

I saw corps ... transform Night City into a machine fueled by people's crushed spirits, broken dreams and emptied pockets. Corps've long controlled our lives, taken lots... and now they're after our souls! ... I've declared war not 'cause capitalism's a thorn in my side or outta nostalgia for an America gone by. This war's a people's war against a system that's spiralled outta our control.

– Johnny Silverhand during Tapeworm, Cyberpunk 2077

Johnny Silverhand, born Robert John Linder[2][3], was a famous influential rockerboy and the lead singer of the band Samurai before its breakup in 2008.[4] A military veteran who defined the rockerboy movement to what it is today, he was the most prominent figure that fought against the corrupted NUSA government and megacorporations, often being described as a terrorist. Despite being charismatic and quite the charmer Johnny is also known to be irrational, impulsive, and a manipulator.[5]

Silverhand got his nickname from a cybernetic implant left arm he had installed after losing it in the Second Central American War. One of the early (and most probable) victims of cyberpsychosis[6], he then became very temperamental and "on the edge". He was described as driven by "dedication and ambitions, but at the end of the day he doesn't care much for the people around him as long as they are used to accomplish his goals" in one interview.[7][citation needed]

Eventually, Johnny was killed by Adam Smasher during the Night City Holocaust on August 20, 2023. However, his consciousness was engrammed into the Relic prior to cessation of his bodily functions after their initial conservation sometime during the Time of the Red. The engram is not exactly his consciousness, though, because it has a programming of replicating itself in the host like a virus, instead of assuring Johnny's survival.

Biography

1988 - 2000s

Robert John Linder was born in College Station, Texas, on November 16th, 1988.[2][3] He was a fan of Wendy O. Williams and considered her the toughest rockergirl ever. She took her own life when Johnny was just nine.[8]

John enlisted into the military as a teenager, lying about his real age,[9] and it didn't take long to see some action. John was sent to Nicaragua to participate in the Second Conflict of 2003. While in the war, John's life was supposedly saved by a friend who died protecting him. The conflict was devastating, as the war was run by a corrupt and manipulative government. When their secrets were exposed, however, many of the American soldiers dropped their banners as they fought back by deserting the military. The government used its influence to create a powerful propaganda campaign to make the American public hate deserters.

John was one of the men who decided he wouldn't fight in the corrupt war that ultimately led to him losing his arm and a friend. He left for Night City and stayed at a hotel for a whole month.[10] The military and the war had changed his life forever. He changed his name to

Johnny Silverhand, his last name representing the cybernetic arm that had replaced his left arm.[11] Johnny began his mission of rebellion to expose corruption by starting a rock band that would eventually be known as Samurai.[12][5] He started this band with his friend Kerry Eurodyne, originally only playing in backstreet clubs. Their first ever gig was in the Red Dirt, a small bar in Night City. At some point in 2003, while playing in a bar called Rainbow Cadenza, a producer by name of Jack Masters discovered them and signed them up with Universal Recording. Samurai was comprised of the co-founders Johnny and Kerry as well as Denny, Nancy, and Henry.

His music became revolutionary, starting the rockerboy movement and becoming an overnight sensation. He, along with Samurai itself, rose to the top of the US charts in record time. Despite this success, however, Samurai struggled as personal issues made it to the surface. During this time, the keyboard player Nancy was in an abusive relationship. She reached a point where she couldn't take it anymore, and pushed her boyfriend out of a window. After the NCPD discovered the body, she was arrested and taken to prison. Without her, Samurai struggled and finally split up in 2008.[5]

Johnny Silverhand was still one of the most popular musicians at the time. He planned to use his star power to begin a solo career and continue to push his anti-corporation and anti-government message. DBS Music wanted to sign him so desperately that they blackmailed him, threatening to reveal his true identity, as a deserter of the Second Central American Conflict.

Instead, Johnny Silverhand signed with Universal Music again, and released an entire album called 'SINS of Your Brothers' admitting that he was a deserter, and revealing all the terrible things the government had ordered. The album was wildly successful, and changed public perception of what it meant to be a deserter.[5]

2010s

In the 2010s, Johnny continued his rebellious campaign, this time in Japantown, during his famous free benefit concert to bring attention to brutal methods the NCPD used to quell the Homeless Riots.[13]

Rogue's relationship with Johnny ended at some point in 2011,[14] after she found out about Johnny cheating on her.[2]

After giving a concert at The Hammer on August 4th in 2013, Johnny went on a walk with Alt Cunningham, his former girlfriend, but were ambushed by thugs hired by Arasaka. The thugs injured Johnny, kidnapped Alt and took off in a van. Arasaka wanted her to develop a new variant of the Soullkiller software she had written for ITS.[2]

On the 5th of August in 2013, Johnny gathered a strike team, consisting of his ex-girlfriend Rogue, media reporter Thompson, and a nomad named Santiago, to infiltrate Arasaka Tower in Night City, so that they could save Alt. As a diversion, he called in a favor from all the members of his old band. Samurai gathered together and performed an entirely free show.

