Cyberpunk vs. Fates Worse Than Death

Cyberpunk is a literary genre that first began in the early 1980s in the works of authors such as William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Neal Stephenson and movies such as Blade Runner. Although Fates Worse Than Death takes much from the cyberpunk genre, it is not just a generic cyberpunk setting. Those who are only familiar with cyberpunk conventions will have a hard time playing in the Fates Worse Than Death universe. However, since cyberpunk is the closest "genre" to Fates Worse Than Death, here is a short list of differences to get cyberpunk fans acquainted with the Fates Worse Than Death game universe:

Cyberpunk	Fates Worse Than Death
The "**Urban Sprawl**", an unending, unvaried and unknowable stretch of solid city containing every sort of culture, economy, lifestyle and organization within its breadth.	Game focuses on the island of Manhattan, detailing its boundaries and what can be found within it, including its specific and unique organizations and culture.
Most characters are **lone wolves** who travel the world giving only temporary loyalty to those who pay them (or the occasional good cause).	Most characters have an important and well-defined place in city society with duties and non-selfish motivations.
Usually **no psychic** phenomenon, or if there is it is usually a wildcard: rare freaks who can make people's heads explode.	Well defined and explained psychic abilities with clearly defined limits.
Urban populations are constantly growing, changing, and moving, leaving little focus on tradition and history.	Manhattan population is small, stable and some people live as their grandparents had, giving a sense of tradition, age and maturity to the city.
Distinction between the **powerless majority** of people who are just trying to survive and the **powerful minority** who have special skills or resources. The powerful tend to be the main players, with the powerless as a sort of background.	Focus on the idea that everyone is quite skilled at what they do, no matter what their economic status is, and that everyone is powerful and dangerous in their own way.
Focus on the **media**, on corporate advertisers creating pop culture, on who is famous, on being flashy and stylish and having 'style over substance'.	The street population of the city is basically ignored by and ignores the media. There is no real pop-culture and people become known for their deeds, not for looking cool.
VR is a gateway to adventure and a playground for the world's master hackers.	VR is an addictive escape for shut-ins, disdained by the street population. Real hackers are as likely to use a text-only interface.
Guns are common and used liberally.	Guns are rare (screened for at city entrances), used mainly by the richest criminals. The most common weapon is a knife.
Life is cheap and the death of a person usually has few consequences.	Life is cheap to some, very important to others. Each individual has many interconnections and nearly every death has consequences.
Philosophy is irrelevant, people spend their days concerned with how to survive.	Many have carved a niche for themselves in city society and have time to ask themselves questions such as "why am I here?" and "what do I want to do with my life?"
Police force is a brutish paramilitary force.	Police force is a bunch of idealistic teens who are under-equipped, under-skilled and act more like a gang than a military organization.
Gangs are short-sighted, violent, self-destructive, crazy criminals who are addicted to and sell drugs. This vision of gangs is generally based on post-crack (1980s and after) US urban street gangs.	Gangs are more-or-less "normal" people who have banded together for self-protection. Some gangs have lofty goals and ideals. Although they do have problems with violence, overall the city is a better place for their presence.
Cybernetic implants and replacements are powerful, flashy chrome and tend to turn people in to robot monsters.	Implants are either biological or small, unobtrusive electronics. They extend human capabilities but are rarely able to make people superhuman.
City is portrayed as a bright, noisy, bustling marketplace 24 hours a day.	The city is darker and quieter with a smaller population density (especially with many shut-ins) and few motor vehicles. At certain times of day the streets are almost empty.
Integration of computer chip technology in to brains creates **human-computer links** and lets human be programmed.	Neural restructuring techniques allow the brain itself to be changed, reprogrammed, even copied. Unobtrusive hand-jacks allow integration with computers.
Dreary, blighted **dystopian** setting symbolic of characters' own sense of being lost and having no control over their lives.	Dreary, blighted dismal setting as a counterpoint to and testing ground of social and individual growth.
Not as much focus on **drama, suspense and terror** because characters don't have much to lose in the first place.	Characters are given something worth trying to hold on to, making drama, suspense and terror possible.
Violence typically portrayed as the most important form of social and political persuasion, and most stories usually have at least one skilled fighter (usually a neutral party, hired and used as a tool by the PCs).	Violence is one of many tools available to characters, which can be beneficial if used wisely or disastrous if used poorly. Often, threats of violence are more useful than violence itself.
Massive difference in education, social power and culture between **rich and poor** characters.	Really rich people exist but are seldom seen. Most PCs range between what would be called middle class and very poor today. Culturally, they are more alike than different.
Exploration of **what is human** through invasive electromechanical implants turning people in to machines.	Exploration of what is human through neural restructuring, biotechnological manipulation, drugs with permanent psychological effects, etc.
Complete lack of **social support net**. There are hardly any social services except those designed to keep the capitalist system going.	There is a massive welfare system that supports most of the city, though many people do fall through the cracks. This is a system that benefits corps and government (see p.361).
Corporations are a cross between governments and organized crime agencies, who regularly and directly interfere in the lives of the characters.	Corps have a lot of power (mostly economic) but they can't afford to piss-off the government and their influence on the lives of characters is usually subtle and from afar.
History usually dotted with several Vietnam-esque **wars** with limited nuclear activity.	Periods of global corporate rule, ecological crises, global anti-corporate violence (and occupation by anti-corporate terrorist armies) leading to restructuring of economies and governments.