

## = Beneath a Steel Sky =

Beneath a Steel Sky is a 1994 cyberpunk science fiction point and click adventure game developed by Revolution Software and published by Virgin Interactive for MS DOS and Amiga home computers . The game was made available as freeware for PC platforms in 2003 . Set in a dystopian future , the player assumes the role of Robert Foster , who was stranded in a wasteland known as " the Gap " as a child and adopted by a group of local Aboriginals , gradually adjusting to his life in the wilderness . After many years , armed security officers arrive , killing the locals and taking Robert back to Union City . He escapes and soon uncovers the corruption which lies at the heart of society .

Originally titled Underworld , the game was a collaboration between game director Charles Cecil and comic book artist Dave Gibbons , and cost £ 40 ,000 to make . Cecil was a fan of Gibbons 's work and approached with the idea of a video game . The game has a serious tone , but features humour filled dialogue , which came as a result of Cecil 's and writer Dave Cummins 's goal to find a middle ground between the earnestness of Sierra 's and the slapstick comedy of LucasArts ' adventure games . It was built using Revolution 's Virtual Theatre engine , first used in Revolution 's previous and debut release , 1992 's Lure of the Temptress .

It received extremely positive reviews at the time of its release and is retrospectively viewed as a cult classic and Revolution 's greatest game besides Broken Sword : The Shadow of the Templars . A remastered edition was released for iOS in 2009 ( as Beneath a Steel Sky Remastered ) , which also received a positive reception from the gaming press . A sequel was greenlit during the Broken Sword : The Serpent 's Curse 2012 Kickstarter campaign , but its development has yet to be confirmed .

## = = Gameplay = =

Beneath a Steel Sky is a 2D adventure game played from a third person perspective . The player uses a point and click interface to interact with the environment and to guide protagonist Robert Foster through the game 's world . To solve puzzles and progress in the game , the player collects items that may be combined with one another , used on the environment , or given to non player characters ( NPCs ) . The protagonist converses with NPCs via dialogue trees to learn about the game 's puzzles and plot . Clues and other information are obtained by clicking on items in the inventory and on objects in the environment . Unlike in most adventure games at the time , the protagonist 's death is possible , after which the player starts from the last save point . In the remastered iOS version , the point and click interface is replaced with a touch user interface , a hint system is added , and hotspots are highlighted .

## = = Synopsis = =

## = = Background = =

Beneath a Steel Sky is set at an unknown point in a dystopian future , when the Earth has been significantly damaged by pollution and / or nuclear fallout .

In Australia , the six states and two territories who have been consumed by their respective capital cities are described as " city states " . Union City is the second largest of the six remaining city states after the acquisition of Asia City . Within this socio political milieu , the national intelligence agency ASIO wield a great deal of power .

After the " Euro American War " , all participants agreed upon a set of ideals described as the " neo democratic principles " which remove all labour representation and social benefits . Ironically , those that subscribe to these principles are called " Unions " , contrasting the real world definition of what a trade union pushes for . Those that oppose the Unions ' ideals are called " Corporations " . All of the City States in Australia are either Corporations or Unions .

The larger political context of the game involves a conflict between Union City and the Hobart Corporation , whereby they are each trying to achieve market dominance by the use of sabotage . During the game , characters in Union City remark that Hobart Corporation is winning the " economic war " by flooding the market with " cheap , gimmicky garbage , " although it is never clarified whether this is mere propaganda .

= = = Plot = = =

The immediate backstory is introduced via a comic book that tells the story of a young boy called Robert who is the sole survivor of a helicopter crash in " the Gap " ( the name applied to the Outback at the time of the game ) . Too young to fend for himself , Robert is adopted by a group of locals , who teach him the skills he needs to survive in this harsh new environment ; they name him Robert Foster , partly due to him being fostered by them , but also because of the discovery of an empty can of Foster 's Lager found near the crash site . Over the years , Foster learns engineering and technology and builds a talking , sentient robot called Joey . Joey 's personality is stored on a small circuit board , which can easily be inserted and removed from many types of robot . This allows him to change bodies as the situation requires , provided his circuit board is not damaged . His commentaries on the current " shell " he is in are a running gag throughout the game .

