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Hello everybody and welcome to chapter select a seasonal podcast where we bounce back and forth between a series of games

Exploring their evolution design and legacy and for this season two

sort of finale

We're talking about God of War

2018 God of War 4 God of War PS4

Whatever you want to call it. I'm one of your hosts max Roberts, and I'm joined as always by Logan Moore. Hello, Logan

Hello in a couple weeks. We can call it God of War PC as well

I guess we can't she says it'll be the only one on PC

So you will be referred to it as that and it would make sense

It's the second God of War game to not be on a so dedicated Sony console. It's up there with God of War betrayal. Mm-hmm

It's finally getting it. I feel like we I don't know if we've actually mentioned betrayal

I feel like we've definitely a betrayal a couple times on the podcast throughout the course of this season

So God of War which that's all I'm gonna call it from here on out. I'm tired of typing

I've been typing 2018 at the back half of it for months now God of War

developed by Sony Santa Monica studio

For the PlayStation 4 slash ps4 Pro at the time it came out April 20th

2018 and has a impending PC release date like we talked about

January 14th of 2022, which is if you're listening to this live when it comes out is next Friday day.

Logan, you have it, correct?

Yeah, I do actually have God of War on PC right now.

I'm reviewing it.

That's all I can say about that, the time this goes up.

So if you want to read my review, it'll be live.

It won't be...

I forget what the date is actually, it'll be live.

We'll attach it in the show notes once it does go up, but you can keep an eye on comicbook.com

if you want to see it once it goes live.

So bookmark that website.

Will do.

It was directed by Cory Barlog, who you may recall, we've talked about quite a bit this season in general, but he directed God of War 2.

He's the first and currently only director to ever direct two God of War titles, although he's had his fingers on pretty much every game except Ascension, which he returned post-Ascension

actually in August of 2013.

The game was produced by Yumi Yang and Kenneth T. Roy.

They were the directors of product development, and then there's a bunch of producers underneath them, but kinda those two people were at the top.

Some of the other just producers that at least Wikipedia lists was, help me, Brian Westergaard, Elizabeth Daum-Wong, Sean Llewellyn, and--

- Llewellyn, I think.

- Llewellyn, Chad Cox, and Eric Fong.

So those are some of the producers

that at least Wikipedia mentions.

Combat, which is big in this game.

The design director was Derek Daniels,

and then Jason McDonald was the gameplay design lead,

and he's been doing combat in God of War

since God of War II.

He was the lead on Ascension.

I mean, he's the combat guy, basically, for God of War.

And then the music, for the first time,

goodbye, Gerard.

- Yeah.

- It's Bear McCreary, I almost said Brian.

It's Bear McCreary did the music for God of War here.

The game got a 94 out of 100 on Metacritic,

which ties the first game.

So now we've come full circle, 94 to 94.

I wonder what the PC scores will be like.

In all earnestness, I'm curious.

Obviously the game is still the game,

so what is PC gonna bring to the table?

- I will guess lower.

That's not off of me having played it,

'cause at the time we were recording this,

I have actually not played it on PC yet.

I've merely downloaded it to my Steam library.

I feel like the PC ports of the PlayStation games

have been a little bit,
like they've been ironing out the kinks with those,
I feel like, as they go.

I feel like Horizon was a little bit rough when it came out
and so was, days gone I feel like it was a little bit better
but people still had some complaints with it
when it first arrived.

- And Death Stranding, this one claims to have
some robust keyboard and controller support.

You could theoretically, I mean you can,
it's not theoretical, you could play God of War
with an Xbox controller if you so wanted to.

- I'm actually 1,000% going to do that.

- It's gonna be really weird to, you know,
it's just weird to think about that.

But, so it's coming to PC soon,
but the PS4 Metacritic scores 94 out of 100,
and when they announced the PC port,
they also announced the lifetime sales
up through August of '21,
which is 19 and a half million copies.

it's the best selling PlayStation exclusive period.

I mean, if you had asked me, I would have said Spider-Man,
simply because of the name and clout of Spider-Man,
but it is God of War.

- And I think Uncharted 4 is really, really high up there too.

- Uncharted 4 was the previous game.

- It's like 16 or 17 million or something like that
when they last reported it, something like that.

- So, you know, Uncharted's big.

To put that in a little bit of context,
did a little bit of, you know, table math.

If you take current PS4 console sales, that's about roughly 17% of PS4 console owners out
of 115 million own God of War.

And this is all before the PC port of the game.

So it's huge.

This game is big, big, big.

And I think, you know, this is where it leads us to our experiences and our histories with
this particular game, you may have heard at the end of the last episode, I played a little
bit from our Millennial Gaming Speak days, where we theorized based off of rumors floating
around like, "Oh, I wonder what God of War 4 will be like."

And then in E3 2016, it was revealed and we also talked about it then.

I kind of thought it would be fun to play a little clip for you all.

You can explore these little areas that are big and you can find things and do maybe a
side quest.

I doubt God of War has a side quest system.

I hope it does.

That sounds so un-God of War.

Yeah, which is exactly why I want it.

Because I don't think that God of War games are very good.

I really don't.

God of War 2 is a fantastic game.

They're very mindless.

Logan, do you think God of War games are mindless?

I mean, they kind of are.

I feel like any action, I mean, I would say, the things I would say in order for a game to not be mindless was that it would be that it needs to have a lot of, like, writing and constant narrative in front of your face.

