

OTAKU

The following is a slightly revised version of the Otaku rules I developed for my **Matrix** submission. It was not part of my final submission so I've changed the rules to follow existing **SR3/VR2** mechanics as much as possible. Comments are of course welcome. Text in brackets [] denotes text changed from the original manuscript.

OTAKU

The following rules take precedence over the rules presented in **Virtual Realities 2.0** and **Renraku Arcology: Shutdown**.

PLAYING AN OTAKU

Most otaku come from dysfunctional families or worse - abandoned on the street or orphaned at a young age. The years before he was rescued by his otaku tribe were filled with an endless gnawing hunger and desperation, with the occasional flash of danger when the hunters of the Sprawl were on the move. Many otaku children were more animals than humans before being brought in, survivors to the core.

After being rescued by the otaku tribe the new recruit was given shelter, an education, and sense of community - probably the new otaku's first taste of stability or even friendship. For this reason otaku tend to be fanatically loyal to their tribe, almost to the point of desperation. They also tend to be very distrustful of others outside the tribe or other otaku.

New otaku are given an education (often strongly Matrix-oriented), often being put in front of a computer their first day in the tribe. Once he is judged ready by the older otaku he is taken to have his datajack implanted. This step usually marks the differentiation between an initiate and a full member of the tribe. The member then takes a sort of spirit journey into the Matrix, often for days at a time while other tribe members keep his body from wasting away. During this time most otaku experience the strange Deep Resonance that alters them forever. Those that do not usually leave the tribe, using their incredible computer skills gained in the tribe to become programmers or deckers. They usually do not speak of his time as an otaku and will never intentionally meet his old tribe again.

Surprisingly enough, most otaku are quite stable mentally. The otaku candidates' mental stability is very important, without it he could very well go insane when experiencing the Resonance. Just don't expect them to be normal, the depravations of their childhood and the tribal culture of the otaku tend to produce members that are highly dysfunctional in normal society. Most lack any sort of compassion for non-otaku, or even otaku not of their tribe. To an otaku life revolves around two things: the Matrix and his tribe.

Everything revolves around the Matrix in otaku culture; bizarre social customs and interactions are the norm for otaku, especially when dealing with non-otaku. The Matrix IS the world to otaku, and most could care less about the "meatworld" except how it affects their personal well being or others of the tribe. They tend to be incredibly arrogant when it comes to their abilities on the Matrix, even to the point of foolhardiness in some. Even the older otaku tend to be childish, petty, and cold-blooded.

TRIBES

Most otaku are members of "tribes". Although these usually bear little resemblance to such organizations in the NAN and elsewhere. Instead they are more loose organizations for self-protection and showing those with the talent how to connect to the Deep Resonance. They typically bear more resemblance to street gangs than a "tribe", many are actually just as vicious as the most depraved go-gang - using their unique abilities to cause as much damage as they can.

THE DEEP RESONANCE

The Deep Resonance is the poorly understood phenomena that most otaku go through at some point in their early teens. The exact experience varies, but many otaku describe it in terms reminiscent of the totemic experience that shaman's experience. Others claim no special milestone, they claim to simply wake up one day with a profound understanding of the Matrix, suddenly perceiving the flow of information and data as patterns and symbols, much as a mage.

Whatever the mystical or physical reality of the Deep Resonance the effects are quite remarkable. The otaku's neurological structure alters itself to allow direct neural interface with the Matrix, enabling the otaku to "deck" without a computer. In essence he becomes a living computer.

CHARACTER CREATION

Either the priority system (p. 54, SR3) or the points-based system (p. xx, Shadowrun Companion (SRComp)) may be used to generate decker characters.

PRIORITY SYSTEM

If an otaku character is created using the priority system then the following restrictions apply:

1. Otaku must assign Priority A to Magic and E to Resources. They do not get spell points or magical abilities. This represents their "adept" abilities in the Matrix.
2. Otaku characters start play with a datajack and ASIST converter. This cyberware does not cost the otaku money.

POINTS-BASED SYSTEM

It costs 30 points to play an otaku.

PATH

Otaku fall into two broad groupings: the cyberadepts and the technoshamans.

Both groups exhibit largely identical abilities, but have very different views on the Matrix and the Deep Resonance. Players are required to choose a path for their otaku character upon character generation.

