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Hi everybody, welcome to Chapter Select, a seasonal podcast where we bounce back and forth between a series of games exploring their evolution, design, and legacy.

For season two, we are covering the God of War series.

I am one of your hosts, Max Roberts, and I am joined, as always, by Logan Moore.

Logan, we're here.

Hello.

Hi.

We talked, last time we did this show, we talked about how weird it was that we finally finished season one and now it's almost just as weird to be starting season two even though it's only been like what a month since we did the last season I guess a month and some change yeah yeah we're here season two is rolling we are production obviously you know what the season's all about you've clicked on the episode you're listening to it season two is all about God of War which feels weird to say out loud I actually haven't I don't tell anyone we haven't announced that yeah as time of recording no one knows people mm-hmm so super excited to dive into this I think we chose this early this summer maybe May June ish yeah yeah I mean we're always like kicking around ideas for franchises we want to dive into at some point on the future this show I mean to give you a real peek behind the curtain. We've already got seasons 3 and 4 kind of lined up as well. So the fun part is deciding what we want to spend time actually doing. So when we were talking earlier this year, we realized we were actually going to finish the Paper Mario

season and we were like, "What should we do after this?" And it kind of landed on this for a number of different reasons. I think first and foremost because God of War Ragnarok hype for next year, assuming that that game comes out next year.

Yeah, and that was before they dropped the trailer on us.

We were just excited that God of War...

It didn't even have the Ragnarok name attached to it officially.

Yeah, they said that the name of the game was not God of War Ragnarok, and then it was God of War Ragnarok, so of course.

Surprise.

Thank you, PlayStation.

And the other reason was the pivot from 20, 30, sometimes even 40 hour RPGs to a 5 to 7 hour action hack and slash adventure puzzle game.

Like that pivot just sounded super appealing to us.

And yeah, so we're doing God of War here and we're doing something a little like slightly different.

Logan took, he had to convince me to do this.

- A little bit of convincing.

- A little bit of convincing, but it actually, in hindsight, makes total sense.

I credit Logan for thinking about this this way.

Instead of playing the games in this,

the first game and then the most recent game,

we're gonna do that mostly except

we're gonna save God of War 2018 for the very end.

So the order of the episodes will be God of War one,

God of War Ascension, God of War 2, Ghost of Sparta,

Chains of Olympus, God of War 3,

and then we're gonna end on the reimagining,
the relaunch of God of War 2018.

Logan, tell the people why we're doing this.

- So I think there's like a couple reasons
why I pitched this to you.

First off, I realized as soon as,

if we put God of War 2018 at the end,
the way the rest of the season lined up,

I really just kind of liked,

'cause we do God of War 1 first,

and then Ascension, which is a prequel,

which is kind of cool, further fleshing out the first one,

and then the second one,

and then you do both of the handheld games back to back,

and then three, and then three leads into 2018.

So I like how the season kinda structured

if we put 2018 near the end.

The other big thing though is that 2018's obviously

the big standout one in the franchise,

and that's the one that I think,

I mean, when you talk about God of War,

that's the game that comes to a lot of people's minds now,

and that's the game that will probably have

one of our best conversations surrounding, I would imagine.

So I just figured putting it at the end

after we have played the other six

and they're fresh in our mind,

it would just enhance our conversation
of the most recent installment.
Plus, I mean, I think I mentioned this to you,
but when Ragnarok does come out,
we can probably record a one-off
and throw it at the end of the season for posterity's sake,
just for fun.

- Yeah, that is absolutely the plan
to record an episode of Ragnarok
when it comes out sometime hopefully next year in 2022.
And then that can just be attached here to season two
in the podcast feed.

And all the games will just kind of live together.
That's really the goal with any series we take on
that may have games continuing to come out.
Say even a future Paper Mario game comes out.
That's totally a possibility to just play that game
and then attach it to the end of season one in the feed.

- Also, we put the most anticipated one at the very end
so that you have to listen to the whole season
to get to the one you wanna listen to us talk about.

- Probably, yeah.

We gotta keep people engaged a little bit.

You know, gotta hook 'em in.

It's like fishing.

- Exactly.

- So, God of War, not God of War in 2018,

but God of War, PS2,

developed by Sony Santa Monica Studios,

or Studio, not Studios.

It came out for the PlayStation 2,

and then was later remastered for the PlayStation 3

and the PlayStation Vita.

It came out March 22nd, 2005,

and then later November 17th in 2009 on PS3,

and then May 6th, 2014 for the Vita.

The game director and creator of God of War, David Jaffe.

It was produced by Shannon Studstoeck.

- Kratos's daddy.

- Kratos's daddy. - That's what they call him.

- Yes. - That's what they call him.

- So does that make him Atreus' grandfather?

- I guess so, yeah.

- Technically.

- Even though he has no connection

to the creation of that character, I guess so.

- It was produced by Shannon Studstill,

who was in charge of Sony Santa Monica for so long.

The combat was designed by a total of five different people,

but I thought combat would kinda be cool

to mention here for God of War.

It was Derek Daniels, who is still at Sony Santa Monica,

Richard Fogie, who is now working on State of Decay, those games, and Eric Williams,

who is now directing God of War Ragnarok, I thought that was kind of cool, and then

combat scenarios were done by David Jaffe and Todd Pappe, who would later come on to direct God of War Ascension.

So I just thought that was kind of cool to see that laid out.

The music was done by a lot of people, but when you look at the soundtrack, it was mostly done by Gerard Mariano but then there was Mike Reagan, Ron Fish, Winifred... what?

I said Gerard. Did I say it wrong? You said like "Gerard." I'm sorry, Gerard Mariano.