The show was held right in front of Arasaka Tower. This led to a riot on the tower as troops were called in to control the situation. In a panic reaction, Toshiro used Soullkiller on Alt while the assault took place and trapped her inside the Arasaka mainframe.[citation needed] Johnny and his team infiltrated the Tower, while Alt was trapped in the mainframe trying to find a way back to her body.

The team made it to the room where Toshiro, Akira, and Alt were. Johnny looked over Alt's body and presumed her dead moments after killing Toshiro out of anger. He turned to gather up Alt's still warm body in his arms off the couch disconnecting her. Behind the wall of monitors, a disembodied Alt screamed to him, but Johnny didn't hear her.[14][15]

After the assault on the Tower, Johnny and Santiago left Night City for a period of time and went into hiding with the Aldecaldos nomad community. In 2015, they returned to the USA from Mexico City.[16] Little was known of what he did during this time.[17]

Around 2015, a firefighter by the name of Samantha Stevens saved Silverhand from a fire that occurred in one of his studios.[18][19][20]

2020s

Around 2020, Silverhand did an interview in which he reminisced about a girl he had fallen for. She had told him she was born in Miami around 2004, as she could still remember the destruction of Tampa, and he mentioned she had a biosculpt smile and blue Teknics 2350 eyes, though he did not care how much of her was "real." [5]

In 2023, Johnny and Morgan Blackhand, alongside Rogue Amendiares, Shaitan, Thompson, Spider Murphy and others, led a Militech assault team on the Arasaka Towers in Night City, with the intention of ending the Fourth Corporate War by destroying the tower with a mini nuke.[21] Johnny had another reason for going back to the Arasaka offices however; he wanted to find Alt Cunningham, but there were more than a few obstacles in the way. Johnny's team was pinned down by the Arasaka forces and Adam Smasher in the tower labs after successfully liberating Alt. During these events, Johnny, who had barley managed to find cover, is conflicted on what to do. He feels last time he had abandoned Alt, but this time the rockerboy ensured himself he wouldn't do the same. With a Militech SMG on one hand and his Malorian on the other, Johnny left his cover, shouting and provoking Smasher, while emptying his guns on the borg. Smasher turned around, surprised at the audacity of the man, and then fired his autoshotgun at him, cutting Silverhand in half. This action allowed Shaitan to immobilize the Arasaka borg, giving the rest of the team the chance to leave.[21][22] Spider Murphy tried to reach Johnny but she was stopped by Rogue, who told her he was gone. Spider instead reached inside her jacket and pulled out a data slug Alt had downloaded to her a long time ago. Whispering she was sorry to Johnny, Spider inserted the chip into the back of the dying rocker's skull. She then tried to reach for her data suitcase, but soon realized it had been destroyed in the crossfire. Spider then left with Rogue, knowing Johnny and Bartmoss would one day be avenged.[22]

Silverhand's engram in 2077 has a different tale of the events, in which he escaped the fight with Smasher and attempted to reach the helicopter where Rogue was waiting, yet again being stopped by Smasher. Johnny was presumed dead, gunned down by the borg. The dying Johnny was recovered by Arasaka and interrogated by the corp security and later by Saburo Arasaka himself with a techie. He would be subjected to the Soullkiller program, his consciousness scanned and stored on an engram; his physical body dying and was allegedly buried in concrete in the derelict oil fields just outside of Night City.[23]

Despite there being no body to intern, a niche was dedicated to his memory at the North Oak Columbarium. His epitaph, which uses his real name, reads: "Robert John Linder: Son of a bitch who never gave up. A legend among legends." [24]

Black Dog

Not long after the 2023 Night City Holocaust, a Silverhand fan firefighter, Samantha Stevens, accessed the Hot Zone by a request from Angel. Samantha recovered a non-detonated mini-nuke from the wrecked bunker of the destroyed towers, and tossed its contents into Del Coronado Bay. After finding Johnny's body among the ruins, she put it into the nuke crate to preserve it. At some point she also recovered some of Johnny's possessions, including one of his Malorian 3516 and his Porsche. She hid all of these items, including the bomb case, in her garage somewhere in Night City. She protected and took care of them for years.

