK ROLEPLAYING IN THE 23RD CENTURY*

## PREVIEW

This preview contains the first fourteen pages of the book. The contents page, and the introduction chapter.

Then the various forms that the game uses. Character Sheet, Gang Record and Domain Record.



D101 GAMES

# REBOOT THE FUTURE



**CYBERPUNK ROLEPLAYING IN THE 23RD CENTURY**

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Crypts and Things

Monkey

OpenQuest

River of Heaven

Tales From the Sorcerer Under the Mountain

For more information on Reboot the Future and other games

[d101games.com](http://d101games.com)

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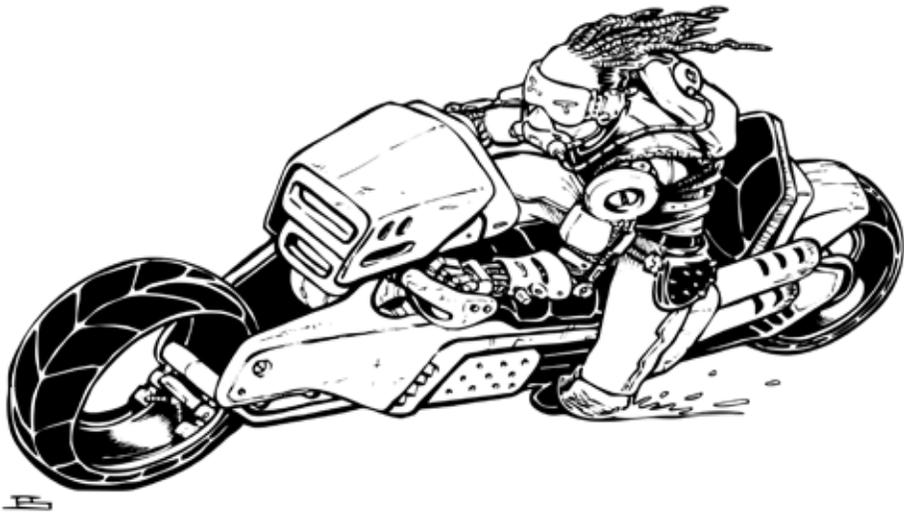
## THANK YOU

Paul "Tweedmeister" Mitchener for graciously let me use the Liminal system.

Dan Baker for his awesome front covers.

Jeshields for his generosity with stock art over the years, which finally led me realising I could easily make my dream cyberpunk game with it. Go check out his stock-art website at [jeshields.com](http://jeshields.com).

# INTRODUCTION



**Reboot the Future** is a cyberpunk game set in the off-world colonies of a space federation known as the **Consortium**.

After abandoning the off-world colonies during the **Galactic War**, the big corporations have recently returned.

While the corporations were away, a whole generation of people have been free of their influence and have seen the damage that corporate rule has caused.

Some of them, known as the **Cyberpunks**, are now in open rebellion.

## WHAT IS REBOOT THE FUTURE?

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"It's 2223, and the future is here, and it's bright!

Sure, the last ten years have been hard, but we had to grit our teeth and fight the anti-consumers in a war so big it was called **The Galactic War!** The good news is, we won! Now all the Consortium is safe to profit and grow without limits again because **space is infinite!**

Here at **Imperial Sterling Inc.**, people have accused us of throwing the local economy under the transit tube in the colonies during the war. Still, our withdrawal from your local space was necessary to focus our resources and beat the enemy! Now that we are victorious, we're back and investing in your economy once more. Our **System Architects** and **Planetary Economists** deliver vital quick aid packages and draw up long-term rebuilding strategies. All powered by the ground-breaking technologies of Project Darklight.

But we need **YOU**, with your local knowledge and get up and go attitude, to help us make a difference for your community. With you on board as part of our **Reboot The Future** program, they can have a say in the new system we are building for them. We can rebuild the education program, new hospitals, get all adults into full employment, and live a full and prosperous life once again. Best still, you will be part of a generous profit share that will see you living the golden lifestyle you deserve!

Things are getting better, be part of it.

Sign up with Sterling Inc's Reboot the Future program today!"

**From Imperial Sterling Inc's Reboot the Future program launch advert.**



## A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

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**Reboot the Future** is a **traditional** roleplaying game, where the players take on the roles of player characters, and there is one distinguished player, the Game Moderator (GM). In the author's experience, two and five players, along with the GM, works best.

Each player portrays their character in the game, saying what they do and acting as their character. The Game Moderator is responsible for describing the world and everyone in it except the characters. The GM sets up the problems the characters solve and adjudicates rules and solutions. Characters portrayed by the GM rather than a player are called non-player characters.