CYBERADEPTS

Cyberadepts tend to be the rationalists of the two paths, they see the Resonance as a natural evolution of humanity blending with their technology and see themselves as another step in mankind's eventual ascension into a new kind of being. They gain an almost prescience feel for the Matrix when they experience the Resonance, they see everything in terms of organized data and patterns.

Game Effects

Cyberadepts gain a +1 bonus to the effective rating of any complex forms they create. This represents their skill at organizing patterns and deep knowledge of the Matrix's workings.

TECHNOSHAMANS

The technoshamans take a more holistic approach, often viewing the Matrix as a living being. In this respect they view themselves as avatars of the Matrix's will, and see the Resonance as proof. Many technoshamans claim that spirits of the Matrix are also active, aiding the otaku and their plans.

Game Effects

Technoshamans increase the effective rating of their Pattern skills by 1. This represents their approach to 'blending' with the Matrix as a unified whole.

ATTRIBUTES

SPECIAL RULES

The Racial Modified Limits (p. 245, SR3) for otaku Mental Attributes are raised by 1, and lowered by 1 for Physical Attributes. This may affect their Attribute Maximums as well.

ALLOCATING ATTRIBUTES

The Mental Attributes are even more important for otaku than they are for deckers, for they are the basis of their Living Persona. In particular, Intelligence and Willpower are the most important attributes for otaku. It is not uncommon for otaku to be physically disabled, coupled with extremely high intelligence and determination

Charisma matters even less for otaku than deckers, with most otaku having subzero Charisma. Many otaku appear very strange and many people will react negatively to their presence. They are not like normal people, and it shows through.

Physical skills are largely unimportant to an otaku, and it is the rare otaku who could be called strong for his metahuman type. Many otaku are almost crippled by infirmity in fact. The only physical attribute of any value is Body, which is used when resisting the effects of grey or black IC.

SKILLS

Computer

All otaku characters must start play with a Computer Skill of at least 6. The normal skill limit for characters (p. 43, SR3) does not apply for otaku in regards to the Computer Skill. Otaku may possess a Computer Skill as high as 8 during character generation.

Hardware Specialization

Otaku have little need for any knowledge of hardware. They themselves do not use computers once they experience the Deep Resonance. Thus this specialization is rarely found in any otaku.

Decking Specialization

Most otaku specialize in this aspect of Computer Use. It represents the otaku's intimate understanding of the Matrix and how to manipulate it. Most otaku, even at a very young age, have the skills and experience that only the most veteran deckers can match.

Programming Specialization

Most otaku possess some level of programming skill from their period of mentorship. But once they experience the Deep Resonance they have little need to further explore the field. Some otaku do take an interest in it though, using their skills to support the tribe.

Cybernetics Specialization

Almost no otaku specializes in this facet of the Computer Skill.

Etiquette

Otaku characters must specialize in either Street or Decker when choosing Etiquette skills. They may learn other Etiquette skills during the course of play.

Otaku Skills

In addition to normal skills, otaku also possess special skills unique to them. In particular pattern, channel, and complex form skills. See below for details.

THE LIVING PERSONA

The Deep Resonance turns the otaku's brain into an organic processor core, a biological cyberdeck if you will. The statistics and ratings for this 'system' are based on the otaku's own Mental Attributes.

THE CORE FORM

Operating System

The otaku's effective [MPCP]Rating is equal to the average of his Intelligence and Willpower Attribute.

Initiative

Otaku have a number of Initiative dice equal to their Intelligence in the Matrix. They have as many Initiative Dice as their Resonance Pool.

I/O

If using the optional bandwidth rules (p. xx) otaku have an effective I/O Rating equal to their Intelligence x 100.

Enhanced Attributes

The altered neurological structure of the otaku is not compatible with any external improvements. In fact, modifications to the otaku's natural Intelligence and Willpower are detrimental in regards to the Deep Resonance. For this reason, improvements to the otaku's Intelligence or Willpower by ANY means other than through spending Karma Points will reduce their Attribute for purposes of calculating their Living Persona values and skills.

For example, an otaku with Intelligence-4 who receives an Cerebral Booster-2 would have an effective Intelligence of 6 for standard tasks, but only 2 for purposes of calculating his Living Persona values.