Ron Fish, Winifred Phillips, Winnie Waldron, Chris Velasco, and Marcelo De Francisca? Francie?

You would almost think this should be- We gotta get used to announcing American names.

I was gonna say you'd think this would have been easier than naming Japanese developers, but apparently not.

It has a 94 out of 100 on Metacritic.

I'll double check.

Is it baffling?

Is it?

I don't know.

I mean it's a product of its...it's the same sort of thing with Paper Mario when we'd play these games.

Yeah.

95 out of 100, that's crazy.

But I mean it's an older game.

That was for the PS2 version, I just double checked.

before we gave it a hundred, a ten out of ten, interesting. Anyway, that is God of War's like information and development stuff but now Logan what is your story with God of War? How did the world of Kratos come into your life?

I mean it was a series I had known about for a long time as a young lad but it's also a series I was not allowed to play as a young lad because you know boobs and violence and things like that so it was something I didn't play until the ps3

remasters came out and then if I remember correctly I think somebody in our neighborhood had it like I think they bought a PlayStation 3 and it like came bundled with that and they didn't want the game so they sold it to my Neighbor and then my neighbor let me borrow it eventually or something weird like that very eventually I ended up playing them

I so I have played this one. I have actually not played the full series Ascension and then ghost of Sparta, I believe are the two I have never experienced at all. Okay Other than that, I think I've played everything but but yeah, I've played the original God of War last time I probably played it was

I mean you could check my trophies I know they're dated but probably about ten years ago I would imagine so yeah it's a long time ago.

Hot minute yeah but uh but I've played the game I have back in the day I enjoyed it I guess yeah I don't know and today I guess I have different feelings on it.

- I, so in high school, I had a friend who owned it and he let me buy it off of him for a whopping \$18 and I paid him in change 'cause that's all I had.

So I came to school one day with a bag of \$18 in quarters and nickels and dimes and all that sort of stuff

So I bought it from him, which is how you get around buying rated M video games at the time.

And I bought it, played it, and fell in love.

I really, really enjoyed the combat and the Greek mythology that was very appealing to me, and I just really had a great time with it.

This is my fourth time playing the game.

The last time I played it was actually before God of War 2018 came out.

I replayed one, two, and three kind of in preparation.

But I still only played it on the PS2.

So this is actually my first time playing it on the PS3

with the HD remaster that they put out.

Actually, why am I now suddenly blanking

on that studio's name?

Bluepoint, Bluepoint did the God of War games.

Did a lot of those eras of transitions and stuff.

So that was, I mean, I actually had a lot of fun

playing it on the PS3 this time around.

You know, 720p is this one,

and 60 frames a second though,

which was really nice to have it locked.

You didn't play it on a PS3 or a PS2 this time.

You, tell the people how you played it.

- I played it on a PS5, sort of.

Kind of.

Technically played it through the power of the cloud,

which is how I'll be playing all of the games this season other than

God of War 3 Remastered, I guess, and then 2018.

So I subscribe to PlayStation now.

It was probably just the easiest way for me to dive back in and play all these.

So this is actually my first experience with PS Now,

and I did not have a terrible time with the service.

I know other people have had different thoughts and opinions

and experiences over the years with that service, but it worked quite well for me to be totally honest.

Like, I did not notice in the slightest that I was streaming a video game while I was playing it.

There was times where it would get a little slow or a little hitchy, but for the most part I was totally seamless.

I was actually very surprised and I hope that that continues to ring true with the other four or five games I'm going to play in this manner.

So yeah, PS Now, actually not bad for me.

- I was also surprised to hear that, which is good,

because these games are quite, you know,

they're action intensive, you know, input matters.

And so I was happy to hear you say that for the service,

'cause you know, everyone talks about xCloud

and Game Pass Now, and PS Now doesn't really get brought up in the conversation.

Even Stadia trumps PS Now as far as just

what I see in online discussion.

So it's nice to hear that and cool.

Me on the other hand, I'm playing all of this on,

I'll be playing everything on my PS3 except God of War 3.

I'll be playing the remaster version on my PS5

and then same thing for God of War 2018.

I'll play the PS5 patched version.

4K 60 baby, let's go.

As far as-- - Yeah, I'm excited

to replay that. - Yeah,

that's gonna be really good.

So to dive into our discussion here about God of War,

I'm thinking I want to start with the story

because I feel like that's probably the simplest thing

to wrap around and the real meat of this game,
I think, is it's game play and presentation and stuff.

So I wanted to start with the story.

It's this Greek mythology bringing in this guy
who made a pact with the god of war and he wants revenge.

It's pretty straightforward.

It's pretty blunt.

- You just, there's not too much there.

So what did you think about it coming around at this time?

And I just looked at your trophies.

The last time you played this was in 2014 in June.

- I looked that up too, out of curiosity.

- You were popping trophies at like 2.30 in the morning.

- Well, I looked at that too here

and it says that I popped the most recent one in 2021
at 4 a.m. as well.

So I don't know, there's gotta be a,
there's gotta be like a time code thing with,
I don't know where this website is located out of, is what I'm saying.

So there's got to be time to do this.

It might be out of like Europe or something.

I don't know.

I was looking in the PlayStation app.

I believe the 2014 ones.

You were a wild child.

You were up late.

I mean I would believe myself staying up that late during the...

Or wait.

I would not have been up that late actually.

2014?

I would have been out of high school.

June 2014.

Yeah.

I would have been out of high school which means I would have had a job.

There's no way I was staying up that late.

Yeah.