The player characters form a gang with shared knowledge, assets, and common goals. Together, the gang take on adventures called conspiracies. These conspiracies further both the goals of the gang and the drives of its members.

## A NOTE ON DICE

Reboot the Future uses ordinary six-sided dice. You do not need any other types of dice to play this game.

Throughout this book, I use the notation of  $Xd6$  to mean the result of rolling  $X$  six-sided dice and adding the results together to get a number. Some dice rolls have an additional number that gets added to the dice roll total, using  $Xd6+n$ , where  $n$  is the additional number.

For example, in a skill test, you roll  $2d6$  (two six-sided dice, with the results added together), add your skill, and compare the result with a target number. An example damage roll, for an attack with a light firearm (SMGs/Auto-pistols), does  $1d6+3$  damage.

## A NOD TO LIMINAL AND PROJECT DARKLIGHT

Reboot the Future is based on two games: Project Darklight and Liminal. Project Darklight, this game's previous version, used a completely different system called Wordplay. Paul Mitchener's simple but focused system Liminal was originally written to support a British Folklore and Urban Fantasy game. If you are familiar with Liminal, I've purposely used the same structure to help you get up and going in no time. There are characters with traits, who belong to gangs, and factions to interact with. But instead of Fae and Vampires, it's cyberpunks and corporations. Also, there are some new rules to bring the Consortium, the Cyberpunk in Space setting of the 23rd century, into sharper focus. So rather than this being a new edition of Project Darklight, I see it as an upgrade.



## **THE WORLDS OF THE CYBERPUNKS**

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### **"IT'S THE YEAR 2223.**

Two hundred years ago, humanity left an Earth that had been so over-exploited by big business it could no longer support life. After another hundred years or so, spent terraforming the barely inhabitable worlds that they had fled to so they were just like home, it was business as usual. This situation means the citizens of these New Worlds are under the economic yoke of immoral Corporations who will exploit anything, and anybody make a profit.

Twenty years ago, the Corporations made their first big mistake in pursuing the Agenda for a long, long time. They started fighting amongst themselves. As the media PRs all call it, the First Galactic War was one big shark-fest. Big Corp ate little Corp until there were only three big Corps in charge, who formed Tri-Corp. Of course, the man on the street was expected to pick up the bill for this war, which led to the mother of all recessions, where they made their second mistake. In the twenty years that the Corps abandoned whole colonies as "economically unviable," a whole generation grew up outside the corporate indoctrination (sorry, education) programs since schools and most social funding was the first thing to get cut. A whole generation grew up into unemployment and had to find a way to live outside the corporate wage slave culture the rest of the Consortium have to live in. We grew up hard, mean and clever, not brainwashed and defeated like our parents. We've seen what damage the Corps have done to our world through design and willful neglect.

With the galactic economy on the upturn after the war, the Corps are back, telling us they own us. They can try to flood the DataSphere with subliminals about how their "Project Darklight" will save us all, but my friend Sys-Squirrel has a thousand jammers roaming Virtual Reality. They can build their fortress headquarters downtown, but the Sementex Girls are experts in demolition art. Their puppets may be putting their corrupt claws into City Hall, where one good mayor had worked for the people. Still, me, Donahue McClusky, and my fellow Media Assassins are going to get the bottom of how they killed Mayor Goodwin and then blaze it across News-Net. They think they can bulldoze their way back into controlling our lives and selling us cheap. But I'm no commodity chum. I'm a Cyberpunk. I live on the edge, and me and my friends are going to fight back against the suits and take our world back from them!"

**Jane Griffins, investigative reporter Channel 23**

## WHAT THE FRAK IS PROJECT DARKLIGHT?

"Project Darklight is the name of an ultra-top secret research facility, run by Tri-Corp. Its location is secret, a necessity in a universe of corporate espionage, but its existence is publicly known. It's a brand name for new technologies that are flooding the market. The announcement of "The Project Darklight Labs" and a promise of "technologies light years ahead of anything you've seen before" brought the Galactic War to an end and invigorated the moribund galactic economy.

Critics of Project Darklight point out that the technologies coming out of the labs are so far beyond what is currently available that it is almost beyond human understanding. Also, they are highly vocal of Tri-Corp's monopoly on the wonders coming out of the labs, pointing out that this is a big grab for economic and social control. Ominously they point out that the first technologies that came out of the labs were the infamous "Star Smasher" Frigates and the Super Soldier program, swiftly followed by radical speed and scope enhancement to Pleasure-Net on the Core Corporate Planets under their control.

