I.   Am.   Batman.

High Tech Gadgets? Yup, in spades. A series of arch-enemies bent on chaos and destruction? Got those a plenty. Morally ambiguous friends with underworld connections? Couldn't live without 'em. A highly trained and tuned mind and body. Um, well, sort of? Playboy Billionaire? OK, OK, maybe I'm not *quite* the Caped Crusader, but if I were a superhero, that's who I'd be. And as you can probably tell, I, like the countless Batman fanboys before me, have fallen headlong into Bob Kane's timeless vision.

Now make no mistake about it, there are hundreds of reviews of *Batman: Arkham City* online and in print, with nearly all of them outstanding (Metacritic Score 96/100). So rather than give you a re-hash or reformulation, let me focus on one particularly immersive quality of the game: taunting. Among the seemingly limitless small details that Rocksteady Studios included in the game, my particular favorite is the call-to-arms they achieve through well-timed, biting jeers from the villains. Whether it's a thug in the street calling you out for hiding in the shadows or the Penguin chiding you for making things to easy for him and dying to quickly, they have a way of really getting under your skin. With a simple twist of the dagger the game designers turn potentially frustrating setbacks into motivation for getting back into the game. Yet if you didn't feel like you were Batman, this tactic wouldn't work. It would seem like the designers were taunting you, the game player. But because the story, environment, and characters are all so compelling, it feels like the villains are taunting you, the Batman. And nobody talks that way to Batman and gets away with it!

And if you've read any of my previous columns you've picked up on a theme that I keep coming back to: the best games immerse you and help you to experience what it is like to be somebody else in another place and time. What other medium allows you to feel the fame and adoration of being in *The Beatles,* the physical exertion it takes to sing "Back in Black," or the pride of building a winning sports franchise from humble beginnings. Yet more often than not games fail to immerse, and the experience can feel contrived, derivative, and formulaic. In fact I would describe most games, in terms of emotion, as a "failure to launch." So for me, someone who has read, watched, and played bad Batman games for years (so many bad Batman games!), this feels like the *complete* Batman experience. Finally, after all these years, I. Am. Batman. And you could be too, so what are you waiting for, someone to taunt you into playing?

Dr. Anthony Betrus

The Game Connoisseur