When these are logged, I think the times are different anyway

Story wise yeah, I don't know. So I guess the first thing

that I should say about God of War up front is that

Prior to 2018. I really didn't like this series that much and I was always pretty vocal about that and you can attest to this firsthand

absolutely, um, which is funny because God of War 2018 like as we get further away from it, that's probably one of my

It's probably one of my five favorite games of all time at this point. It's really really really high up there for me

And it has only continued to climb over the years as I like think about it more anyway

So I really like the reboot game a lot

but these previous ones I didn't care for just because I thought Kratos was a

Crappy character and annoying and I didn't like him

I mean it was kind of all the stereotypes of or all the cliches you hear about people who are like oh

I hate Kratos, he just yells and he's angry all the time and he's annoying.

And returning to this I was like, "Okay, so I know where Kratos gets later in his arc,

let me see if I can recontextualize these original games."

And for the most part this whole first game is just about establishing his character and

I don't feel any different towards him now after replaying the game than I did when I

played it for the first time seven years ago.

And I think part of that, I don't know, so like he's kind of, I mean there's a lot to kind of break down with him.

I think part of it is that he's somewhat of a complex character, but at the same time the way they present the story I don't think does him any favors.

The game almost makes you want to feel like you're sympathetic towards his plight and like why he wants revenge.

But when I replayed it this time I was like, wait, this guy basically makes a deal with the devil, it backfires on him, and then he wants to get revenge on the devil he made a deal with and you're supposed to like understand his plight and like root for, I don't know if you're even supposed to root for him necessarily, but like, I mean clearly the antagonist of game is Ares but Kratos is out here making deals with a dude that's not a good guy and then it blows back in his face and his family dies and all that stuff and it's supposed to you're supposed to like feel bad for him I guess I don't know maybe you're not though. You saying that actually reminded me the other day I rewatched he's this God of War director live panel that they did did actually right before God of War Goes to Sparta came out.

So at the time that was five directors.

And they had this panel and they were talking about, you know, what did each game mean to you and the story of like Kratos and stuff.

>> So what did each of you learn from Kratos along his journey?

>> I can tell you exactly.

I mean, God of War is about a guy who, God of War one, about a guy who puts everything aside for his ambition for work. and he loses his wife and he loses his kid.

And, you know, that's all I need to say about that, so.

- I don't even wanna follow up with anything now.

(laughing)

- I don't mean to be sad, I mean, I'm sorry.

- You couldn't have waited till last to see your video.

- It's about putting your work ahead of your spirit.

I mean, that's what I, I mean, I, you know,
that's what it was about for me.

- And you saying that actually reminded me,

David Chaffee's answer was like,

"What has God aware about to you?"

and he was like, it's a guy who loves his job
more than his family and loses them.

And that happened to David Jaffe in real life, unfortunately.

And you kind of can see that,

because Kratos was this great Spartan warrior
who wanted to assert the dominance of Sparta
across the world, and this obsession with war and ruling
led to his family being killed by him and stuff.

And so then those decisions haunt him,

Which you can, again, you and I have the context of where Kratos' character goes.

Of where they take that, yeah.

Yeah, and it's even in the Ragnarok trailer, he's, you know, Kratos is clearly adverse to war,
especially with the gods. And, you know, he doesn't want to go to war and it's interesting
to know where they can take it. But in this first game, it's just that kind of stuff. I,

I was surprised this time to notice some of the environmental storytelling and the subtleties
that they do plan around. Not that any teenager playing this game back in 2005 or even later
really would have picked up on. One of the early interactions is you're in the Athens courtyard
and you're like going up these stairs and there's a woman and she keeps running away from
you.

And actually everyone that you encounter knows who you are.

And so like they keep dropping these crumbs of like who, people know what he's done solely based off the color of his skin because Ash is spooky.

- He's the ghost of Sparta.

- He's the ghost of Sparta.

I just kind of thought that stuff was interesting.

There's a diary in Kratos' boat where, you know, he talks about how he can't get the images of his wife and daughter out of his head.

but that's also right after you do the sex mini game to get a bunch of red orbs.

So there's a little bit of like game,

I mean, it works and narratively I get that

and it's interesting to see that now,

but there's definitely things you would miss your first time through for sure.

- Yeah, and it's just, I guess it's weird to me

that this first game for how

ports narrative is constructed in some ways

that it did turn into this huge massive franchise

for PlayStation, not that the series has ever been built on the back of storytelling per

se, it definitely is I think more so now than it ever has been with the current reboot games

they're doing and the Norse mythology. But yeah, nothing really pulled me in to the story

or made me change how I felt about it previously. And the other thing too is, and this is where

I chalk it up to just being an old game, is the way the story is doled out is also very

clunky, it reminded me of how games used to be.

Gameplay, this is a gameplay section,
and then all of a sudden it stops and it's,
oh now this is a cut scene.

I almost forgot that it used to be like that
compared to like how modern games
just kind of flow in and out seamlessly.

- Yeah, and even then there was,
this is a in-game cut scene,
and this is a CG pre-rendered cut scene
that we've put on this DVD for you to watch.

- Yeah, this is every, stop everything,
the screen's gonna go black for a second
and then we'll play a video.

- And we're gonna boot up a video.

Yeah, that, yeah.

It's cool that they kinda tell it in flashbacks
and they do, I think they did try to do in-game
asset cutscenes as much as possible,
but it's just, the tech wasn't necessarily there
for these smooth transitions and whatnot.

I did also kinda find it interesting
how much future story stuff they did lay down
and kind of like the bonus content of this game.
Obviously the game ends, you're the God of War.
The narration says that Kratos reigned over
and watched all war for all time.

Obviously that doesn't happen.

But then the end it goes, Kratos will return.

So like God of War II was already green lit at the time.

But one thing which I know you didn't see,

'cause I don't think you didn't do the challenge of,

what was it called?

- Challenge of the Gods or--

- Gods, yeah.

- It's not Titans.

