

# THE GOD OF HYPE



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At the time of reading this, the new God of War is already out and you've probably already played Sony's new masterpiece. Unfortunately, my copy of the game was lost in the mail. This did however give me some time to think about all the marketing that goes behind video games, and the impact it has on industry standards and on the minds of video game enthusiasts. In short, pre-release gameplay footage, tech demos of new consoles and marketing campaigns surrounding everything leads to one major development – hype.

Let's talk about Sony and the hype they generated for each monumental exclusive they put out during the PS4's life cycle. Three are already out at the time of writing this article, and you probably know which games I'm talking about.

Back in 2013 when the PS4 launched, there were no worthwhile games to play on it, unless you consider Flower a game – give it a shot you might like it. The sales numbers pulled from Statista reflect just that, with only 4.2 million consoles sold in 2013.

But with the release of GTA V and The Last of Us Remastered in 2014, sales numbers saw a major increase. Obviously so, good games mean more people will buy that game, so what's the point? The point is that, for each subsequent year (2015 – 2017), Sony released three major exclusives namely – Bloodborne, Uncharted 4 and Horizon Zero Dawn back to back, and this trend will continue with the release of God of War in 2018. And I can only bet that Sony is gunning for the 25 million figure given how much they have pushed God of War.

Let's take a look back at E3 2016, when God of War was first showcased. From

2016 till now, Sony aggressively showed us teasers and interviews and by the end of 2017, a lot of documentary style footage of the games development cycle started popping up on the internet. This created immense hype and curiosity. Up until that point however, there was a divide amongst gaming news portals and fans of the beloved series. But as of right now, God of War is the highest rated PS4 exclusive on MetaCritic and for good reason – the game looks absolutely gorgeous and as Digital Foundry put it—it's a stunning tech showcase. The last real push that Sony needed came from the perfect scores, and with that they had the perfect item up for sale.

This MetaCritic score and its impact will go a long way to pay dividends to the hype God of War has created. To foreshadow how successful God of War stands to be, Uncharted 4 sold over 2 million copies in the week of its launch, while Horizon Zero Dawn beat out Breath of the Wild by 500,000 copies by pushing 1.73 million copies out of store shelves (as of January 15, 2018). These two games were just as heavily marketed if not more than God of War, with a lot of promotional activity in the West, and a whole host of gameplay trailers and teasers to boot. God of War has something similar with its first party cousin Uncharted 4 in that, both games topped the MetaCritic charts in the months of their release.

This is where the comparison between Horizon Zero Dawn and Breath of the

Wild come into play. Currently, Breath of the Wild has sold over 6.8 million copies while Horizon's figures float around 4.8 million. Nintendo used similar marketing schemes as PlayStation did, where they teased the game in all its glory at E3 2016 after which, they hyped the game up bit by bit while also creating a lot of awareness about the Switch itself. But ultimately, it is Breath of the Wild's score of 97 on MetaCritic which has kept it and the Switch relevant even a year after its release, while Horizon Zero Dawn slipped up due to Sony's lack of continued support and a score of 89.

Before you start thinking that MetaCritic scores are subjective and that neither Horizon nor Zelda are objectively better than the other, it's the numbers which speak the loudest and it's what people hear. But how much of these numbers are generated through hype and are they a good voice of reason?

While with most great games the hype is justified, that was not to be the case in the week of No Man's Sky's launch. In the second week of August, only five days after launch, No Man's Sky had managed to sell over a million copies and to everyone's surprise the game was absolutely terrible, so awful that a lot of people requested and were subsequently refunded the \$60 they paid for it. While No Man's Sky was a cheat of a game, there are games where overhyping led to its own downfall. I'm looking at you, Evolve and Watch Dogs. The opposite is true as



well where a game can suffer because of being underhyped. Alan Wake, Bioshock, Bully, just to name a few, came out with very little publicity till eventually they became sleeper hits and/or cult classics.

If you want to know my thoughts on God of War (based on what I've seen) then here it is – it's a great game, but not exactly the masterpiece everyone's claiming it to be. It looks amazing but everything else is what I'd expect from a AAA PS4 exclusive. With that being said, don't fall for the trap that is hype 'cause you might end up disappointed. Sony did everything right with God of War and it shows. They published a stellar looking game with tactile gameplay but that's all there is to it.

That's the difference between Sony and other publishers and why Sony has consistently released critically acclaimed games for four generations straight – they know exactly how much they need to bet on their horses. And given Sony's track record so far, I honestly do believe that God of War too will be an amazing game, but just don't expect it to be the Citizen Kane of video games because that title already belongs to The Last of Us.

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