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he powers that be have granted you the opportunity to become the demiurge of both heaven and hell. Your primary job responsibilities are fairly straightforward: reward those souls lucky enough to visit heaven and crack the whip on those souls unlucky enough to be sentenced to hell. Either way, you must architect a well-balanced and economical place of residence for the souls entering your domain. Never before has there been such a game tailored for those with wild mood swings, as the player must learn to juggle his halo and horns effectively between the two extreme planes of ethereal existence. Welcome to LucasArts Afterlife.

Afterlife takes place on a planet much like our own, with a bunch of bipeds (praisingly called EMBOs, or Ethically Mature Biological Organisms, in the game) roaming around. As with all lifeforms, the cycle of life evolves with each EMBO. But where do these little EMBO souls flutter to when they bid farewell from their physical world? Depending upon their religion (yes, that's right, religion plays a role in Afterlife), they could end up in heaven, hell, both, or neither. Those that enter the pearly gates of heaven do so in anticipation of their just rewards from the seven virtues (Contentment, Charity, Temperance, Diligence, Chastity, Peacefulness, and Humility), while those entering the barbed gates of hell do so in apprehension of receiving punishment from the seven deadly sins (Envy,

Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth, Lust, Wrath, and Pride). But the powers that be have better things to do than to maintain and manage the souls that enter; an overseer, or demiurge is what's required. That is where the player, as newly appointed demiurge, comes into play.

The playing environment consists of two horizontal planes, one above the other, with heaven on top and hell, of course, on the bottom. These two planes are divided into grids made up of small squares, or tiles, which can be zoned into areas for the construction of Fate buildings. As each EMBO leaves the planet, its soul is rewarded or condemned to one of the seven virtues or sins. In Afterlife, housing for the souls come in the form of virtue and sin Fate buildings. As demiurge, it is the player's responsibility to zone the real estate of heaven and hell for the appropriate buildings, otherwise souls will become lost and leave your charge. Your progress in the simulation is reflected by a variety of game elements, including soul population and the number of pennies (the main currency in Afterlife) the player has in his account. As the player will quickly discover, nothing comes free, not even in a game called Afterlife, as each Fate building comes at a cost.

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ut even before the buildings are established, a portal or gateway must be present for the souls to enter the Afterlife. Thus, a pearly white gate is built in heaven and a barbed sinister looking gate is built for hell. Of course, the placement of a gate and a variety of Fate buildings alone simply won't do, as the souls have no way of traversing between locations. The answer to this rather simple problem is a road system. Then there's the matter of maintaining order on the streets, thus

angels and devils must be hired to keep the locals in check. This spells extra pennies out of the player's piggy bank. Fortunately, as your buildings become more and more efficient, your soul rate (value of each soul in pennies) will increase. This translates into a stable influx of pennies as the player receives compensation based on soul population. Should the coffers start to run on empty, banks can be built from which loans can be taken out. But there are more pressing problems to be faced, including the need for efficient micromanagement of each building and sending out good vibes in heaven and doling out bad vibes in hell through careful and studious placement of buildings. And the player will have a romping good time in placing the multitude of structures available, including topias for housing angels and devils, siphons to increase efficiency, banks to replenish funds, omnibolges and love domes for massive population densities, and limbo structures that serve ethereal brew to wandering souls.

Luckily, if the player does a good job, the powers that be might even award the player with special building structures that do not cost a cent to construct or maintain. These structures help spread good or bad vibes to the respective plane, not to mention giving the player a massive ego trip with its elaborate graphic detail. Good vibes are important in heaven while bad vibes are essential in hell. Maintaining vibes will lead to a more efficient reward and punishment network. Besides, there's nothing like adding a Bowels of Hell special structure to spread some icky vibes about. A wholesome number of graphs and charts can be accessed in the simulation by the player to use in evaluating both successes and failures in various areas of the game. Fortunately, a pair of assistants under the player's jurisdiction are available for advice. Named Aria Goodhalo (the good) and Jasper Wormsworth (the not so good), these two helpers can provide valuable information pertaining to the efficiency and problems of both heaven and hell.

All these amusing aspects of Afterlife are combined and accompanied by both angelic and foreboding tunes in the background, with amusing voice-overs for Aria and Jasper. Graphics for the various structures are superb while sound is sprinkled liberally throughout. All this and the problems of building Karma stations for transportation of those souls undergoing reincarnation and astral disasters (the bad things) like Hell Freezes Over, My Blue Heaven, Hell in a Handbasket, and Disco Infernal are all awaiting the promising demiurge.

As can be seen, Afterlife is a rather complex simulation, but hellishly fun in its execution. Indeed, Afterlife gives full entertainment value by successfully providing a slew of simulation elements. The only real problems with Afterlife is the tendency for the screen to get rather cluttered when Fate buildings start popping up everywhere, although there is an option to "flatten" or hide the structures. Also, the simulation does not officially have any set goals or victory conditions, which is not a really negative thing, although it can leave some demiurges wondering why they're continuing playing after a prolonged period of time.

The job of demiurge is anything but a piece of cake. Afterall, your resume was accepted, and you certainly impressed them in the interview. Now it's time to show the powers that be just how good ya are. So polish your halo and give your horns a good brandishing, and prepare to greet the souls outside awaiting the grand opening of the gates to your dominion.

Pros

- Nicely done structure tiles
- Addictive gameplay
- Novel approach to storyline
- Variety of simulation elements

### Cons

- Game area can get really cluttered
- No set goals or "victory conditions"

### Publisher Info

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