



GOD OF WAR

Better than your favourite game

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God of War (2018) is perhaps the most hyped up game of this generation. Irrespective of your interest in gaming, you could not have missed the praise it got over the course of last week. And after getting my hands on the game I have to say, that I agree with the sentiments of critics and fans alike. God of War will perhaps be hailed as one of the most iconic moments of the PS4's life cycle in the years to come.

Disclaimer: this review will only contain minor game play spoilers and no story spoilers past the trailers.

The premise of God of War is simple enough. While it isn't known as to how Kratos ended up in the Norse realm of Midgard, the game kicks off with him and his son Atreus going out on an adventure to fulfil the boy's mother's last wish. But where this journey takes them and how the many lingering questions become answered, is this game's biggest strength. The narrative is presented through dialogue, lore items, and big reveals.

When in most games, large scale world building can come off as jarring, God of War's dialogue exchange and its timing sets up the world in a way which makes it very interesting. This and the pacing of the story can get you hooked on God of War very quickly. This sense of attachment that I have with the story was only possible because of how seamlessly key plot points and lore was presented. While there are cinematic moments which will

leave your jaws dropped, they aren't littered around at every corner. There aren't huge encounters at each turn nor are there huge gaps between combat sections or important dialogue. In short, the pacing of God of War is as good as it gets for a 25-hour campaign.

But what really got me into God of War's story was the character development of both Kratos and Atreus. At the start of everything, Kratos comes off as a quiet and brooding figure while Atreus is a kid who has little bearing over his emotions. The emotional distance between the two is evident as well; where Kratos lacks an understanding of how Atreus thinks and feels, Atreus feels a sense of resentment towards Kratos for leaving him and his mother alone. And their development doesn't entail that Kratos will be singing about fairies and Atreus will become a badass by the end of it all, no. What was amazing about the whole process was how natural their changes were. There were points in the game where Atreus, despite maturing, would still mess up because of his lack of control. There were times where Kratos would fail to see eye to eye with his son as well. But the subtle changes that they go through all happen in a non-linear way and it always kept me invested in their stories. It was also a joy to see the one-note hero Kratos from the previous games have as much depth as he did in this game.

But what good is a story if it looks terrible? Todd Howard forgets to ask

himself this every time he's making a game, but Cory Barlog sure didn't and because of his input and direction, God of War looks as captivating as it does. To say it looks good is perhaps an understatement. I played it at 1080p at 30 fps and I was taken aback by just how realistic reflections were and how each step would leave tracks on the ground. Kratos' beard moving with the wind was a first time in video games as well, and all of the visuals are complemented very well by the huge draw distance. There were never any pop-ins during my playthrough and not a blurry pixel in the distance. Not to mention, everything looked real. More than anything, the animations and particle effects brought Midgard to life and that's a huge feat for a fantasy game. Every thud of Kratos' frosty axe gives way for icy particle effects, while the effect follows the trail back to Kratos as he calls it back. The view of the mountains from afar, the small caverns you swim through, the breathtaking scenery of the forests all felt living.

If you haven't guessed what the main draw for this game still is then it's the realism of each and every aspect of the game. And it's not an exception when it comes to the combat either. Each attack has the right amount of swing time and weight to it. Not to mention the enemies aren't pushovers either. There is a lot of depth to the combat in the form of combos, invincibility frames during combat, and figuring out enemy attack timings. My heart almost always jumped during

fight sequences, and the adrenaline rush after chopping down a hoard of baddies was something else.

The combat is also helped on by increasing levels of enemy difficulty and bosses but that's where the skill tree and upgrade system comes into play. I'll be honest right now, this was perhaps the most surprising element of the game for me. The crafting system went deeper than I expected, and God of War allows for you to even obtain different attacks with varying effects. Atreus is also upgradable even overpowered at points of the game, proving his mettle instead of being like Ashley from Resident Evil 4.

There are major improvements in God of War as opposed to games it takes inspiration from. The combat is fast paced like Bloodborne's while maintaining Dark Souls' grit. It has a similar story arc like the Last of Us, but is not as linear and rather webs around the many motivations of each character until finally coming together. It looks as great as the best PC games and the animations on Kratos' facial nerves have more going on than a game of StarCraft.

God of War, simply put, is a near flawless game. The grand scale of Kratos' hulking figure, as he fights off towering beasts to the sound of crescendoing Valhallan music will get your blood pumping. And the raw emotional weight this game comes with is just as memorable. God of War is an experience worth having, something that will live with you for a long time.