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William Gibson, the father of cyberspace, has inspired and influenced yet another creation. In HELL: A Cyberpunk Thriller, it is 2095 and Washington D.C. has become the playground of Hell's demon minions. The Hand of God, a political party led by Emperor Solux now rules the United States. All manners of freedom are taken from the people, from the exploration of cyberspace to free speech. Naturally, a populace as diverse and rebellious as the United States' cannot be so easily forced into submission. Computer deckers, merchants of "illegal" entertainment, and the children of outlawed and failed experiments proliferate the nation, in direct defiance of the Emperor. This is the scene. This is the situation. This is HELL.

### [The Players](#)

The gamer plays the role of either Gideon Eshanti or Rachel Braque, special agents of the Hand known as ARCs who enforce the bylaws of the Emperor. Devote and loyal to their calling in life throughout their career, they are shocked when a small group of "scrubs" from the Emperor infiltrate their apartment and attempt to take them out. Thanks to their training, the pair escape the encounter and embark on a journey to uncover the meaning behind the assassination attempt. Little do they know that they are flung into an intricate web of deceit and condemnation.

### [The Cast](#)

The world of HELL is populated by a variety of colorful players. This is perhaps one of the

strongest points of the game. The more interesting characters include the demon Mr. Beautiful, voice characterized by Dennis Hopper, the undead explosives expert Cynna, played by Stephanie Seymour, the Imperator, voice characterized by Grace Jones, and Transgressions officer Jean Saint Mouchoir, played by Geoffrey Holder. This talented cast, Dennis Hopper especially, pulls out a remarkable performance, enhancing the storyline and keeping the gamer intrigued.

### ameplay

HELL's gameplay resembles Darkseed and the Kings Quest series, in which the main characters travel from location to location looking for clues, leads, and certain items essential to the completion of the game. To travel to another location, HELL provides a novel approach in the form of a groovy electronic map representation of Washington's subway system. By clicking on various locations, the characters are transported there accompanied by a nice little animation sequence. As Gideon and Rachel (you can play either role), the gamer searches the gameworld, interacting with characters in hopes of uncovering the reason behind their employer's betrayal. When interacting with characters, a 3-D rendered "cyber puppet" is shown going through the motions of talking, although most of the motions are repetitious and get annoying over time.

### Strong Points

The storyline is an intriguing one and is not immediately predictable nor easily solved. Clues and leads in the game abound everywhere, with each clue moving the main characters closer to their goal without giving too much away. Dennis Hopper gives a wonderful rendition of Mr. Beautiful, a fiendishly clever and power-hungry demon employed by Mephistopheles. Seymour, Jones, and Holder also add to the game with their roles as Cynna, Imperator Solux,

and Jean Saint Mouchoir. During the course of the game, a great deal of interacting with characters is essential to completing the game. With a non-linear storyline, keeping track of everything that's been said can become a bit of a headache. Fortunately, HELL has a "replay" option that allows the gamer to go over every conversation Gideon and Rachel had with every character. Also, little Easter eggs can be found in the form of several sarcastic references embedded in names the people at Take 2 gave to the characters (such as Anna Mae who owns the comix shop).

### Weak Points

While the encounters with Hopper, Seymour, Jones, and Holder are a delight, dialogue with the rest of the characters in the game are pretty boring. Plagued with weak dialogue and voice characterizations of the minor characters, the game can get quite bland. Besides the glaring realization that some of the characters are voice characterized by the same person, the dialogue of the main characters is extremely repetitious. This is apparent whenever Gideon and Rachel make first contact with other characters. They come off as arrogant and repeatedly have this annoying "we'll-ask-the-questions-here-so-shut-up" kind of attitude. Also, the manual claims that HELL features an option that allows more player participation in the game. The feature consists of an option for Gideon and Rachel to ask a variety of preset questions. HELL boasts the fact that the gamer gets to actually choose what is asked. Two problems, how does the gamer get to "choose" when the questions are already preset? Second, when presented with all these questions, wouldn't the gamer want to ask all questions anyway, in order to get as much information as possible? The game means well by providing this feature, but fails miserably in its execution.

HELL's graphics are nothing revolutionary and in fact are not up to snuff with some of the other CD-ROM games on the market. The animation sequences, although bearable, are neither fluid nor smooth. Nowhere is this more apparent than the opening sequence.

In addition, the game doesn't seem to allow the gamer to switch to the finder desktop, except by quitting the game. These two points makes the gamer wonder whether Take 2 Interactive Software took enough time, thought, and effort into porting the PC version of HELL over to the Macintosh.

HELL's intricate storyline and a talented Hollywood cast draws the gamer deeper into the game, but unfortunately the weaker points insists on preventing the gamer from enjoying HELL too much. It goes to show that not even a Hollywood cast can make a game.

### Pros

- *Excellent character portrayals by Dennis Hopper, Stephanie Seymour, Grace Jones, and Geoffrey Holder*
- *Intriguing storyline*
- *"Replay" feature that keeps track of conversations with other characters within the game*
- *Challenging puzzles*

### Cons

- *Character dialogue can be quite boring at times*
- *Graphics and animation could use some refinement*
- *Storyline is interesting, but main characters are not*

### Publisher Info

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