The jury is out on what Project Darklight is, and until some enterprising weasel manages to grab enough real hard data on and blows it into the Public Domain, all we are left with is hype from the Corps and rants from its detractors.

A game of Smoke and Mirrors is about to be played out, my friends...."

**Donahue McClusky, investigative Journalist and Cyberpunk Activist, New Oldham, 2223.**



# **REBOOT THE FUTURE IN A NUTSHELL**

---

So, you want the skinny on this game in a quick consumable bullet-pointed format?

Well, here we go...

## **OVERALL**

- It is a cooperative game played between the players and a single Game Moderator which generates fun and memorable stories.
- The players each play a character that is their alter-ego in the world of the near future that they and the Game Moderator create.
- The Game Moderator is responsible for describing the world as the characters first encounter it, helping set up situations and dilemmas and playing the non-player characters that the characters encounter.
- The players are responsible for describing how their characters react to the situations they encounter, and if necessary, the Game Moderator invokes the game's rules to resolve the action.

## **THE SETTING**

- The year is 2223.
- The place is a federation of corporate-controlled systems, known as the Consortium.
- In 2020 the First Cyberpunk Revolution failed to save Earth from artificial ecological disasters.
- After this failed revolution, Earth became toxic, and humanity made its way into the stars. Faster than light travel is still a dream, so decades-long transport in cryogenic sleep was the reality for the diaspora.
- Technology has effectively stalled at the high end of cyberware during the late 21st century. Most tech is exactly like it is today, five minutes into the future.
- Mega-corporations are gradually eroding the last of the national and civil governments after a large corporate war popularly called the Galactic War.
- Total control is their agenda. Project Darklight is their method.
- Welcome to the Second Cyberpunk Revolution!

## **CHARACTERS**

- Characters are classic Cyberpunk anti-heroes.
- The game features a selection of classic Cyberpunk concepts as starting points and inspiration. But you can easily build your own customised character.
- Everyone can enter cyberspace and do hacking relevant to who they are and their personality. For example, a Cybermerc will have aggressive intrusion programs that smash and destroy defensive software and then

take control of automated doors and gun turrets. No more twiddling your thumbs as the Net Wizard goes into a trance and does a hacking run.

- Humanity's relationship with technology is one of Cyberpunk's central themes. So cyberware is handed in a meaningful yet streamlined way. It's a significant part of your character and will bring down the house when you use it, but it won't reduce you to looking for small modifiers or invalidate your character's skills as a human. The basic tech that can proliferate like a plague of insects in such a technologically rich setting, has numerous examples and but quick and robust guidance for dealing with new techno gizmos dreamed up by the players and Game Moderators.

## **DATASPHERE**

- This is the **computer-generated** playground where your character runs the neon to find hidden information.
- **Its always on**, bombarding you with adverts, instant messages, as well as the stuff you want to access.
- **Avatar**. This is your character in the DataSphere. For normal folks, it's their bank details and real identity. For Cyberpunks, it's a false ID, so they don't get tracked down in the Real World for the crimes they commit in the Virtual World.
- All Avatars come with default software of "Search Public DataSphere areas", "Use Public Virtual Stores", "Access own Bank account".
- **Hacked** cyberpunk Avatars come with the ability to "Crack encryption code", "Avoid Security Measures", "Corrupt Software", and "Be invisible in the system", all of which the DataSphere Admins don't want you using.
- The DataSphere is made up of two parts:
  1. **Virtual Reality (VR.)**, an immersive virtual world that only exists on the computer network.
  2. **Augmented Reality (AR.)**. This computer-generated information network overlays the real world. For example, adverts on pavements and extra functionality for your fridge, such as a TV screen that is overlaid on its door. Augmented Reality often contains doorways into VR. Unlike VR you don't disassociate from your body when you go there.

All computer systems are Artificial Intelligences (AI) and are classified in the following ways.

- **Alphas**, who are completely self-aware, a hypothetical level of AI that officially doesn't exist.
- **Betas**, which are not self-aware but a very good attempt. A beta thinks it is and fools most people.
- **Gammas**, which are quickly written, off the shelf, and easily detected as a facsimile.

## **A CYBERPUNK PRIMER**

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**Cyberpunk** is a **Science Fiction genre** that originated in the 1980s. It blends slick Punk Rock anti-authoritarian attitude with an exploration of the effects of technology on humanity.

The following is not intended as an exhaustive list but more a quick dive into the culture for any neophytes reading this. Also, it signposts some of the themes and ideas that the game uses.

### **READ**

**Neuromancer/Count Zero /Mona Lisa Overdrive by William Gibson.** These books, known as The Sprawl Trilogy, came out in the 1980s and pretty much defined Cyberpunk in my opinion. Throw in the short story compilation "Burning Chrome" for good measure.