- Gods, Challenge of the Gods.

There's a video you can unlock if you beat it

and it's called Birth of a Beast

and it tells Kratos' origin story of,

you know, he was this child in the Spartan army

and they weeded kids out by letting them live

in the mountains for days and those that came back

could go in the army and those that didn't.

And it straight up establishes Kratos' brother

and makes the sequel sound like it's gonna be about him

and his return from Hades is like this vengeance plot

for brother against brother.

That never gets--

- Sounds like the original Uncharted 4.

(laughing)

- That never, oh my gosh, that never got explored

until Ghost of Sparta, which I just,

they clearly had a bunch of ideas at the time.

Yeah, and the super bonus--

- I have not played Ghost of Sparta.

- And the super bonus secret thing
implies Kratos' lineage to Zeus actually.

So like, there was a ton of stuff
that you really could dig into in this game
that I was surprised, like so early on
that they wanted to explore all these things
and eventually do to different varying effects.

But I thought that was pretty neat.

It's definitely told like a Greek story, you know?

It has that kind of gather around,
hear this tale of an ancient warrior with gods and things like that.

Yeah, the voiceover.

That's the one thing I do kind of like about it is that it's told almost like you're reading
an ancient Greek myth or something like that and there's a narrator to it.

It's unique in that regard.

But the story that is on display I don't think is...

It's not great, it's a starting point, but I think it's just especially...

Yeah, the thing I remain so puzzled about is how Kratos immediately became this mascot
for PlayStation when he as a character in this game is just like totally flat for me
and almost comes...

He comes across as a hugely terrible, a largely terrible person very quickly up front in this
series.

of people when they talk about how Kratos is a bad guy I mean spoilers for
the whole series here I mean we'll get into these discussions deeper as we play
the future games but a lot of people talk about how he's such a bad guy
because he ends up wiping out the entire Greek pantheon and the entire Greek

world in the later games it's like wow what an awful person it's like no he's pretty terrible before any of that ever happened yeah I guess like I as far as mascot goes though. Like he said before, he's just totally obsessed with war and conquering different countries and tribes. Which is cliché to a point. I think he became a mascot because iconic design, sales, and critical acclaim. Yeah. And like he's just, Kratos is a silhouette, and they would even go on to use this in later advertising, but if you just do Kratos with his tattoo you immediately know who he is he just has that brand franchise like iconic design it's really one of the great character designs visually I mean it still is a testament today it still works it's it's very cool and I do like how they narratively explain why he is white like pale white I mean not Caucasian, he's a Greek person, but he's just why he is that skin color is it's literal ashes of his wife and daughter. I do find that actually quite powerful along with later the you know the scars from the chains and stuff like there is a lot of visual storytelling on Kratos that I think works quite quite well. But let's use design in that way and talk about how the game looks. You know 2005 this is was a 16 years later like Kratos has been around for a while now. What'd you think? Yeah not bad. Again it's you're judging things for how they were for the time. The game definitely has a big sense of scale in certain instances Especially like when you first get to Athena's Town.

Oh, it's just Athens.

I was like, "What's Athena's Town called?"

Duh, Athens.

Especially like when you first get there and then you see Ares tearing the place up.

And that's something good they've always done, is giving these games a sense of scale.

Especially when compared to Kratos himself, because he's so tiny in the grand scheme of these things that are going on all around him.

and God of War 2 does a fantastic job of that as well with the game's opening boss fight.

So that's something they do really well here.

As far as other designs of some of the other different locales in the game, nothing really stood out to me.

I guess what's interesting is the designs that are interesting to me are the designs like knowing where the series goes in the future, like seeing how Hades looks in this first one and it's like totally doesn't resemble how he looks later on. Like things like that I think are funny. Most of the character designs are, again Kratos is yeah I agree that he's got a really clean basic look but it works and he's a really yeah like he's probably one of the most iconic video game characters especially for PlayStation. You can just show the red and white and people immediately know who it is that you're talking about, who it is that they're looking at. And then yeah, enemy designs are, I don't know, they're okay. They represent the Greek creatures fairly well I think.

I think they're, yeah, they're really good Greek character designs. They're the kind of enemies you would want, especially in a first game. Like, you want to fight a cyclops, you want to fight a gorgon. That type of stuff. Yeah, that's the stuff you want to fight and how they evolve that later is cool and whatnot.

The scale was one of the first thing I wanted to mention.

I think they, with the controlled camera,
like the locked camera that they changed,
they really get to play with scale super well.

I think one of the most iconic shots or moments
is when you get to Pandora's Temple
on Cronus's back the first time,
and you're crossing that bridge
and the camera just pulls way out,
and you see just how tiny you are compared to this thing
that you're about to go conquer, and you do conquer it.

And that makes you feel powerful and cool.

There's a shot while you're outside of the temple,
and you're crawling, and you can see the big chain
waving against the side of the temple,
and you can see Kronos down below you
crawling through the desert.

When you get to Athens, you see Ares out there fighting.

really do up the scale, they really make it feel larger than life. And the fact that you
then get to go conquer and do all these things I think lends to feeling powerful which is...

