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Staten Island Advance

Rich Ryan



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There are lots of gray areas in 'Black and White'

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"Better to reign in hell than to serve in Heaven." -- Lucifer in "Paradise Lost" If Lucifer had only had access to a PC and a copy of "Black and White," he might still be in heaven.

There are plenty of sim games on the market, but few of them allow you to become a god.

The game opens on an Eden-like island, which gamers can explore. Among the decisions facing gamers are whether they will be a feared deity or a benevolent one. To that end, they must also attract and keep followers. After all, what's the point of being a god if no one worships you or believes in you?

Fortunately, gamers have miracles at their disposal. Players must also choose a creature and from time to time they must engage other gods in battle. Help is provided by two spiritual advisers who give suggestions -- they never lie -- but can't quite ever agree on how things should be done either. Rated "T" or Teen, this is a very complex game, the nuances of which may escape youngsters.

With its detailed graphics and intricate plot, "Black and White" is going to be one of those games that raises the bar.



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It's also a very demanding game in terms of your PC. The manual suggests that users clean up their PCs by defragging, deleting empty files and running scandisk before installing.

It's also suggested that all background programs be turned off as well as anti-crash and anti-virus programs.

Minimum system requirements include Windows, a 350 MHz Pentium II, 64 MB RAM, a 4X CD-ROM drive and an 8 MB Direct 3D video card with Direct 7 drivers for video and sound.

The latest expansion pack for "The Sims" is out. "House Party" offers more than 100 new items including a mechanical bull, a go-go cage, a campfire and a costume trunk.

Gamers decide whether to throw a hoedown, a luau or go underground at a rave. There are also new characters and new music.

Newcomers should know that the game requires the original "Sims" game and that "House Party," which is rated "T" or Teen, does contain sexual themes and some animated violence.

"Bugs Bunny and Taz: Time Busters"-- After Daffy accidentally breaks Granny's time regulator Bugs and Taz must travel through time gathering the pieces as well as returning other characters to their proper time periods. In addition to the title characters, look for such others as Elmer Fudd, Yosemite Sam, Babba Chop and Count Bloodcount. All told, there are more than 30 levels that find our heroes visiting the Aztecs, Vikings and Arabs as well as paying a visit to Transylvania. Gamers can switch off from Bugs to Taz at any time and two players can get together for a cooperative adventure. The action is geared toward the 6-and-up set with only mild violence. Serious gamers will find fault with the blocky graphics but youngsters will no doubt enjoy putting Bugs and Taz through their paces. Rated "E" or Everyone. (Available for the Sony PlayStation)

"DaytonaUSA" -- This may be one of the last Dreamcast titles, but it's a good one. This classic racing game features eight tracks, including three new ones created exclusively for the Dreamcast. The big selling point is that this game is designed for online gaming. As

a result, factors such as automatic or manual transmission and tire type that are givens when playing alone become important when you're racing against unseen opponents. There are plenty of modes for those who don't wish to go online as well. If you're still buying games for your Dreamcast, give this one a look. Rated "E."

"The Simpsons Wrestling" -- Fans of "The Simpsons" are going to love this game that's every bit as un-PC as the series. Gamers can wrestle as their favorite character -- Bart, Homer, Barney, Krusty -- and each comes with special taunts and power moves such as Barney's "Duff Cloud Burp" and Homer's "Strangulator." Gamers can also grapple or use the ropes and different power-ups such as doughnuts and popcorn appear randomly on the screen. The game also makes use of a variety of locales in Springfield including the Power Plant, Krusty Lu Studios, Bowl-a-Rama and the Kwik-E-Mart. Different modes allow the gamers to battle the computer or each other. If you watch the show, then this game is for you. Rated "T" or Teen. (Available for the Sony PlayStation)

"D.O.A.Hardcore" -- If you're going to make a good "fighter," you need to make the moves realistic. This game offers some of the most authentic martial arts moves ever seen outside a dojang. All told, there are 11 different modes, and gamers can simply fight or work their way through the "Story Mode." Players choose from a dozen different characters. As you might expect, both the men and the women are extraordinarily well built, and the costumes skimpy. But the programming that allows crescent kicks to be thrown perfectly, and elbow strikes to be properly executed is what's going to draw martial arts lovers to this game. Choose from warriors who practice t'ai chi quan, jeet kune do or the more obscure xynyi liuhe quan. The manual also offers a brief history of each discipline. Add in top-notch graphics with stunning backgrounds, and the result is a game that belongs on every serious gamer's library. Rated "T." (Available for the PlayStation2)

Powerplay: If you're playing "The Sims Livin' Large" or "The Sims' House Party" on your PC and find yourself strapped for cash -- an essential component in those games -- simply press control, shift and C. A small gray bar should appear, type in the word "Rosebud" and press enter and you will receive \$1000. Then press control, shift, C again, and type in a series of !;!;!;!;

The more you type, the more money you will receive.
Unfortunately, it only works on the game.

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