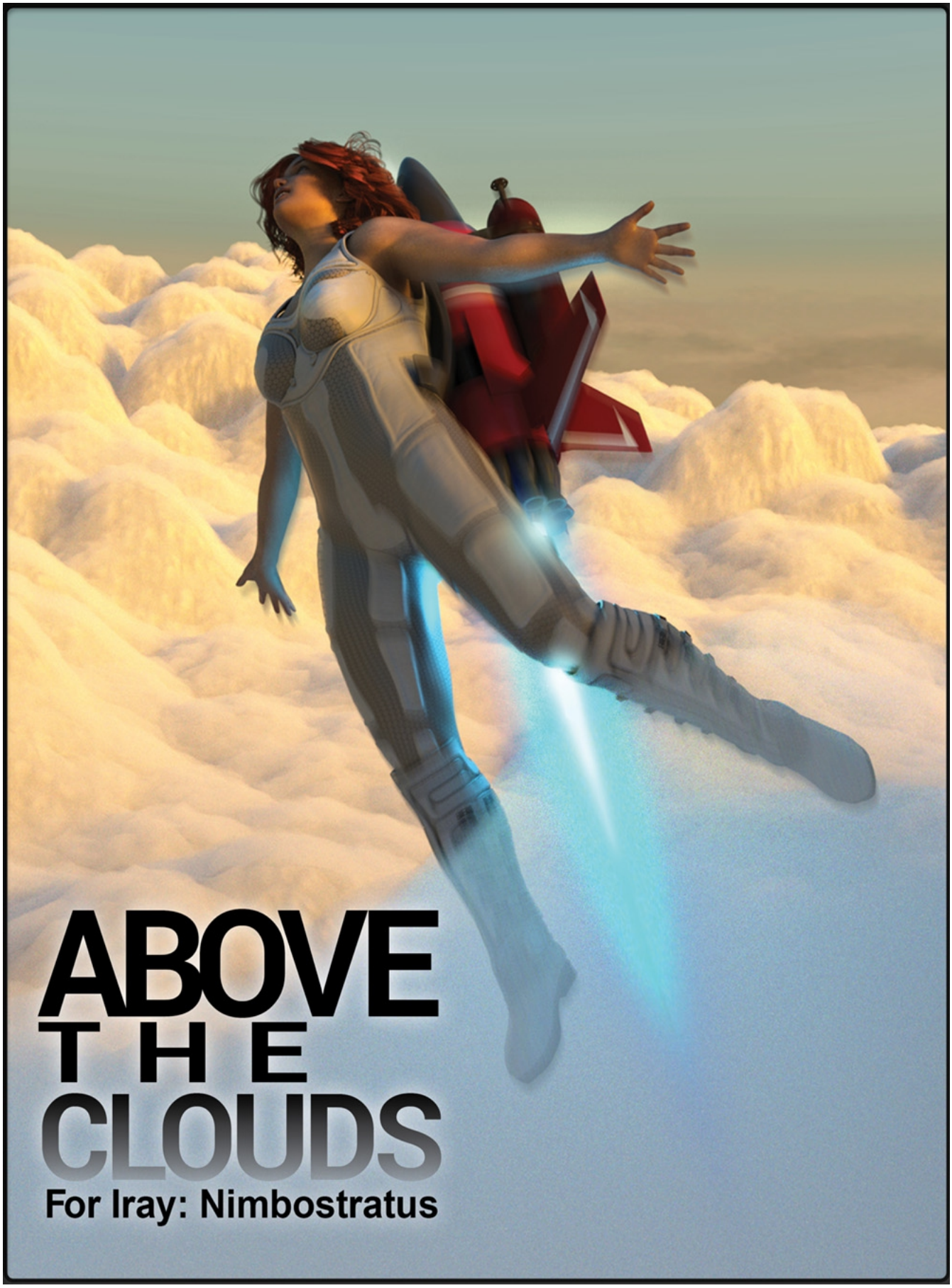
ABOVE
THE
CLOUDS
For Iray: Nimbostratus

User guide

How to use:

1. Load a scene subset. This loads the cloud prop and distant cloud ring.
2. Load a render setting that matches the time of day of your scene subset. This loads an Environment setting in the Render Settings Tab. It sets the time of day which includes your main light source, horizon, saturation, etc.
3. Load your props, figures, other scene elements, then compose and render as usual. Use AuxViewport to check for final cloud height as displacement will raise the clouds up (around 20 units on the Y scale, 2 feet, or 1/2 meter). The color of your initial AuxViewport render may have a yellow tint, give it some time and it will correct.
4. If rotating the dome in render settings for sunset make sure you rotate the cloud ring too. It has a gap that will allow the sun to shine through.

Basic Info:

The clouds have two surfaces. An inner cloud that provides the main solid form and an outer that provides the soft edge. Using the material presets or by manual adjustment in surfaces tab you will find a variety of fixes and freedom. Your camera needs to be outside the prop for the effect to render.

Material Presets:

For placement only: This will help you place the prop if you find it difficult to see in Viewport Tab. Remember to apply the Full Reset and any other surface adjustments before rendering as this preset affects all channels in both surfaces (inner and outer cloud).

Full Reset: Sets all surfaces back to default.

Faster Clouds: Clouds will render faster and with less grain but they will lose some dimension and velvet (or rim light) effect.

Hide Inside cloud: Will make the clouds a little more transparent. It will also remove some detail.

Hide outside cloud: Can be used for renders where the clouds are in the distant background as they will not need a soft edge. This preset will also render faster.

Smooth: Removes the bump and displacement for more rounded pillow-shaped clouds.

Distant tiling: Sets tiling to 1x1. Use this if most of the cloud prop shows in your render.

Default tiling: Sets tiling to 6x6. Appropriate for figures, vehicles, and small structures.

Material Presets: (Cont.)

Transparent Density: Hides the inside cloud and makes the softer outside cloud much more transparent. For this setting it is helpful to have a light source nearer the horizon to show dimension in the clouds. To bring out more dimension you can raise the bump and displacement.

Thick Density: More realistic to a thick layer of clouds you would see from an airplane and from a little distance.

Default Density: In between transparent and thick. This preset adjusts the density so that objects can be seen through or embedded in the clouds.

Helpful tips on using the props:

Nimbostratus Cloud: Try scaling the Y axis up to 200% for more dramatic shaped clouds.
The sunset cloud ring: unlike the cloud rings for the other scene subsets this one has a soft hole that you can line up with the sun (render setting) so the clouds don't cast a shadow on your scene.

Beyond these presets the surface settings for both the inner and outer cloud are very sensitive, but you can experiment freely with changing the base color of the inner cloud. The effect will be subtle even if you change it to a very dark intense color. The clouds are sensitive to light and will pick up the color of major light sources used.

Render Settings:

No hdr images are used. Here is more information about changing settings:
http://docs.daz3d.com/doku.php/public/software/dazstudio/4/referenceguide/interface/panes/render_settings/engine/nvidia_iray/environment/start

Lighting:

Lighting that is directly from above my burn out the cloud surface, the more the light source is nearer the horizon or at a low angle, the more definition there will be to see the cloud form. Many of the promos use back-lighting to add drama by making the softer edge of the clouds glow.