OTAKU SKILLS

Each otaku understands the Matrix in subtle ways far beyond that of even the most experienced decker. This understanding translates into special skills that only otaku possess.

Enhanced Attributes

As stated above the Deep Resonance has profound affects on an otaku's neurochemistry. These changes are not necessarily compatible with bioware and cyberware that enhance mental attributes.

Cyberware and bioware that affect skill tasks (Encephalon, Cerebral Booster, Mnemonic Enhancer) have no effect on Otaku Skills. Task Pools may not be used with Otaku Skills. In addition, for purposes of calculating the cost to raise skills use the otaku subtracts any artificial Attribute bonuses from the base stat for purposes of calculating costs, even if the enhancements are treated as "natural".

For example, an otaku with Cerebral Booster-2 has an additional 2 Intelligence for most tasks, and a Task Pool of 1. This Task Pool may not be used for any tests made with Otaku Skills, and for purposes of calculating the cost to increase his Intelligence-linked skills his effective Intelligence is actually reduced by 2.

PATTERNS

Otaku learn four skills that determine the capabilities of their living personas connection to the Matrix. These are the Pattern Skills. There are four pattern skills, each named for one of the persona programs: Bod, Evasion, Masking and Sensors. They represent the level of development and understanding the otaku possesses of the Matrix. They operate in all other ways as a normal users persona program.

Specialization

There are no specializations for pattern skills.

Starting Skill

There is no limit to the level of skill an otaku may possess in his pattern skills. Otaku start with an amount of skill points equal to their Intelligence x 2 that they may distribute among their pattern skills. These points must be spent on pattern skills and cannot be saved.

Skill Development

Pattern skills are linked to Intelligence and are considered to be Active. Regular skill points and Karma may be used to increase his pattern ratings.

Suspending Persona Operations

If using the optional Bandwidth rules (p. xx), otaku may not suspend their persona operations.

CHANNELS

Otaku to not possess, or require, operational utilities to help them access information services on the Matrix. Instead, they learn five special skills called channels that act in their place. Each of the five channels is named for one of the five Matrix subsystem ratings: Access, Control, Index, Files, and Slave. Whenever an otaku is required to make a Subsystem Test during a system operation he uses the appropriate channel skill to lower the target number. For example, an Analyse Security operation requires a Control Test. A normal decker would use an Analyse utility to lower the target number. An otaku would use his Control Channel Rating instead.

Specialization

The basic channels are general skills. The otaku may specialize in certain actions that mimic the functions of specific utility programs as well.

For example, Control Channel (Analyse) would mean the otaku would have an effective rating 1 higher for performing operations that would use that utility, such as Analyse Host; but be at -1 for any others such as Redirect Datatrail.

Starting Skill

The otaku may not possess any channel skills higher than Rating 6 during character generation. Otaku start with a number of skill points equal to their Intelligence and Willpower Attributes x 2 (rounded down) that they may distribute among their channel skills. Each channel must be assigned at least one point from this pool.

Skill Development

Channel skills are Knowledge Skills and linked to the otaku's Willpower. Regular skill points and Karma may be used to increase channel ratings.

COMPLEX FORMS

In addition to their patterns and channels, otaku can learn to create constructs that operate in much the same manner as conventional utilities. In effect these are 'stable' simple forms that the otaku has improved upon and memorized. Complex forms are not 'programs' in the conventional sense. The otaku

directly manipulates his Living Persona on the Matrix to produce the desired effects.

Starting Skill

Otaku begin with their Intelligence x 10 points that they may assign to Complex Forms. These points are allocated towards the programs programming complexity on a 1 for 1 basis.

For example, a starting otaku character with an Intelligence of 5 has 50 points to allocate to complex forms. He buys Attack-5S (costs $5 \times 4 = 20$ points), Sleaze-5 (for $4 \times 3 = 12$ points), and Armour- ($5 \times 5 = 25$).

Creating a Complex Form

Each complex form is a skill, and is linked to the otaku's Intelligence. No complex form may exceed the average of the otaku's Willpower and Intelligence multiplied by 1.5. Complex forms are counted as Language skills for purposes of increasing their ratings. There are no concentrations or defaulting for complex form skills. Each complex form is a separate base skill, even for forms that mimic differing staging of the same program.

For example, a complex form that mimics the Attack-5S program is a separate skill from one that mimics the same skill but with a Medium staging.