That's something the series has always been good at, like coming back to it, like I mentioned
before like the other games do that as well, like God of War 2 the opening boss fight,
the entire opening to God of War 3 as well, even God of War, the newest one, like with
the dragon fight or even the some of the world serpents do too yeah the world serpent like
that stuff is always like it's always done a great job of making Kratos feel like this
incredibly powerful character that can go toe to toe with anybody but also extremely
small within the grand scheme of these worlds that he's residing in yeah they they've they've
always done a really good job of that it's cool to see it implemented so well in the
beginning. As far as just playing this version for the first time since it was
my first time playing the ps3 version, 60 frames per second is really nice. It's
nice and locked. The game is just crisp and clean. The only thing I think
visually that hasn't quite aged super well is the the CG pre-rendered CG
cutscenes. Like those are like alright that's that's a bit older. If this game
was remade obviously that stuff would get cleaned up but those things haven't
aged the best. And there's really not a ton of them. They're really the major Kratos flashbacks
that explain like where he's come from and stuff. Those are those cutscenes. But the rest of it,
I think, it looks like a PS2 game and I'm fond of that look. So it's good. It's aged pretty well.
But really, I think just the visual design of Greece and scale and stuff, I think, is where

they've been the strongest. I mean tying into that a little bit, do you want to talk about the world? Like just the Greek kind of like the level layout and the flow of things? Like I- Yeah. I mean it's Greece, we go to Athens, we go to Pandora's Temple.

I don't know, it feels like those places. What do you think?

Yeah, I was surprised by how, um, I guess reserved they were with this because some of the places

they take you to are lesser known areas, I guess, of the Greek world. And you can tell that they start taking you a little bit deeper into the games that come after this. But the first couple that they take you to are definitely not ones that you would initially think of,

I don't think. I mean, obviously Athens is a huge city, but it's more of the backdrop.

It's not as like when you think of like iconic Greek locations though the things you first think of you know Mount Olympus and

Hades and places like that and you do technically go to Hades in this game, but not for very long and

It's kind of a bad platforming fest once you get there

But yeah like the places they take you to in this game

you could tell they're kind of it seemed like they're kind of holding back to build towards the Bigger locations maybe in the future and kind of just tease some things here and there

As far as how it's all stitched together though. I do like that it is not

One continuous like you just continuing to advance throughout the world

Which it kind of is but I like that there are things off the beaten path that you realize like oh

I can't go there right now, but maybe I'll be able to later or something like that. Like you can even go and find

Like the cliff that he launches himself off of at the end or I guess beginning as well beginning of the game

and you can find the doorway up there that

Athena ends up opening for you in into Mount Olympus where he sits on the throne at the end of the game

and they like tease those things here and there and you can't do anything with them when you first pass by but it's just kind of

a

Nod that you will be going that direction eventually. Yeah, so those things are cool. I

I like just kind of going off of that how connected the level layouts were.

You're doubling back, you're coming... but not doubling back in the way of like,

"Now I gotta go back through this hallway," but you'll-

It's not like a Zelda game or a Metroidvania or whatever.

You'll pop out of a door and you'll be like, "Oh, I'm here? I'm over there? Like, how is this working?"

Oh, it's just that hole that man dug.

Yeah.

I know where I'm at.

I wrote down, "Grave Digger reveal comes to mind as I write this."

the world is very connected and it feels richer for it. It's not a linear hallway.

You really do get a sense of that in Pandora's Temple too because you go through these sections

and then somehow you end up back in the middle room. And then you have this mental map of the

environment and it works pretty well. I just, it just feels good, you know? I did, I don't know

why, well I do know why I wrote this down. There's a part in the desert where to summon

and Kronos you, what do you do?

You blow the horn.

- Kill the sirens.

- Well you kill the sirens but you blow the horn

and it reminded me of God of War.

- Oh yeah.

- 2018.

- Oh yes.

- Who blew the horn.

- Yeah same.

- I was like ah, that's pretty good.

But I think, well before we dive into gameplay

'cause I know that's the real meat of the game.

Just the last kind of other thing, the music, the sound.

the sound design and the music of this game.

What did you think of God of War's first outing?

- The music is quite pretty good.

It's definitely got, I will say I can't think of many

different tracks in the game, but the bombastic,

like main God of War theme itself is very good.

It's-- - It sticks.

- Yes, it does very much, and they use it a lot.

But yeah, it works and it's very powerful.

The music as a whole in the game is good too.

Like it's not a soundtrack I would listen to

like I don't know, other gaming soundtracks,

but it really fits the tone of the game quite a bit.

And I think more than a lot of other things in the game,

it really makes it feel, I think it adds

sort of grand sense of scale and storytelling with like the like with it

being involved with like the myth the mythological Greek world it really adds

that sort of weight and sense of grandiose it's just storytelling to it

it feels like it belongs you know and it does make you feel powerful it's just

this like this choir is behind you it's loud and drumming it's just done and

you're just swinging the blades around and all this stuff it's it's it's woven

in really well but it never like overstates its welcome it's a little

loud actually went into the settings and turned down the music slider it's like

all right we can we can tone this back a little bit but uh it's good music it's strong and I think another testament to that is they still use pieces of it in God of War 2018 now granted we're in a Norse world now so it changed you know the type of music changes a bit but there's still those pieces in there and I think that's a testament to that design early on. Alright Logan it's time for the real meat potatoes and I think the thing you probably have the most to say about I think we both do is this gameplay. Well I was really disappointed point you couldn't press triangle to recall your recall your axe in this game I'm sorry there's no no no well no axe at all there's a weapon big like an axe but there's no there is yeah um gameplay wise uh gameplay pretty good still I think it holds up pretty well it comes across it's weird because I know when this game came out people raved a lot about how deep the combat system felt and I still think it does in some ways. But compared to a lot of other action games that have come out over the years it definitely feels more simplistic going back to it. I don't know if you still feel the same way and that's not a bad thing by any means. It still is a functional good combat system for the most part. I think it has a few niggles here and Namely, I don't like the QTEs, but that's kind of something that is throughout the entire series And I don't I think the other thing that was annoying me too is I would get enemies down to certain Like kill thresholds where the circle would appear over their heads and sometimes I would like mash it and he would go for the grab Animation and trying to do the animation to kill them or whatever I don't know if that happened to you very much, but that happened to me a couple of times It's that PS Now service clearly. Yeah. Yeah clearly For the most part though yeah all the I all the abilities the change themselves even the sword feels pretty good As well in the game swapping back and forth between the chains and the sword sometimes you can get off some Cool combos yeah, I think that's my my main takeaway is that this feels like