At some point in the Time of the Red, after encountering a group of edgerunners who were trying to find an unreleased song of Silverhand, Samantha gave them the task to transport the crate containing Johnny's body to Los Alamos Labs in New Mexico. Before they left, Samantha took aside one of them, a mercenary known as Zara, and gave her the Malorian she had found in a wrapped package and told her that the owner was never going to use it again, adding that she seemed the right person to carry it for him.

The group of edgerunners managed to deliver the create to Angel in New Mexico. After opening the crate, she whispered "Hello, my love." [20]

2077

At some point prior to 2077, Johnny's engram was placed onto a prototype version of the Relic. The device was stolen by Yorinobu Arasaka and stored within a secure vault in Konpeki Plaza, in an attempt to bring his father out into public. Johnny's engram and its location were uncovered by the Voodoo Boys, who planned to steal it to bring them into contact with Alt and bypass the Blackwall. The group hired Evelyn Parker to braintance the room for security measures and its location, though she decided to betray them and steal the device for herself. Through fixer Dexter DeShawn, Parker hired mercenaries V and Jackie Welles to steal the Relic from the room. The two mercenaries were able to steal it, though the Relic's storage case was damaged during their escape. To ensure it survived, a fatally wounded Jackie carried it in his shard slot and placed it into V's before he died.

Due to its presence when they were murdered, Johnny's engram finally awoke when the Relic revived an injured V. It then began uploading it onto the brain and replacing the mercenary's

consciousness, as it was programmed to. Initially attacking them in a bid to take over, Johnny eventually decided to cooperate with V to ensure he survived or could be retrieved from their head. He appeared on multiple occasions to either provide advice to V or give his thoughts on their situations. The Relic also provided V glimpses of Johnny's memories, including his attempt to save Alt in 2013 and his final attack on Arasaka Tower. Johnny's engram also attempted to take control of the body on multiple occasions.

If V took Hanako's offer in Nocturne Op55N1:

Johnny was angered at V's decision and believed they were too stubborn to see the truth. Because of this, he refused to help V in anyway during the process. He hated V and having to watch as Hanako, Takemura, and Anders Hellman all were working towards restoring the Arasaka Corporation. Johnny, however, was impressed with Yorinobu Arasaka who tried to kill the entire board of Arasaka in a military coup, he considered buying him a beer if he could. He took enjoyment from seeing Arasaka fight amongst themselves however still distrusted Hanako and believed he knew where this would end.

After Yorinobu was dealt with Hanako had Anders Hellman took V so that they could get the help they needed. During the surgery Johnny and V spoke one last time, he was very displeased with V's actions and proceed to explain how they betrayed themselves. He said that they were now one mind and without him they would feel empty once the Relic was removed. Johnny also said that V betrayed Jackie and took the easy way out instead of the blaze of glory, before he eventually left V forever.

If V asked Panam for help in Nocturne Op55N1:

Johnny was upset at the decision V took, and he believed they were making a mistake in not trusting him. As such, he did not offer V help during the assault; however, he learned that V had the Aldecaldos supporting them, something he did not anticipate. Even though he could not join V, Johnny still rooted for them during the assault and mocked Arasaka for getting attacked by nomads. Alt Cunningham took pleasure in her being right that Johnny was unable to manipulate V in taking control of their body, and still helped to get to Mikoshi. Johnny was still content with the results of the assault since Arasaka was hurt in the process.

Once in the Net, V and Johnny met with Alt, who told them that even though they had been finally separated, the biochip had changed too much of V's brain, and if they returned they would die after six months. Instead she advised Johnny to go back as the body wouldn't reject his psyche.

If Johnny stays with V's body:

V followed Alt beyond the Blackwall. A few months after those events, Johnny chose to leave Night City, feeling grateful to live again but sad for how things turned out in regards to V's fate.

If V lets Johnny go with Rogue in Nocturne Op55N1:

After giving control over their body, Johnny made a strike team with Rogue Amendiares and Crispin Weyland, crashing into Arasaka Tower with an AV, and reaching Mikoshi after fighting their way down. As they had assaulted the tower they ran into Adam Smasher who then killed

Rogue in front of Johnny. Johnny was upset at the murder and then fought Adam seeking revenge.