As the game starts , Foster is kidnapped and his tribe annihilated by security soldiers sent from Union City by its all @-@ powerful computer , LINC ( Logical Inter @-@ Neural Connection ) . The abductors refuse to give Foster any explanation as to what is happening . Shortly upon arriving in the city , the helicopter malfunctions and crashes in the city 's upper level . Foster survives and flees , making his way into a recycling plant , carrying Joey 's circuit board with him .

Foster places Joey 's circuit board into a robotic vacuum cleaner ( something about which Joey is none too happy ) . He then attempts to escape the plant , but is cornered by a security officer who had also survived the accident . The officer , Reich , addresses Foster as " Overmann " . Just as Reich is about to kill Foster , a nearby security camera shoots a laser , disarming him . Reich tells the camera , which he reveals is controlled by LINC , that Foster must be stopped . In answer the camera shoots him again , killing him . Foster takes the officer 's access card and sunglasses before he continues his escape .

As he makes his way further down the city , Foster eventually arrives in the abandoned subway tunnels . There he discovers that LINC has grown exponentially , to the point where he is now half @-@ machine , half @-@ organic entity . However , in order to function , LINC needs a human host to share its brain . The current host is Foster 's biological father , who is old and has become severely worn out from his symbiosis with LINC . It is revealed that LINC sent for Foster because , with the death of its current host inevitable , it needed a replacement , and only a blood relative would do . Foster ultimately defeats LINC by plugging Joey ( now calling himself Ken ) into the mainframe . Joey / Ken is able to take control of the system , and he and Foster set about turning Union City into a utopia .

= = Development = =

While working at Activision , Revolution co @-@ founder and CEO Charles Cecil got the idea of working with Dave Gibbons , artist and co @-@ creator of comic book Watchmen , as Cecil was a fan of the comic book himself . He approached Gibbons , but shortly thereafter , the old Activision broke down . However , they maintained a friendship , and Cecil later contacted Gibbons to ask him to work on Revolution 's second game . Seeing his son play video games , Gibbons became interested and realized that his skills in drawing , writing and conceptualizing could be useful in a gaming environment . Joining the team just before the release Lure of the Temptress , Gibbons was sent a rudimentary outline of what could happen in the hypothesised game , and wrote a longer story with new characters and scenarios , to which Revolution then further added . Originally the game was named Underworld , a title proposed by Gibbons , but it was renamed due to the release of Ultima Underworld : The Stygian Abyss .

The production values became much higher for Beneath a Steel Sky than for Lure of the Temptress , resulting in a game six times larger , and by the end of 1993 , the team working on the game had grown to eleven . The game was created in sections , which allowed the team to ensure that each part was " perfected " before moving on . Its 2 @-@ year development cost £ 40 @, @ 000 , a large amount of money for the company at the time .

= = = Creative and technical design = = =

The designers ' goal was to create a visual bridge between comic and video game graphics . Gibbons drew the backgrounds in pencil , starting with roughs , which were sent to Revolution to see if they were technically feasible . Once agreed upon , Gibbons would then make the final sketch . The pencil sketches were then colored , mainly by Les Pace . The backgrounds were scanned on a Macintosh as 24 @-@ bit , 1000x1000 pixel images with 16 million colors , and then transformed to 8 @-@ bit , 320x200 pixel images with 256 colors for the PC version . The backgrounds were designed so that the sprites would appear clear on the screen and wouldn 't mix with the backgrounds . Gibbons created the sprites using Deluxe Paint . Steve Ince , who joined the team in February 1993 , created a number of sprite animations , also painting some backgrounds based on Gibbons 's sketches . Gibbons also designed the characters , although he found it challenging to get a character 's personality and expression in a face that was only around seven pixels wide and nine pixels high with a limited palette . He would have liked to design a character in a similar manner to Prince of Persia or Flashback , but Revolution wanted something more detailed , so the result became a compromise . All character sprites are smoothly animated with around 20 positions each . According to Gibbons , about 75 % of the backgrounds and characters he designed were used in the game .

