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Dare to Know

Cyberpunk Comics

Science fiction comics that depict the relationship between human beings and the rapid advancement and omnipresence of technology, which leads to a radical change in the social order.

A sub-genre that explores the interactions between humans and technology. Cyberpunk features the combination of man and machine, either literally or metaphorically. The lines between the physical world and the cyberworld are often blurred, sometimes with multiple forms of virtual reality. For traditional cyberpunk, the setting is typically the Earth, but a dystopian one that is immersed in a dark and bleak cyberworld where corporations control society and standards of living have broken down. Protagonists are typically hackers who interact, physically and digitally, with other people equally immersed in the cyberworld. Authors and artists working in cyberpunk may use the sub-genre to criticize corporate power and the invasive rise of technology.

Stories concerning bio-robotics discuss the addition of mechanical prosthesis or enhancements to human physiology. Similar works involving cyborgs feature “bionics”—the integration of humans and machines. Comics on artificial intelligence (AI) depict one or more artificial minds becoming fully sentient. They may be mainframe computers, mobile androids, or, more recently, software on the internet. This portion of the sub-genre is generally focused on one of three mentalities: pro-machine, anti-machine, or ambivalence. In a pro-machine plot, robots or artificial intelligence entities are benevolent. In an anti-machine plot, there is generally confrontation with robots, androids, or AI; sometimes as mechanical servants malfunction, assert rights, or launch a coldly logical and diabolical plan. In an ambivalent plot, robots perform their functions but there remains some anxiety about them.

Common Elements

Exploration of the relationship between humans and computers
Human concerns of sentient technology
“Frankenstein complex”
Malicious compliance
Consequences of technological interference in human lives
Alienation from society
Social revolution
Computer hacking and hackers
Omni-present surveillance
Cybernetic implants
Prosthetics
Cyborgs

Cyberspace
Virtual reality
The internet
Robotics
Artificial intelligence
Corporate domination
Class divides
Ecological collapse
Megacities
Transhumanism
Freedom from need to work
Personal gratification
Power to rule

Graphic Novel Examples

Cyberpunk 2077 Volume 1: Trauma Team
(2021) by Cullen Bunn and Miguel
Valderrama

Thumbs (2020) by Sean Lewis and
Hayden Sherman