**Altered Carbon by Richard K. Morgan** brings the genre bang up to date, with a complex Detective Noir tale that drudges through the corrupt underbelly of a far-future earth addicted to technology and obsessed with immortality via cybernetic body replacement. Oh, and there's a TV series on Netflix that is worth checking out.

### **WATCH**

**Max Headroom 20 Minutes into the Future** (Channel 4 TV programme). In the 80s when I was a teenager high on ZX81/Spectrum and Fighting Fantasy books this was my introduction to the genre. Available on YouTube.

**Bladerunner (Movie).** Another style definer.

**The Matrix Trilogy (Movie).** Mixes mythology and philosophy of the nature of existence with slick mirror shaded action.

**Almost Human (TV series).** A cyberpunk cop show, with a central buddy relationship between a human cop with a cyborg leg and his robotic partner who has experimental human feelings. Alas, only one series.

### **LISTEN**

My Cyberpunk listening habits clearly come from the 80s/90s industrial scene that the following bands typify. There's also a lot more electronic music out there that fits the genre in sound and feel.

**Ministry** recorded two defining albums that fit the Cyberpunk mode "Land of Rape and Honey" and "The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste".

**Frontline Assembly**, anything by them, is spot on music-wise. Much of this game was written to their 2012 album "Echogenetic"

**Skinny Puppy** is another classic industrial band. The lyrics are very political. For example, animal rights are high on the agenda. The idea behind the name is that they are playing music fronted by a dog that has escaped a vivisection lab.

**Foetus.** In many ways, one of the pioneers of Industrial. Centred on the recording artist JG Thirlwell, his music happily mixes and match AC/DC like guitar riffs with opera, classical and jazz horns and the typical throbbing drums that characterise industrial.

**Neurotech.** This is a one-man multi-instrumental outfit whose output is available via [bandcamp.com](http://bandcamp.com). A good mix of symphonic metal guitars and futuristic synths. I recommend the epic The Decipher Volumes as the ideal soundtrack to a Reboot the Future session.

## PLAY

**Cyberpunk 2020 (Tabletop RPG).** The classic Cyberpunk RPG by Mike Pondsmith defined the genre for pen and paper RPGs. In many ways (but not all) Reboot the Future is a tribute to that game.

**Remember Tomorrow (Table Top RPG).** By Gregor Hutton, published by Box Ninja. Pick up this gem if you think I don't go far enough with the whole collaborative/make it up as you go along design.

**Deus Ex series (Computer CCG).** All five games (Deus Ex, Deus Ex: Invisible War, Deus Ex: Human Evolution, Deus Ex: Mankind Divided ) are well worth playing to immerse yourself in a truly satisfying multi-media cyberpunk experience.



# REBOOT THE FUTURE

**FULL NAME:**

**HANDLE:**

**ORIGIN:**

**FLASHBACKS:**



**CONCEPT:**

**STYLE:**

**DRIVE:**

**FOCUS:**

## ATTRIBUTES

Will:

Endurance:

Damage:

Protection:

## AVATAR

Name:

Style:

System Integrity:

Damage:

Protection:

## EXPERIENCE

Experience



Advancement



## PHYSICAL

Athletics

[ ]

Awareness

[ ]

Melee

[ ]

Shoot

[ ]

Stealth

[ ]

Survival

[ ]

Vehicles

[ ]

## MENTAL

Art

[ ]

Business

[ ]

Corporate Law

[ ]

Education

[ ]

Interface

[ ]

Medicine

[ ]

Remotes

[ ]

Science

[ ]

Technology

[ ]

## SOCIAL

Charm

[ ]

Conviction

[ ]

Empathy

[ ]

High Society

[ ]

Rhetoric

[ ]

Streetwise

[ ]

Taunt

[ ]

## **T**RAITS

## **L**IMITATIONS

## **E**QUIPMENT

## **C**IRCLES

## **C**ONTACTS

# GANG RECORD

**NAME**

**CONCEPT**

**GANG GOAL**

**BASE**

**GANG ASSETS**

**HOOKS**

# DOMAIN RECORD

## GAME DETAILS

NAME OF GAME

TYPE OF GAME

Closed  Open

POWER LEVEL

Street  Troubleshooter  Elite

## SYSTEM DETAILS

HOME WORLD

TYPE OF WORLD

First  Second  Third

PLANETARY STORY CONCEPT

DETAILS

## SAFETY DISCUSSION

RATING

PG  15  18  R

OFF LIMIT TOPICS

OTHER SYSTEM OBJECTS

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS