

meet and handles negotiations with Mr. Johnsons, dealers, info-brokers, and situations where legwork and networking is necessary. A face may be all natural, but more often than not they're augmented by bioware such as tailored pheromones.

Magicians use their force of will and the power of their beliefs to manipulate magic and control spirits. Magicians who have similar beliefs often gravitate to one another, adopting schools of thought known as traditions. Magicians of all traditions are able to cast spells and summon and bind spirits. Most can also perceive and project into the parallel mystic realm of astral space. Two magical traditions are common: hermetic mages and shamans. **Mages** (hermetic magicians) are known for using thaumaturgical abilities in a scientific manner. To mages, magic is about knowledge and structure. **Shamans** are magicians to whom magic is attunement with the forces of nature.

Adepts are the modern-day ninjas and berserkers, using magic to enhance their body's abilities. Adepts tend to be athletically oriented, with good stealth and combat skills.

Hackers are characters that specialize in computers, and accessing and manipulating data via the Matrix—either using augmented reality or going full-bore and using virtual reality to help them do their dirty work. Most hackers use customized computers called commlinks, often with personally written programs that manipulate the Matrix in ways beyond any sys-op's intention. While illegally logged into the Matrix, hackers can search and sift through information of all kinds, tap phone calls, and disable and enable other systems at will. Most hackers are experts in cybercombat—a battle of skills and programs against other hackers or intrusion countermeasures (IC).

Riggers are a subset of hackers who focus on using and manipulating modern vehicles and drones. Many riggers are adept at controlling multiple drones at once and using them as “eyes and ears.” Others excel at “jumping into” vehicles through full virtual reality, effectively operating as if they were extensions of their own bodies. Similarly, security riggers—typically known as *spiders*—interface with the sim-enhanced security systems built into buildings and facilities. From this “web,” the spider's reach spans the entire building, allowing him to see through sensors and mentally control security features like locks and hidden weaponry. For riggers looking for work on the sly, good *smugglers* are always in short supply, and piloting a T-bird across hostile borders or running BTL chips up and down the coast can be profitable shadow-ops. If getting down and dirty with the physical and electronic guts of your ride is more your thing, you can take *tech-wiz* jobs to modify vehicles according to a client's (probably illegal) desires—a lucrative biz that also requires less travel.

Street samurai are physically enhanced combat monsters. With implanted cyberware, bioware, and combat skills, they attempt to be the quickest, meanest, and strongest killing machines on the streets. Many of them cybernetically boost their reflexes to increase their action and reaction speeds, or boost their strength so that they can inflict more damage. Many are also lethal with firearms, and almost all have a smart-link system installed for increased precision in shooting. Some

fight for honor, some because they get paid for it, and others because they are insane enough to go up against anything. Street samurai is a catch-all term—some characters may identify themselves as bodyguards, mercenaries, assassins, or with similar labels, but in general a character based around physical skills and non-magical augmentation can be called a street samurai—even if some of them don't like the implication.

These basic runner types are just the tip of the iceberg and are not meant to define a set of character classes. Players can create a dizzying variety of characters using the character creation rules (p. 70)—for example, a detective character who relies on charisma and skill as opposed to cyberware, or a covert operations specialist who has all the gear and cyberware necessary to penetrate electronic defenses. The only limit is your imagination. For more examples of the types of characters you can play, see the Sample Characters beginning on p. 89.

SETTINGS

Shadowrun is set only sixty-five years in the future, but the world has gone through tremendous changes. Two of the most significant are the Matrix and the astral plane—two “settings” that will come into play no matter where your shadowrunner is on the globe.

The Matrix

The Matrix is the sweeping term generally used to refer to the worldwide computer network and telecommunications grid—or, more accurately, the millions of wireless computer networks and devices that, together, comprise the Matrix—a mesh network with no central body. The Matrix is used for all types of communications—voice and vidphone calls are routed through the Matrix, as are text messages and emails.

Almost everyone in developed nations uses the Matrix on a daily basis for work, education, and recreational purposes. In fact, most people are online all of the time, constantly interacting with the Matrix via their *commlinks* and *augmented reality (AR)* overlays. Most people have their own *personal area network (PAN)*, a micro-network linking together all of their personal devices using their commlink as the central router and Matrix hub. This wireless connectivity gives users a great amount of freedom, as they can access their files and resources from virtually everywhere, and interact with nearby devices and networks using AR visual sight cues and other sensory data to bring them information on the fly. This technology is described in detail in *The Wireless World*, p. 205.

Of central interest to most casual users are geo-tags which broadcast AR Matrix data that is linked to a specific location. For example, a geo-tag at a shopping mall may broadcast a mall map, information about new stores, and current sale specials. A geo-tag at the Seattle Department of Motor Vehicles would direct you to the proper line, desk, or terminal, inform you of the necessary ID requirements, and offer driving safety tips to everyone entering and leaving.

Matrix users can access multiple systems at once—they may be downloading their email in one augmented reality “window,” referencing research documents in another, and be

