

# BENEATH A STEEL SKY

A BRITISH DEVELOPED  
ADVENTURE TO CHALLENGE THE  
MIGHT OF LUCASARTS? VIRGIN  
HAS HIGH HOPES FOR ITS NEW  
CYBERPUNK ADVENTURE.

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## DUBBED

as the world's very first computer-based animated comic book adventure, Beneath a Steel Sky combines the talents of famed graphic novelist Dave Gibbons with UK-based development team Revolution Software. By working together, the team has created a game which not only illustrates the style of Gibbons, made famous through his Watchmen and 2000AD work, but also showcases the latest incarnation of Revolution's Virtual Theatre game engine.

Developed initially for use in the team's previous game, Lure of the Temptress, Virtual Theatre (VT) is a unique game system which effectively simulates a community of characters. Whereas most games tend to treat an

It was originally planned that Beneath a Steel Sky would use the same system as Lure of the Temptress, but a number of improvements were deemed necessary. Charles Cecil, producer of the game and Revolution managing director commented that in the initial version, "there were far too many boxes on screen, which could become confusing, especially when there were multiple conversations taking place. Eventually we decided that the system should be completely enhanced to overcome this, as well as other problems". The new version of VT allows for not only a realistic environment, but also an uncluttered, simple to operate user-interface.

On the graphics front, Dave Gibbons has been an integral part of

### "VIRTUAL THEATRE CREATES A WORLD IN WHICH EACH CHARACTER IS UNIQUE AND LEADS THEIR OWN LIFE"

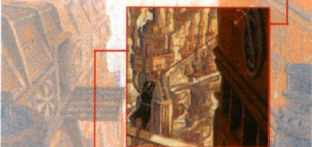
adventure one location at a time, Virtual Theatre creates a world in which each character is unique and leads their own life within the 'world'. Rather than meeting a character in a set location, VT has everyone rambling around getting on with life, and you can meet any of them on any occasion in different places. It certainly adds life to the games and it proved to be very effective in Lure of the Temptress.

the Steel Sky team along with Les Pace, an artist responsible for much of the animation in Who Framed Roger Rabbit? Gibbons sketched out each screen (after consulting the game coders for special gameplay areas and so on) and these were then coloured and scanned into an Apple Mac as a 24-bit 1,000 by 1,000 pixel image with a palette of 25 million colours. These images were then ported to the PC and

<b>PRODUCT</b> Beneath a Steel Sky
<b>SOFTWARE HOUSE</b> Virgin
<b>RELEASE DATE</b> November
<b>REQUIREMENTS</b> Dos 5.0 Min, 2Mb RAM, 386, VGA, Mouse, 20Mb Hard Disk
<b>SUPPORTS</b> Soundblaster, Adlib, Adlib Gold, Roland Sound Cards



On the ledge you have to throw the grappling hook across, Batman style, to help our hero reach the other side. The animation as he swings across is particularly impressive. Just look at the quality of the backdrop as well. Reaching the other side, Foster crashes through the window into the next part of the adventure



Many of Dave Gibbons' illustrations found throughout the game create a dark and moody atmosphere which conveys the cyberpunk feel exceptionally well. From control rooms to gardens, all the images are superb

**PRE  
VIEW**



translated to a resolution of 320 by 200 pixels in 256 colours. Once each screen was completed in this way, Les had to touch up each image to compensate for the loss of detail. Game characters are then superimposed over these backdrops for the adventure.

Obviously, having a famed graphic novelist working on the team, Revolution and Virgin were keen to utilise his talents as much as possible. To this end, the game will be accompanied by an in-pack graphic novel to introduce the game characters, and give some kind of background to the story.

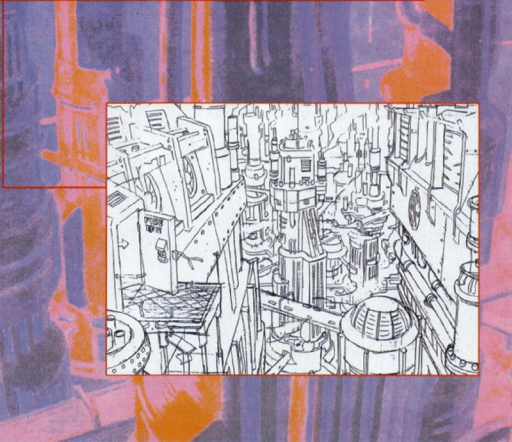
The story is what you'd expect from a cyberpunk-esque mystery. It's set in the future (obviously), where six vast corporations have taken over the world. Between them they've managed to annihilate the Earth's ecological system and now they are the only ones capable of providing suitable habitats in the form of giant city states which cover entire continents – ring a few Megacity bells? Perhaps Judge Dredd is kicking around somewhere?

Anyone declining to live in the cities has to dwell in the wastelands, referred to as the Gap. Robert Foster is a former Gap dweller, but for an unknown reason he has been forced to the city. Here he must come to terms with his own past as he explores the unusual social structure of the city, enforced by LINC which is the all-controlling Big Brother-style computer. The adventure is absolutely huge, and is rich with a wide variety of characters and personalities who inhabit some of the best-looking locations found in an adventure game.

Could this be the adventure game to finally establish British developers as a force to be reckoned with? ■



Images were drawn by Dave Gibbons before being coloured and digitised by Les Pace. The resulting images initially took advantage of a 25 million colour palette before being reduce to a 320 by 200 pixel image presented in 256 colours



## WHO IS DAVE GIBBONS?



Dave Gibbons is possibly one of the best known comic book artists around. With work spanning from the highly acclaimed Watchmen, to Give Me Liberty and 2000AD his work is widely acclaimed by fans of graphic novels. His work on the Beneath a Steel Sky project has involved everything from planning individual characters, such as Foster himself, the security force chaps and the Gap Dweller shown here, to all of the locations in the game.

As well as in-game graphics, his talents have been called upon to produce an in-pack graphical novel which covers much of the background to the game's story.