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If V and Johnny go on a suicide run in (Don't Fear) The Reaper:

V did not like the options given to them, fearing they could hurt other people. Johnny saw them as his only true friend, and offered a fourth option, assault Arasaka Tower just the two of them. While it seemed to be a clear suicide run the both of them agreed to trust in each other and walked through the front doors of Arasaka Tower. V fought against waves of Arasaka soldiers as Johnny gave them many tips on how to handle the situation, guiding them through he said that V was better than any of them. As they made their way down Johnny and V got support of Alt Cunningham who took control over the Tower and eventually destroying Mikoshi. V and Johnny fought against Adam Smasher, and were successful in the end. Johnny was pleased with V's work as they finally made it to Mikoshi's access point where Alt gave instructions from there.

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JOHNNY SILVERHAND

They say you can become a legendary rockerboy without all the sex and drugs, the manic depression, run-ins with the law and one toxic relationship after another. But Johnny Silverhand's old school.

Frontman for Samurai, charismatic visionary, rebel with a cause, sworn enemy of corporations (but especially Arasaka) and the mind behind the cult singles "Chippin' In" and "Never Fade Away" - currently residing in V's brain as a digitized tenant.

Silverhand met his demise during the attack on Arasaka Tower after getting shot by Adam Smasher and subsequently flatlined by Soullkiller. But some rockerboys never really die. Point in case - Silverhand's personality construct was kept in Arasaka's labs for decades before it landed on a prototype biochip called the Relic, which - following a series of unexpected events

- ended up in V's brain. If you think spending eternity in a cyberspace prison is worse than sharing your headspace with a complete stranger, you'd be dead wrong. For an egomaniac and narcissist like Johnny, it's a living hell.[24]

Ambitions

Y'know they say time is the best teacher. Used to think that was true ... Blew 'Saka tower to smithereens, and it's still standing there. Just the same. Don't want people gettin' stuck in a rut, stuck in the past. want them to change. Them and the world.

– Johnny Silverhand to V, Cherry Blossom Market, Cyberpunk 2077

Johnny Silverhand, after leaving the military, became determined to speak the truth of the corruption and oppression of multiple entities that held a position of power in the world. Johnny always harbored hatred for the world around him; Night City, the NUSA, the police, corps, and mostly Arasaka - his music became an extension of his feelings for the public to hear, though none of it ever made him feel better. He made it his goal to spark rebellion in people to not be blind and fight up against the oppressors as he believed. Johnny concentrated most of his anger to the Arasaka Corporation, and in his life he managed two assaults' of the Arasaka Tower of Night City. Arasaka became an obsession for him, so much so his friends would criticize him for his determination. To him, Arasaka represented corporate colonialism at it's worst, as the Megacorps would take consume the land and take over people's lives, he feared that humanity lost it's freedom.

Johnny lacked empathy for most people; if he needed to kill to prove his point, he would do it without hesitation. Often referred to as a terrorists and anarchist, he still never deviated from his goal of rebellion. Johnny Silverhand believed dying as a legend would spark rebellion in others, and that taking control meant doing whatever it took to bring down the Megacorps.

Flashbacks

Johnny's memories in 2077 are not accurate to what really happened in reality as per Alt Cunningham words.

What you saw [Johnny's memories] was his subjective view of what happened. A warped account of events he locked away in his subconsciousness and replayed time and again. It bears no resemblance to the truth.[28]

Conversations with Mike Pondsmith about Silverhand engram's memories in Cyberpunk 2077.

In 2013, Johnny attacks Arasaka purely to save Alt. (okay, so he's also pissed at them because they messed with him). Near the end of the 4th Corporate War in 2023, Johnny's old Media pal Thompson finds out that Arasaka has amassed a huge, uncontaminated database that will make it close to all powerful in the wake of Bartmoss's wreck of the Net. Thompson arranges an assault on the database, backed by Militech (who is fighting with Arasaka worldwide). The Bomb is a suitcase bomb that the team brings along to destroy the database if need be (Militech provides the Bomb, along with Morgan Blackhand, who is there to make sure the op goes off).

Johnny comes along because his friend Spider Murphy has also discovered that Arasaka has trapped Alt after 10 years of hunting for her. He's mainly there to get her back, but is willing to join up with Thompson and Morgan to get the job(s) done. Johnny's recollection of the events that day are scrambled from the rad damage his body took and the process of recording his engram (CDPR and I have both agreed that Johnny is an unreliable narrator at best). The bomb that went off was detonated by someone in the assault (the actual person is unknown), but Militech and the NUSA both decided to pin the blame on Arasaka anyway.[29]