Again, it's weird because we know where these games go not even in 2018, but just in the other ones after this this feels like

a good

Basis for where I know they take things in the future

But it still holds up in a general sense

for an action game

They

Nailed

The weapon and by the weapon I mean the blades of chaos they made just like Kratos is iconic for

PlayStation and characters line they've made

some of the most iconic weapons

to ever be in a video game the blades of chaos are

just so cool and

powerful and

Diverse they come in there is there's much I like there is much iconic to God of War

I think is Kratos is in a lot of ways. They have to be and it's... Which is why when 2018

was coming out everybody's like they gotta be in the game. They have to be in this game

somewhere. And it, and that leads to a powerful story moment as well. It's just the Blades

are just as much of God of War as Kratos himself is. They feel just, I really love the feel

of them they've got a momentum and an energy to them and you know when you hit square,

square, square, triangle and you do the slam and it creates the ripple like there's...

Those combos feel good to pull off and I still remember L1, circle, spinning around and all

this stuff.

There's just really cool moves and energy to a lot of this movement and I think that

also helps with the scale because they can pull the camera out but you can still see

the blades and you know what you're doing.

Like you've never, the gameplay was never compromised

from a combat perspective from the camera or I didn't think.

Like that kind of stuff pulling out.

So blades nailed, top, bam, boom, bada bing.

The sword is good, it's got a different weight to it.

I think that's interesting.

But the rest of the powers, I think really

the only other power that's useful or like I enjoy using was the Poseidon Rage

but then you've got Zeus or Medusa but those either Zeus doesn't do enough

Medusa takes too long Hades is good Hades actually is kind of useful but

he's unlocked toward the end so it's yeah the Hades yes it's kind of bro he's

very yeah Hades is definitely broken especially if you max it out I was using

that quite a bit but it they I think they put a lot of their combat design

into the blades as they should have and it panned out but some of the other

systems felt a little weaker and so I'm kind of curious to see how those

systems evolve over the course of these games especially now knowing the context

of where 2018 goes with two really solid primary weapons and less so much other

stuff so I'm excited to see how that goes. I forgot, I truly forgot how many puzzles

there were in this game. It's a puzzly game. Yeah, there's quite a few. Some of them are

pretty obtuse as well. At least a couple of them. Like what, which one? The one where

you gotta kick the pillar off the ledge on top of the other pillar. That's kind of, that's

a funky one. I got it after a few minutes, but with how many steps there are to do that,

because you have to pull both of the pillars out from the far wall, kick them all the way

down to the far side of the bridge, I just naturally kicked both of them off the first

time and then I didn't know what to do. There's some steps involved with that one before it

clicks in your head and you're like, "Oh, this is what I need to do, I guess." But yeah, most of them

aren't too bad in you. It's definitely a very puzzle heavy game. But it definitely... the toughest

one I had was more a timing problem and execution than like, "How do I do this?" It's in those

Cliffs of Madness or whatever it was called, and you have to get one of the rubies and it's like, as soon as you pull this lever, a gate opens and you can push a box, but then the spike floor timer starts, and it's like, kick faster, Kratos, like come on, I know where I need to go here.

So that was a little frustrating and tough, and anything to do with jumping or platforming, like timing-wise, Kratos's jump is very vertical, very stiff, like a, he has a double jump, thank God, but he's very vertical, very stiff.

doesn't have a good momentum or flow there and I know you had trouble with it and I had trouble with it but there's the part in the Hades challenge of the temple with the sawblades. I hate that entire section so much dude. It's so... and that's something I haven't really touched on yet is that there are definitely moments in this game where I just was like why why is this here the entire Hades section is kind of one of them I understand why they probably wanted to throw Hades in there briefly but that entire section feels like such a well they did throw away the temple was one of the guy was the three big guys yeah yeah side in but the Poseidon stuff was all underwater so like those puzzles were pretty straightforward I didn't I have a huge problem with the Poseidon stuff on us.

- Yeah, no, that stuff's fine.

- I don't think, for a water section in a game from the early 2000s, I didn't think it was too bad.

- No, it's pretty good.

Hades, though.

- The Hades stuff is not great.

And then there's one other area of this game

that I remember just thinking, like, why is this a thing?

I don't know, mainly just some of the combat encounters they throw you in.

Like, I was talking to you while I was playing some of this, and there's a lot of inconsistency with some of the combat encounters.

Like I would die during one of them

I remember one time I died during a combat encounter and then I respawned and the next time I started facing off in that encounter

Like half the enemies that I faced the time before didn't show up and then I was just able to advance

a

Lot of the sequences where there's archers shooting you far away and you have to do something

That's the one area of Hades that really annoyed me when you're trying to jump up

Down towards where all those archers are and then you have to and they're all trying to shoot you see that annoyed me a lot

Yeah, there's just certain

Brief sections I feel like could have been cut out of the game and just would have made it a little more

Smooth and I don't know. There's just things that aren't fun

I don't understand why they're in the game

Like if you're not having fun in a certain section and it probably needs to go or should be reconsidered

It's interesting how they tried to balance the pacing because it can't all be combat and can't all be puzzles

but there was just some

Some stuff just felt

Hard for heart's sake or just weird. I think particularly of the boulders in the Hades challenge area

Where the fire is rolling towards you and it's like you gotta mash r2 to like open the store

That's another good one

- Yeah, mashing R2 on the DualShock 3 Logan,

I don't know if you've done that lately,

but those triggers-- - Probably not fun.

