

# What's Up? 9.95

## THE NUMBER OF THE BEATS

The all-woman multimedia unit Orphan Drift's first book is a 436 page collage also called O(rphan) D(rift>) (CyberPositive/Cabinet Editions). It's easily the most wild-style, excessive and ambitious volume of technothory since DeLanda's *War In The Age* back in 1992. It mixes sharper-than-usual samples from key technoculture sources - Burroughs, Ballard, Gibson, Deleuze, DeLanda, Plant etc - with excerpts from the collective's own hyper-dramatic SF and pieces from the Warwick-based digital materialist, cybernihilist and technoshaman Nick Land. This low-level remixology is periodically interrupted by whole paragraphs cut up to read like the glossalia in Stephenson's *Snowcrash*. In turn, these are broken up by pages and pages of binary static - 0's and 1's that scroll blankly across the page - as if printed syntax has devolved back into the machine code it was processed from or is incubating, poised to mutate from text to alien signal. Scanning these pages filled with "the number of the beats" induces powerful sensations of obsolence, paranoia and after a while, recognition. With a visceral relish, *Orphan Drift* elaborates how digital technology is disassembling the human security system of the body. Each material element - from viruses to DNA to bloodcells to memory to skin - is now switched on, can now be scaled up to a macro or down to a nano output which then plugs into any input. Orphan Drift is just another name for this posthuman state in which "the body has become an immense planet of seething hardware and optical fibres". Orphan Drift also follow Deleuze and Guattari into pro-capitalism. Capital's rate of social change, they argue, tears down social systems far in excess of the desires of the right and left. Orphan Drift



rarely bother to criticise in the standard theoretical/ moral sense. Instead, they affirm the end of the human with the hardcore zeal of AWOL MCs. In *Count Zero*, Gibson speculated that digital networks would self-organise into a reactivated voodoo pantheon whose *Ioa* (gods) would possess/ ride people through telepresence. Sampling *Predator 2*, Orphan Drift see voodoo as a technology that blurs the organic and the inorganic: "You can't stop what can't be stopped. You can't kill what can't be killed. It's fucking voodoo magic, man!" Orphan Drift are as inspired by junglists Hyper On Experience - who sampled these lines from *Predator 2* for their darkcore classic *Lord Of The Null Lines* in 1993 - as they are by Maya Deren's celebrated voodoo study, *Divine Horsemen*. Unlike West Coast and East Coast technobores, they favour the sonic over the visual. They understand that digital music is where machine rhythm interfaces with the body's drug-assisted takeover from the mind. "Let go of your nostalgia. Let go of being human," they suggest. As they say down at AWOL - watch out! Technical Badgirls are running wild. KE