Restrictions

Complex forms may not be used to create agent or frames, otaku use sprites in their place. Programming options may not be applied to complex forms.

Improving a Complex Form

When determining the cost to improve complex forms add the Multiplier of the program that the form mimics.

For example, Phillip has the skill of Complex Form (Attack-5S). Phillips Intelligence is a 6. Raising the Skill to 6 would require $([6 \times 1] + 4)$ 10 Good Karma.

Complex Forms and Bandwidth

If using the optional Bandwidth rules (p. xx) then each Complex Form the otaku possesses, add its Rating to his persona bandwidth, even if they are not utilized.

SIMPLE FORMS

Otaku may also create 'programs' on the fly. These temporary forms are fairly short lived and are usually used as "stopgap" measures by otaku trying to accomplish specific tasks.

To create a simple form the otaku essentially makes an "instant" programming test with a TN equal to the Complexity of the program he wishes to emulate. This requires a Simple Action on the part of the otaku. If successful, the program lasts for one use. If not used immediately the simple form only lasts until the end of the Combat Turn it was created in.

Limitations

Simple forms may only emulate offensive, defence and special utilities. They cannot create frames or agents.

Simple forms may not use any programming options.

SPRITES

Sprites are the otaku version of frames and agents. All sprites are individual, and often display complex personalities - usually aspects of the otaku who created them. In a way they are independent fragments of the otaku's own personality.

Each sprite is unique to the otaku that created it. It represents a significant investment in time and Karma by the otaku to create it, and are often viewed as spirits from the Matrix by technoshamans. The actual method used to create a sprite varies from otaku to otaku, usually taking form in a very personal experience on the Matrix relating to their original exposure to the Deep Resonance.

Creating a Sprite

[Use the rules in VR2]

EDGES AND FLAWS

Edges and Flaws are an additional option for character generation given in the SRComp (p. xx). Some additional notes on the Edges and Flaws from that manual are noted below.

Computer Illiterate, Bio-Rejection, Jack Itch

Otaku may not take these Flaws.

College Education, Technical School Education

Otaku may not possess these education Edges.

Illiterate

Illiterate otaku have no difficulty in using the Matrix with their Living Persona. If using the Matrix through another computer system they suffer the relevant penalties.

This is a very common Flaw among otaku, especially technoshamans.

Uneducated

The skill learning penalties do not apply to Otaku Skills. Uneducated otaku still receive only Intelligence x 3 Knowledge Skill points at character generation.

This Flaw could be applicable to otaku who did not complete their entire training in the tribe.

Uncouth

This is almost a stereotypical Flaw of otaku, who are quite famous for their rude and churlish behaviour.

Magic Resistance and Poor Link

A higher than average number of otaku seem to possess an odd degree of resistance to magical effects.

OTAKU AND THE SOTA

Due to the effects of the Deep Resonance otaku are always in tune with the latest developments on the Matrix. Thus they are not affected by the SOTA rules.

OTAKU AND DAMAGE

Although the otaku's innate skill in using the Matrix is remarkable, their Living Persona makes them more vulnerable to harm than a decker. For one thing they are always considered to be running the Matrix "hot". They may not operate in any other capacity.

Otaku do not use an Online Condition Monitor, any damage they sustain to their online icon is translated as Stun damage on their Mental Condition Monitor. Black IC affect the otaku's Physical Condition Monitor just as it does normal deckers.

On the plus side, the otaku's channels and complex forms are not programs in the conventional sense, and they may not be affected by programs such as tar baby. Programs such as tar baby will not even react in the presence of a otaku's channels.

Otaku are also unaffected by virus code such as dataworms.

DICE POOLS

Otaku do not possess a Hacking Pool. In its place they have a Resonance Pool. Items that add to or subtract from a Hacking Pool have no effect on a Resonance Pool.

RESONANCE POOL

To determine an otaku's Resonance Pool, add the otaku's Intelligence Rating and his Willpower and divide by 3, round down.

Using the Pool

The Resonance Pool may be used for any task the otaku performs on the Matrix, including enhancing his channels or when making tests using his patterns.

Enhancements and the Pool

Modifiers to the otaku's Intelligence or Willpower Rating do not affect the Resonance Pool, whether it is from magical, cybernetic, or bionetic sources.