- Not the best.

So that was a little frustrating,

and I think the other inconsistent thing was boss fights.

There's only three of them.

The Hydra at the beginning,

the Mechanical Minotaur, and then Ares.

And the mechanical minotaur to,

I found quite frustrating.

This showed me like just old game design

via lack of checkpoints

because you've gotta hit him four times with the log

but to get him in with the log you've gotta hit him

with your blades or weapons or whatever to like weaken him.

- Yes.

- Hit him but then he'll run to the back of the room

and charge you and

I died missing the prompt because I was hitting circle

and he was going for the grab instead of doing the prompt

and I screwed up the prompt I think on one of them

and so then the Minotaur kills me

and I gotta do the whole fight over again.

And it's one of these fights that I can't advance
because I know what to do.
It's I have to wait for the timing to do what I've gotta do
to get to the point.

But that fight just seems out of,
out of place to a degree.

I feel like the Minotaur almost could have been cut
but then you really have no boss fights,
it's just Ares and the Hydra, so what do you do?

I don't, I think they realized,
I mean they clearly do this in God of War II
and then obviously in III, but like,
people wanna fight more iconic creatures
or characters that they know.

Yeah. I mean three is all. Because a lot of the rooms later on just end up being like
variants of the creatures you've been fighting the entire game. Just more armor now or more
attack power.

Yes. Which is one of the uninteresting things I found about combat is that they don't...

You're right. I think the
creatures that they add are good, but there's not enough variety.

Yeah, they just make them... they change the color.

change the color, add some armor, add some different sort of weapons, stuff like that.

There's maybe like seven to eight main enemy types I can think of.

Yeah.

So yeah, the bosses, I'm not a fan of the Ares boss fight as well. I don't think that fight's
very good. The way it's structured too is so just wonky. Like the first part of it's fine.

And then the second part of it is just total overkill. Like you have to kill so many Kratos.

- Oh, that is a lot.

It's too many to kill, but--

- It's too many.

It goes on for too long.

- It does go on for too long, but the mechanic of hugging your wife and daughter and giving them your health to protect them, I actually think is quite powerful way to convey Kratos' love for these two people in his life, and it's a gameplay mechanic in the moment of this big fight while you're fighting these evil.

Like it is a narratively, I think, quite strong moment, but it does go on for too long.

I mean, I personally was using the Hades summon the army thing a lot, and just like, all right guys, we can do this.

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, hug.

All right, do it again.

- Yes, yeah, it gets very cyclical and very, like yeah, like we said, it just lasts a little too long.

And then the final part with the sword battle back and forth thing that gets really I

feel like there's not enough like consistency in that to know when Ares is holes are to like best attack and

I'm sure there's a good way to know if you're very familiar with the fight

But like I found that I died on that section a couple times and the time I won it was just like sheer

Dumb luck it seemed like because he wasn't doing certain attack patterns on me that he was doing the couple times before

I don't know if that was the same experience for you

No, but it just seemed like it. It just seemed like a crapshoot

like sometimes he would do certain attack combos and

They're really hard to block and there's no way to really block them

And he'd just wreck you and you're dead in two seconds

And then other times he's not doing anything like that at all and he's giving you all the time in the world to hit him

So yeah, it was just kind of

Keep trying until you get lucky and the computer's dumb and is gonna kind of help you out

Yeah, I yeah back to the boss fights as a whole. Yeah, they're fine

They get way better later on and they become like the highlight of the games later on for sure

Mm-hmm, but here and not so much honestly the boss fights were the pitch of God of War 3

It was like alright, here you go, buddy

Yes kill everybody and that's what they spent a lot of time showing off before that game came out - yeah

That was the main thing they showed off

I'm excited. I'm actually really stoked to

see how they've evolved like refresh myself because I have played all of the games, but it's

This is a solid foundation of combat and gameplay

Yeah

refinement obviously

Is needed and I'm sure we get to it obviously, but it's good

It's solid and it still holds up today as far as I I played the game twice

We didn't mention this at the top, but I beat this game like

month and a half ago.

So I ended up just getting the platinum which involved playing the game a second time in under five hours.

Which is also kind of maybe a testament to design if you know what you're doing and you skip any optional fight.

You can get three and a half hours in my time. So this is a very doable and quick short consumable game which is rare these days I think.

especially in a triple-a space to have something, you know, that can be beaten that quickly. But it's solid, I think is a really... it's the cornerstone. This combat is still influential to this day and not just in God of War but in other series as well.

Yeah, and I feel like that's kind of what I said at the top as well, mirrored that. Like this feels feels like a good basis for everything that came after if it was just this on its own.

I guess the thing I'm surprised about, even in retrospect, is seeing that this game has a 94 on Metacritic. Because I do think, I don't think the game, I kept joking to you like, "Oh this game's terrible, this game's terrible." And I don't think it's aged very well in a general sense. And I can't really say I was thoroughly enjoying this playthrough. It was kind of a grind to get through at times.

And I feel like part of that's, for a lot of the things we've talked about, it's just dated and it doesn't really grip you the same way some of the later games do with its story. But yeah, the Metacritic score and the way people talk about this first game is very surprising because I think now especially, throwing out the PSP games, people would say this is the weakest of the bunch outside of Ascension. Ascension would be considered the weakest I think. I think Ascension gets the bottom run. And then this. And then people talk more fondly about two and three and then reboot's kind of its own thing. But I feel like of the main core trilogy people could kind of put this one on the bottom. Which is funny because it

has the highest like score for the time. But I guess it's just, I guess it was just a new thing and yeah I do think a lot of it does come down to the chain, Blades of Chaos just being a really unique way of doing combat.

