

choosy than others, meaning you need to look good, dress well, or sport your exclusive-membership RFID tag implant to gain entry. Even the less exclusive clubs might have areas that the general public will never even know about, let alone hope to get in—including private rooms perfect for secure biz.

Besides the standard clubs you can usually find a large number of “niche-market” nightspots in most major sprawls. Under their skins the mainstream clubs are all essentially the same, but in the niche clubs you’re more likely to find a wider variation of themes catering to a narrower range of customer—everything from the magically active to metahuman groups to lovers of Japanese anime (especially since Japanese culture shows no sign of giving up its hold on the world anytime soon). Newcomers who show a genuine interest in (and understanding of the social conventions of) a particular theme are welcomed; others might be looked on with suspicion until their motives are determined. Some of these clubs are private and don’t admit new members without sponsorship by an existing member.

Finally, there are Matrix clubs. In the Matrix nobody knows you’re a dog—or a 12-year-old hacker, or a middle-aged ork pretending to be a cute Japanese schoolgirl—and nobody really cares, as long as you’re cool. Matrix clubs exist only in cyberspace, and thus aren’t constrained by those pesky real-world laws like physics and gravity. Naturally, hackers think this makes them far more fun than your typical meat market. Wizzer still are the clubs-within-clubs that can be reached only by that time-honored custom of hacking your way in. If you’re good enough to make it past the IC, you might be amazed at what you’ll see. After all, you don’t think they share the good stuff with anybody who can plug into an off-the-shelf commlink, do you?

Sometimes people ignore the clubs entirely, arranging meets on the fly, flash-mob style, or setting up their own venues by staging “break-in parties” inside closed businesses or street raves in abandoned urban areas.

MUSIC

Music is everywhere: in your house, your car, the places you shop, the ad kiosks you pass—even inside your head, thanks to your subdermal implants. Whether it’s the squeaky-clean, corp-sponsored Top 40 “hits” or any of a dizzying number of genres from goblin rock to elven acoustic to synthrash to neo-classical to everything in between, music is an integral part of 2070s life. In many places it seems like everybody’s listening to music—and if you get bored with your own sounds, you can always pick up something new by tuning in your commlink to whatever the people around you are broadcasting.

These days, music-makers enjoy many more options than their grandparents back at the turn of the century did. The old-style acoustic instruments still exist, of course, along with their old-school electric counterparts, but in the ’70s they are joined by some wiz goodies that Grandpa could only dream about. Without a doubt the most important of these is the synthlink, which permitted musicians to plug directly into their instruments and create the music they heard in their heads. The synthlink was a breakthrough because it removed

one of the last barriers to musical composition, opening up the creative floodgates for many talented musicians who lacked the formal training or the knowledge to produce songs the old-fashioned way. These days, most music (except for genres that emphasize their “natural” sound) is produced using synthlink-enhanced instruments, and with few exceptions, musical idols come and go with the fleeting vagaries of the public’s hunger for the “next big thing.”

SPORTS

Sports are big business in the ’70s, every bit as much about making piles of cred for their corporate sponsors as they are about the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Equal parts contest of athletic prowess and media extravaganza, 2070s sports can be summed up in one word—intense. With the kind of nuyen that rides on the outcome of every contest in major sports, the field is wide open for every kind of edge that team, player, or technology can employ.

That’s not to say that enhancements like cyber implants and magical augmentation are universally accepted. Take technological upgrades, for example: debate rages stronger than ever these days on the subject of cyberware, drugs, nanotech, and genetic manipulation. Some leagues ban them, some have split to accommodate them, others have begun reluctantly to accept them in limited forms, and a few have embraced them. Many top athletes don’t want to touch them anyway, since there’s always the chance they’ll fail at the wrong time and put the athlete out of action; it’s the up-and-comers and the over-the-hillers who most often look for the quick fix, but this is changing as attitudes change.

Magic, on the other hand, is frowned on pretty much everywhere. Even though lots of big-league sports boast ad-opts on their teams, spellcasting is a major no-no in almost every sport except urban brawl (a game that’s part war, part football, part large-scale urban renewal), and leagues often employ trained magicians and spirits as referees to make sure everything stays firmly in the realm of the mundane.

One controversy that still surrounds major sports is the participation of metahumans. Some sports, like football and urban brawl, don’t care and allow everyone to participate; others, like some baseball and soccer leagues, are humans-only clubs. Efforts continue to get these bans removed.

In addition to the classic major sports that have been around forever (auto racing, hockey, baseball, basketball, soccer, football, boxing, and so forth), more modern sports have fan followings every bit as large: urban brawl; combat biking (soap opera mayhem on motorcycles); court ball (ancient Aztec game akin to basketball, but with the loser’s captain sacrificed at the game’s end); and stickball (a Native American sport that’s popular because it’s one of the few that allows magic).

SIMSENSE

Why just watch a show when you can be part of the action? Why only get what your eyes and ears are telling you, when you can have the full spectrum of sensations and even feel the same emotions the characters are feeling? Simsense lets you do that.