Dave Cummins wrote the dialogue for the game . The tone of Revolution 's early games was born from a tension between Cummins and Cecil . Cummins wanted to be more flippant with dialogue , while Cecil wanted to be more serious . Their goal was to find the middle ground between Sierra 's " ridiculously earnest " stories and the slapstick comedy of LucasArts games . For the voice acting , which is only included in the CD @-@ ROM version , Revolution used actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company . Only two days were spent recording over five thousands lines of dialogue . Not pleased with the results , however , Revolution decided on a lengthy re @-@ recording , and realized that voice actors should be used , rather than stage actors . As a result of this , the speech doesn 't always match the on @-@ screen text , with English terms being Americanized . Cummins was also responsible for the score of the game , writing a specific tune for each of the main locations .

Beneath a Steel Sky became the second game to use Revolution 's Virtual Theatre engine , after Lure of the Temptress . According to Cecil , the original version of the engine seemed less applicable in Beneath a Steel Sky , as the ability to issue commands conflicted with the gameplay they intended to create . Lure of the Temptress had one story that was moved forward by a key event , whereas Beneath a Steel Sky had multiple threads . In one way this presented them with " exciting gameplay opportunities , but in others it cordoned off more ambitious ideas in terms of multilinearity . " As a consequence , some of the engine 's features were scaled back . Tony Warriner and David Sykes , both Revolution co @-@ founders and programmers , had to update the engine , which was part of the new deal with Virgin Interactive . As an example of change in the updated engine , Virtual Theatre 2 @. @ 0 , Warriner explained that in Lure of the Temptress , the system controlled everything , for instance specific routines to a door . So if there was a door on @-@ screen , the door @-@ routine was called up to handle it . The consequence was that every door looked the same and acted the same , so if a door was somewhat different from the last one , it caused a problem . This was changed in the new system , as it was object oriented and no distinction was made between a proper object like a door or key .

= = = Release = = =

Beneath a Steel Sky was presented at the European Computer Trade Show in the London Business Design Centre in April 1993 and at the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago in June 1993 . According to French magazine *Génération 4* , the game was supposed to be released by the end of October 1993 . Various playable demos of the game were made ; one was added to the first issue of *PC Gamer* , and Amiga demos were added as cover disks to several Amiga magazines .

Beneath a Steel Sky was published in March 1994 by Virgin Interactive on floppy disks and CD-ROM . It came on 15 floppy disks , as opposed to *Lure of The Temptress* , which came on four . Because of the Amiga restrictions , a few animations had to be left out , as not all Amiga owners had a hard drive . Each conversion of the images to the Amiga resulted in a loss of detail because of the Amiga 's limited palette and resolution . According to *Revolution* in-house artist Adam Tween , it took a couple of days to " touch up " the screens . A comic book created by Gibbons , which was translated into the introduction sequence of the game , came as part of the game package .

Beneath a Steel Sky was translated from English into French and Portuguese . This was the first game not developed in Portugal to be released with a Portuguese translation .

== Freeware release and Remastered edition ==

In August 2003 , the game was released as freeware with its assembly language source code by Revolution Software . The source code availability made it possible for the ScummVM project to support the game , which allows the game to be played on Windows , OS X , Linux , Windows CE and other compatible operating systems and platforms .

In November 2011 , James Woodcock released an enhanced soundtrack of the game for ScummVM . The game is also available for free download on digital distribution services , including Desura and GOG.com.

In July 2009 , Revolution announced that a remastered edition of Beneath a Steel Sky would be released on iOS later that year . The remastered edition features new animated movies by Gibbons , a context-sensitive help system and improved audio quality . The game was released on the App Store on October 7 , 2009 . The animated movies in the iOS remastered version make use of the original stills and use a sliding paper-like style to animate them .

== Critical reception and commercial performance ==

Beneath a Steel Sky was critically acclaimed . In 1995 , *PC Gamer* awarded it the " Best Dialogue " award , and it won the " Best Adventure " award at the Golden Joystick Awards . It was also a commercial success , reaching the number one place on the British Gallup charts .

