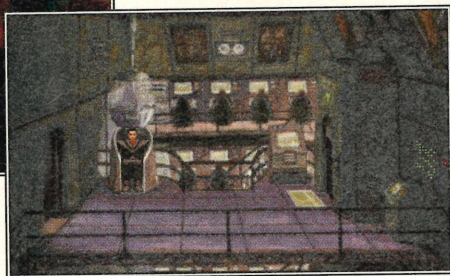




(Left) The security forces helicopter goes down over Union City in *Beneath A Steel Sky's* atmospheric but rather short intro.

(Below) Top Orwellian mind control device type things aho! Or maybe it's just a horribly fashionable futuristic hairdryer.

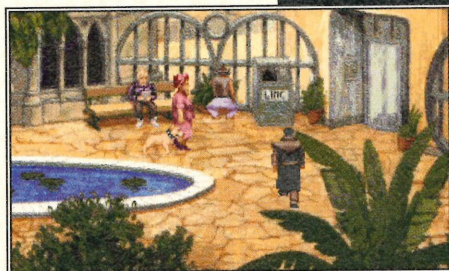
(Bottom) The closer you get to the surface, the more luxurious and expensive your surroundings become. This is Hyde Park on ground level, where only the richest of the rich can afford to live.



well thought out from beginning to end. Serious adventure hacks will be in hog heaven.

But the game's not without its faults. The main problem I have is that it doesn't seem to know quite what tone it should set. From what you've heard, and what you're shown during the introduction sequence, you'd have every right to expect a dark, gloomy and atmospheric vision of a sleazy, corrupt future. However, no matter how hard Gibbons'

beautifully-realised background artwork and truly excellent accompanying minicom try to set the mood, there are too many distracting factors at work here that dilute the effect. Maybe it's that I just can't take the little



on-screen characters seriously enough to care for them or, in the case of the numerous baddies, feel threatened by them. Maybe it's because the music, which should have been as haunting and ominous as the powerful graphics, mostly consists of a series of inappropriate themes which at times sound more like jolly Radio One jingles.

In reality, probably all these things are to blame – the game simply spreads itself too thin, trying to be at once wildly atmospheric, comedic, menacing and tongue-in-cheek. No matter how close it may come at times, *Beneath A Steel Sky* never quite manages to immerse you in a brooding, sinister world the way the designers obviously intended. But then again I'm probably just being a jaded bastard. The game may be very pretentious, but should we really take it *that* seriously? This isn't a movie or a high-brow novel, it's a computer game, for God's sake, and although it may have its failings as a piece of interactive fiction, as an adventure game in the classic LucasArts tradition it's difficult to find fault with.

In fact, it's at least as good – although not as funny – as anything that LucasArts has come up with in the last year. But as for the hyped claim that it's "The World's First Computer-Based Animated Comicbook Adventure," well, I'm still far from convinced. Just take *Beneath A Steel Sky* for what it is and not for what it may otherwise pretend to be and you'll have a whale of a time. GARY WHITTA

PC GAMER *Final Rating*
91% **Highs** Beautiful visuals, an enthralling plot and plenty of brilliant puzzles.
Lows Nowhere near as groundbreaking as it would have you believe.
The Verdict A must-buy for all serious adventure fans.

Counterpoint

"What do you best remember about the *Monkey Island* games? More than likely, it's not the graphics (ace though they are) or the easy-to-get-to-grips-with interface (icon of user friendliness though it may be). No, it's probably the jokes. You know, the spitting contest, the bit where his trousers fall down... And that, for me, is where *Beneath A Steel Sky* falls down. It's just not funny. (It's not even *trying* to be funny most of the time.) Okay, it's not really fair to complain when a game fails to provide something it

never set out to do in the first place (this is much more your *Indiana Jones & The Fate Of Atlantis* than your *Sam And Max*) but consider – LucasArts haven't done a serious adventure in a long time. And why? Because the funny ones are more popular, that's why. That's not to say more serious graphic adventures can't work – this one, on the whole, is pretty, involving, well-constructed and, in most areas, just plain good – but simply that a few jokes would have spiced things up a bit." **Matt Bielby**

Brutal Football



Blood spurts for all – a typical scene of madness, mayhem and lack of team organisation from Millennium's gorefest.

Publisher	Millennium
Developer	Teque
Price	£29.99
Recommended	386SX or above
Release date	Out Now

THE REALLY WEIRD thing about *Brutal Football* is that, although it appears quite straightforward at

first, there's actually a lot less to it than meets the eye. Yes, it's an imaginary sports game packed with blood, maiming and murder, but I was still hoping there'd be a smattering of subtle bits to stretch out the longevity.

The disappointment dawns on you slowly though. The menus 'n' stuff are promising, for instance, in a shoddily executed kind of way – offering a league, a knockout match, user-definable keys and several levels of difficulty – and all bodes well once the teams take to the pitch. It's like American Football, but without the rules. Where it differs from the real-life game, however, is in the use of fists, swords and other instruments of destruction – that and the fact that monsters are playing it, of course.

To be fair, the game is easy to pick up and play – and there are some neat comic moments, with heads used as the ball, bits of bodies left lying on the pitch and severely depleted numbers on both sides. The graphics are quite neat in this respect, with masses of blood everywhere and some great facial expressions cropping up on individual team members.

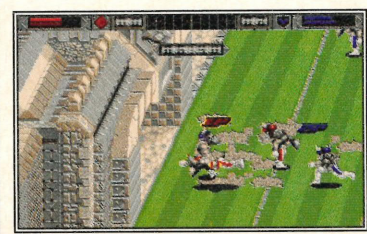
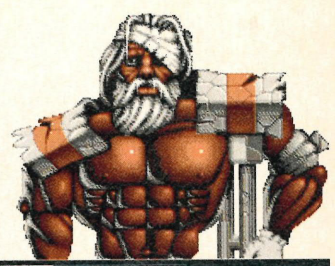
The problem with all this, however, is that it soon grows tiresome – and



It's violent, it's American Football with monsters, it's dull after the first few plays... The pitch is in a state, but do we really care?

you realise that there isn't anything else to the game, apart from running around after a ball and hurting or killing opposing players.

Things would've been fine if the game had been more finely polished. The sideways movement of the pitch is distractingly jerky, for instance – and although everything belts along at a fair old pace, there's a general lack of fluidity which is extremely irritating. Once again, the PC is being asked to emulate more primitive consoles and, once again, the results are ever-so slightly embarrassing. Sorry, but this isn't a patch on the altogether better *Speedball 2*. **MARK RAMSHAW**



Can the red team intercept the ball before it reaches their own goalmouth? If only my airborne player had a selection of bombs...

PC GAMER *Final Rating*
59% **Highs** Mindless and violent action.
Lows Soon grows very dull.
The Verdict Not that funny or sporty.