OTAKU AND CYBERTERMINALS

Otaku are perfectly capable of accessing the Matrix through conventional systems or even cyberdecks. However, if they do so they lose the ability to use any of their special Otaku Skills as well as the abilities of the Living

Persona. They still keep their Reaction and Initiative ratings and may substitute the Resonance Pool for the Hacking Pool.

CYBERWARE

All otaku possess some level of cyberware in that they all have datajacks. Some go under the knife as soon as they can handle the surgery in fact.

DATAJACKS

ALL otaku have a datajack. It is the one distinguishing characteristic they have. This datajack always has an ASIST converter built into it as well. The otaku starts play with this piece of cyberware, he does not need to pay for it.

Enhanced Capabilities

The changes to the otaku's brain also affect his link to the datajack. To this end all otaku datajacks display the capabilities of a DNI link and transducer (p. 19 and p. 38 of Man and Machine respectively). These abilities are by-products of their Living Persona and are not cybernetics, thus the otaku pays no Essence for these capabilities.

HEADWARE MEMORY

Otaku cannot store information in their brains. They must use either headware memory or external storage devices connected through a datajack as storage in order to upload or download data from the Matrix.

RESONANCE AURA

An otaku's aura will radically shift once they enter the Matrix with their Living Persona. Anyone assensing an otaku as he interfaces will notice that the otaku's aura dims, then seems to sparkle with strange lights. Anyone familiar with otaku will immediately recognize it. The otaku cannot mask or hide this effect on their aura - even if they are aware of it.

MYSTERY OF THE OTAKU

No-one is quite sure what to make of the otaku. There are numerous theories of course, ranging from the plausible to the truly bizarre. However, a few things are well known about the otaku at present.

No known physiological or genetic abnormalities have ever been documented in otaku. Even after they experience the Deep Resonance there are no noticeable physiological changes either in their bodies or neurochemistry. Only detailed CAT scans can identify an otaku, and even then only if they are using their abilities. So although it is known their brains capabilities have been significantly altered to make them directly compatible with the technologies of the Matrix there is no understanding of the process involved.

One popular theory is that otaku have always been present. Only the fairly recent developments of direct neural interfaces has allowed their capabilities to manifest to the level that it does. The Deep Resonance, they conclude, is actually representative to an overcoming of psychic blocks to their ability. They cite numerous examples from magical research that tends to support

this assertion. Just as mages are naturally attuned to astral energies, otaku are naturally attuned to the complex flow of information.

Other theories abound of course. Many take Deuce's claims of creating the otaku seriously, and in many locations campaigns have begun to locate and destroy otaku. After all, if Deus created them then obviously they are acting as spies and agents for the AI. The fact that many otaku strenuously deny this link only reinforces the view that they are in fact hidden agents. As more information on the White agents of Deus escapes the Arcology it is only a matter of time before otaku become hated agents of Deus - true or not.

Luckily for otaku, unless they obviously display their abilities there is no way to identify them as such. There are no tests or scans that can be conducted on them to identify them as an otaku, and most are perfectly capable of using cyberdecks in order to accomplish their goals.

Stranger theories such as otaku are created from spirits in the Matrix or are hybrid children from space aliens have also been spread. The fact that no two otaku display quite the same capabilities or sees the Deep Resonance the same has made categorizing them very difficult.

One interesting fact that has come to light is that each otaku sees the Matrix in a very personal way. When an otaku accesses the Matrix they enter their own private world, essentially a reality filter of immense detail. They do not seem to be affected by system sculpting, or any other iconography tricks. Much like a decker-modified interface, their "internal" interface works without the usual cues that determine an objects appearance on the Matrix. The programs that otaku use, their channels and forms, are also little understood. Even close analysis of the actual program code loaded into hosts shows that no two otaku have quite the same way of performing tasks. The code itself seems somehow tied to the otaku himself. Efforts to isolate code fragments to duplicate the otaku's abilities have so far met with utter failure. The actual operating code that the otaku send to the host does not seem to conform to any known programming type or structure.

However, there has been limited success in analysing an otaku's code in order to "fingerprint" the otaku. Since each otaku has a unique "signature" that he uses with his abilities there is the possibility that certain otaku activity can be tracked and logged. So far this has met with limited success. Otaku who learn they are being tracked in this manner have displayed the ability to subtly alter their signatures.