*CU Amiga* 's Tony Dillon proclaimed Beneath a Steel Sky as " one of the greatest adventures ever . " *Amiga Format* 's Rob Mead said that the game is an " Utterly brilliant " , " massive , intense and atmospheric adventure which will keep you on tenterhooks right until its final startling conclusion . " *PC Gamer US* 's Steve Poole called it " slick , funny , " " absorbing " and " one of the most playable adventures of all time " " that will appeal to a wide variety of gamers " . *Amiga Power* 's Cam Winstanley said that it is " an example of what an adventure game should be like ? funny , enthralling and convincing . " *Adventure Gamers* ' Claire Wood called it an " enjoyable " , " engaging adventure classic , thoroughly enjoyable playing experience " and " a 1984 for the computer game generation . "

Winstanley thought that the main highpoint of the game was the story , with an ending " that 's actually quite a surprise . " Wood praised the " intelligent , thought provoking storyline " that " becomes more and more compelling , punctuated by unexpected plot twists and macabre discoveries . "

Dillon praised the game 's " stunning " graphics . Mead said the comic book-like artwork projected a great " atmosphere " . Winstanley felt that the game looked " superb " . Wood said the graphics " have aged reasonably well " .

Many of the critics praised the game 's " adult humour " , showcased through numerous one-on-one

liners and double entendres . Dillon praised the charm of the various characters and their personalities built through conversations . Wood also praised the Revolution 's " trademark " " light @-@ hearted humour " . Both Dillon and Wood , as well as Winstanley , highlighted Joey 's witty remarks . Poole called the writing " some of the funniest dialog ever " and the characters " warped " and " interesting " .

Reviewers praised the game 's puzzles for being logical but still challenging . Poole found the puzzles to be " tricky " and " engaging " , but stated " the difficulty of the puzzles in the final third of the game is disproportionately high " and that he disliked some of the " race the clock " puzzles . On the other hand , Winstanley felt that the " real time " puzzles " add pace " . Wood 's only gripe with the puzzles were the " odd and disorienting " LINC @-@ space sequences .

Dillon wrote that the controls were so " simple that Revolution can finally lay claim to having created the ultimate in intuitive control methods . " Poole labeled them " a masterwork of simplicity " . Winstanley also praised the " simple " interface , while Wood said that the " unobtrusive interface " is one of the factors that make the game a " highly immersive experience " .

= = = Remastered version = = =

The remastered 2009 iOS version was also very well received . It holds an aggregate score of 85 % on GameRankings , based on seven reviews , and 82 out of 100 on Metacritic , based on five reviews . It was nominated for Best Port / Enhanced Re @-@ release at the Adventure Gamers ' 2009 Aggie Awards in 2010 . The game sold around 20 @,@ 000 units in its first month of release , while Cecil anticipated sales of around 70 @,@ 000 copies during its first year on sale , and roughly 100 @,@ 000 in its lifetime .

The remastered release is available with Spanish , French , Swedish , Portuguese , German , Italian , and English subtitles .

Slide To Play 's Keith Andrew said that " Beneath a Steel Sky somehow feels bigger and bolder than its rivals , raising the bar and highlighting what others have so far failed to achieve . Perfectly suited to its new home , this remastering of a classic game serves up point @-@ and @-@ click play nearly unmatched on the App Store . " Andrew noted that the point @-@ and @-@ click interface " merg [ es ] seamlessly with touchscreen controls " and that the hint system is " a feature that might antagonize some of Steel Sky ? s hardened fan @-@ base , but one perfectly pitched at the iPhone generation . "

IGN 's Eduardo Vasconcellos stated that the game " is a reminder of how good the old point @-@ and @-@ clickers really were . The updated elements only add to the experience -- especially the cutscenes . If you 're looking for an intriguing story , solid gameplay and some nostalgic charm , Beneath a Steel Sky is for you . " Vasconcellos applauded the " intuitive and responsive " touch controls and said that the " visuals are an attractive update of the original release . " He gave the game an " Editor 's Choice " award .