Because I agree with everything you said previously about there being, there's like a flow to

them but there's also left to them and they feel good to use as a weapon.

Yeah.

There's a reason they're still around.

They clearly stood the test of time.

The one thing I wanted to, one more thing I wanted to say specifically about playing God of War in 2021 that I found quite refreshing was how video gamey it was. There's, besides just the main story, when you beat the game, you unlock costumes like silly costumes. Kratos can dress up in a cow suit, he can dress up as a business tycoon, a chef, like the game is a game.

There was, there's a bonus challenge arena we've talked about, Challenge of the Gods, where it's 10 or 12 different challenges that you have to do and play, which is just kind of like this, none of that would happen today.

Especially in like God of War 2018 or Ragnarok, Like there's not gonna be an optional challenge arena.

You're not gonna see Kratos dress up in a cow suit with udders that give him unlimited magic.

Like I mean, you can see him dress up in all kinds of different stuff, but not that, I guess.

- Yeah. - It's more like.

- It's gamey, there are cheat codes, there are Easter eggs.

It's just, it was kind of nice to play a video game, video game in 2021, when most things today

They are elaborate and serious and cinematic and those are games I love, but this just felt like, wow, nice.

I guess what I'm trying to say is God of War

is a retro or classic video game now.

- Yeah.

- It's cool.

And that, I think, is God of War.

That's the first game, season two, episode one,
in the book slogan.

I am actually really stoked to play all of the games again
'cause I haven't played Chains, Ghost, or Ascension
since I played them the first time.

So I'm really eager to dig back into those
and this is gonna be a lot of fun, I think.

I'm really looking forward to this season.

- Yeah, I would say too,

I'm really looking forward to every,
not to make this sound like a bad thing.

I think this was the one I was least excited about playing though, if I'm being honest.

We'll see if that's how you feel after we play the multiplayer in Ascension.

Yeah, well, Ascension I've never played though.

So Ascension and Ghost I've never played.

Chains I don't really remember in the slightest.

And then 2 and 3 I know and I like them more than 1.

So I'd say this was the one I was probably least interested in returning to.

to say that yeah I didn't like have a terrible time playing it it wasn't a
slog or anything like that and I I've enjoyed it we've chose this for sure but
uh yeah I'm bottom line I'm very much looking forward to the other episodes as
well I'm also looking forward to getting trophies on all these as well because I
got them I don't know if I'm gonna don't try to plaque them all I was I think I

can get like we've been talking here I've been kind of rooting around and looking at the trophies on the other ones.

The second game's list is very easy.

If there's a way that you can farm red orbs, pretty easy actually.

I think I could just get that pretty easily.

- Yeah, I haven't mentally decided

if I want to plat all of these.

The interesting thing is that I have trophies in Ascension and in God of War III Remastered.

So it's like, hmm, do I keep going?

because I know for God of War Remastered I'd have to play on Titan mode. I'm like, "Am I going to want to do that? Maybe? Who knows?" We'll see. Thank you all for listening to this first episode of season two of Chapter Select. If you would like to find more about the show you can go to chapterselect.com or go to chapterselect.com/season2 and you'll taken right to this season's list of episodes and check them all out.

Season one was all about Paper Mario and season zero was The Last of Us.

If you'd like to check those out you can do so as well.

One more thing really quick about season two, if you're listening to this you can also watch it over on YouTube.

I've just decided to record the games while I play them and then I'm gonna chop it up with the audio and you can watch at least how I played God of War and whatnot going forward so that is an option for you as well. You can find myself on Twitter @MaxRoberts143 you can find my writing over at MaxFrequency.net if you'd like to learn about the history of Naughty Dog during the PS4 era, Chasing the Stick, check it out over there and then obviously this show, Chapter Select.

Logan is on Twitter @moreman12

and you can find his writing over at comicbook.com
where I'm sure he will be pining
to review God of War Ragnarok
whenever that comes around in 2022 someday, maybe, hussu.
We'll see, we'll see if this boy gets to review it.

- I just hope it releases next year.

I just, I still, I don't trust any game releasing nowadays
until it's in my hands.

So that just seems like the era we're in.

- Yeah, I don't blame you, who knows.

We'll see how it all shakes out.

But thank you all for listening
and we'll catch you next time.

- Bye.

- Chapter Select is a Max Frequency production.

This episode was research produced and edited by me,
Max Roberts.

Season two is hosted by Logan Moore and myself
and it's all about God of War.

For more on this season, go to chapterselect.com/season2.

To check out previous seasons, go to chapterselect.com.

By the gods, you've done it!

Somehow you've found your way here, to me.

I offer you my congratulations and my respect.

Together, we shall conquer the perils that lay before us.

And we shall always--

- Dude, dude, dude, they did it.

They found our Easter egg.

- Who are you?

- It's me, David Jaffe.

I directed the game.

- What game?

- Your game, God of War?

- Go away or I'll--

- Dude, dude, don't you get it?

These guys, they spent all that time

breaking those statues.

I mean they must have taken like forever and then they figured out the whole secret code thing

I do not know what you are talking about

We hid the secret pretty damn deep huh Kratos?

If I kill you I will get help

So wait, wait, wait, wait, if you got the secret from the net or a magazine then actually you kind of suck

I mean work for it a bit right Kratos? Actually, can I call you Krait?

No, go away or I'll kill you

You know what you hate it when they get the codes off the net? It's so lazy

Hey see crepe, what are you so pale for I am serious, you know up close

She actually looked kind of tasty if you don't mind me saying it's kind of girl

She was worse than a screeching harpy

As I was saying you have found the secret you have done well

Congratulations mortal we will meet again

Again.

Bye.

[Silence]