Pocket Gamer 's Tracy Erickson said that the game " remains as entertaining as it did 15 years ago , galvanising the adventure gaming resurgence on iPhone . " Erickson felt that the touch controls are " only functional and not fantastic , " but that " measures have been taken to address [ problems of the original point @-@ and click interface ] to a respectable degree , " and that the " minimally enhanced presentation raises alarm . " However , he concluded that even though " More could have been done to brush the dust off this ageing title , " " it 's still a standout game . " He gave it a " Silver Award " .

= = Legacy = =

Although retrospectively Broken Sword : The Shadow of the Templars is generally looked upon as Revolution 's magnum opus , Beneath a Steel Sky still holds the status of a cult classic and has been featured on numerous " all @-@ time top " lists :

Amiga Power ranked Beneath a Steel Sky 42nd on their Amiga Power All @-@ Time Top One Hundred in 1994 . Adventure Gamers ranked the game 17th on their list of Top 20 Adventure

Games of All @-@ Time in 2004 , and 19th on the Top 100 All @-@ Time Adventures in 2011 . In 2006 , Adventure Classic Gaming put the game in 9th place on their list of the Top 10 retro graphic adventure games of all time from PC to consoles . Retro Gamer placed it in third on its list of Top 20 Adventure Games of All @-@ Time ... not by LucasArts in 2010 . It was included in Edge editor Tony Mott 's 1001 Video Games You Must Play Before You Die , a book published in 2010 . In 2011 , PC Gamer ranked it ninth on its list of 20 free PC games you must play . In the same year , Now Gamer listed it as one of the Greatest Point @-@ And @-@ Click Games ( Not By LucasArts ) . In 2014 , TechRadar placed it 40th on its list of the Top 50 best free games you should play today . Pocket Gamer included it on its list of Top 10 adventure games that should be revived on DS in 2009 .

Beneath a Steel Sky : Remastered has been placed on numerous top lists as well , including Edge 's Top 50 iPhone Games at 26th in 2009 , as well as Pocket Gamer 's Top 10 point @-@ and @-@ click adventure games on iPhone and iPad and Mashable 's 10 Classic PC Games That Found New Life on the iPhone , both in 2010 .

Beneath a Steel Sky is often referenced in Revolution 's Broken Sword games , including 1997 's Broken Sword II : The Smoking Mirror , in 2009 's Broken Sword : The Shadow of the Templars ? Director 's Cut and 2013 / 2014 's Broken Sword 5 : The Serpent 's Curse , in the form of an easter egg .

= = = Sequel = = =

In 2004 , Cecil commented " Beneath a Steel Sky 2 is a project Revolution has been considering for a while , and has started to move forward on , but we are unable to comment beyond this . "

In an interview with Eurogamer in 2006 , Cecil spoke of his admiration for the work done by ScummVM and the resulting interest in a sequel . He also stated that if he were to make the game he " would dearly love to work with Dave Gibbons again . " In a February 20 , 2009 interview with IGN UK about the Wii and DS versions of Broken Sword : The Director 's Cut , Cecil and Gibbons re @-@ iterated their interest in a sequel to Beneath a Steel Sky .

In September 2012 , Revolution announced that Beneath a Steel Sky 2 would be greenlit if their Broken Sword 5 : The Serpent 's Curse Kickstarter reached \$ 1 million . Despite Broken Sword : The Serpent 's Curse failing to meet the \$ 1 million ' stretch goal ' , Revolution announced that the success of its crowdfunding campaign had inspired them to greenlight Beneath a Steel Sky 2 . However , Revolution later clarified that Beneath a Steel Sky 2 will not necessarily be the studio 's first project following Broken Sword 5 and that they would " think " about what their next game will be after finishing the Broken Sword game . In February 2014 it was reported that Beneath a Steel Sky 2 had never entered production , despite previous reports to the contrary . The reason cited was that the Broken Sword franchise took up the sole focus of the company .