I'd say half the God of War games, I would say, are somewhat mindless by that barometer.

I'd say three and two, probably, are a little bit more engaging.

One, an ascension. I would say you really don't have to pay too much attention to. Same with the handheld games, but yeah.

I was, uh, I've talked about it on the show, but I was not the biggest God of War fan back when we did our old show.

And even now, like, we've done this whole series now, and I would not say that it's one of my favorite franchises ever. I

like this game, specifically. If we're gonna go into our own histories of now which I know is coming up on our notes here.

No, yeah, we're in it. We live in it.

That clip there, as you can clearly tell, I was not the biggest God of War fan until this game came out and it totally made me do a 180 on the series as a whole.

And that's still very much how I feel, like when I think about God of War, the things that I love

about this series, I'd say 80 to 90 percent of the things that I really like about the series are all associated with this game in particular.

And we've gone back obviously now and I think some of those previous games are actually quite good, especially Ghost of Sparta is the one that remains a surprise for me out of the ones that we have played over the course of this season.

But yeah, I am a God of War 2018 fan first and foremost and then all the other games are very far, like if I was, if God of War 2018 is way up here, my hand is very high to the ceiling for audio listeners, then I would start ranking the other ones like much lower.

Like there's a massive gap in my mind between this game and all the others.

And at that time I'm out there defending God of War, the whole clip has me saying God of War 2 is great and goes to Sparta.

- I think you've loved these games for a long time, which I think you've talked about quite a bit over the course of this season.

- Yeah, and I still-- - Like, waiting at midnight to get Ascension and all this other stuff.

- You know, we all have, you know, we all make mistakes.

You know, Midnight launch for God of War Ascension was probably one of them.

But I do love the God of War series, but there's no question in my mind, no doubt, that 2018 is the best one of the bunch and one of the best games ever made.

It's quite easy. - So I was gonna ask you

while we're, I mean, just talking like this has been on my short list of favorite games ever or greatest games of all time for the longest time. You texted me when we were both playing through

this and you said, "I think this is one of the best games ever." Well, I remember, I remember in 2018 we were at Dual Shockers at the time together and we were doing our game of the year list. Yours was either God of War or League of Legends. I honestly do not remember. No, it was a thousand percent God of War. Yeah. Okay, I know League was always up there, just calm down.

So it was God of War, but I chose that year Spider-Man. And it wasn't a,

it wasn't like a Red Dead, you know, which I was shouting like Red Dead's amazing, or God of War

wasn't a great game, it was just I had more fun playing Spider-Man. And that was kind of my philosophy at the time for Game of the Year. I have, if I could retroactively go back, it's God

of War hands down. This was 2018's Game of the Year, this is one of the best games ever made.

It's incredible. I think this is the best game of last gen, like, hands down. Like, if I was to say a game of the generation or something like that, I think this is the best game of the last generation of consoles. And it's also my favorite. Like, this is probably a top three to five favorite game of all time for me. I would agree with the top three to five and I could see, yeah, I could be persuaded of the last generation. And I think a big part of that in what we'll get to is how they reinvent God of War. That's a huge part, but they keep the legacy intact. Specifically, our experiences with the game, I was actually quite fortunate enough to work on the wiki guide for IGN with this, so I was on a team with Brendan Graber and Casey DeFreas working on this game. I did a lot of side quest stuff like Fafnir's Dragon, those quests. Doing all that stuff was really kind of my wheelhouse for that game. And I was able to get the game two weeks early, which, you know, is rough. It was one of the few times that I get games before you. And when Ragnarok comes around, I'm sure that the tables will have turned, you know, all things staying the same, all things being equal here.

So I got the game two weeks early,
and I still, I was at an art show
when I got the email that said,
you know, here's your code, go, you can download it.
And I went, we gotta wrap up this art show, we gotta go.
So, you know, you gotta go home and download 40, 50 gigs.
So I downloaded through the night,
and then I woke up early the next day,
I still had a dog at the time,
And I thought, I'll go, out in the living room,

the dog will stay in the bedroom, and I can play in peace.

This did not happen.

So I had to, before I chopped the tree down,

dog was whining, and so I had to go let the dog out.

And then the dog laid on the couch

while I started the game.

It was not the most ideal scenario, but.

And then the rest of the time I really just played

at my desk on my tiny TV, recording and writing,

and doing guide work and worked on that for all that time.

So that was kind of my first go around with God of War 2018.

I played about half of it again with my wife, Abby.

She was watching the story,

but then we just kind of dropped off.

She wasn't super engaged like she was

in The Last of Us or other games.

So she's never finished it. - Wow.

- I don't even know, I tried.

And so we stopped at the...

Dragon? Or shortly after the dragon. So, you know, I never platted the game back in the

day, I never finished all the quests. When I do guides I usually just do the work I'm

assigned and then I'm drained, I dip out. So I never properly finished it.

Yeah, that makes sense more now that I think, like I was always shocked that you never platted

this. And then when I think about it retroactively, it's totally because it was a work assignment.

Like there have been games that I've wanted to go back and clean up trophies for and I

just never do because it's like a work thing.

I associate it with work for some reason.

There's just like a mental disconnect there.

And I had that with this game for a long time.

Even replaying it with Abby, my goal wasn't to plat it, it was just do the story.

And I wasn't doing a ton of the side quests or collectibles, I wasn't worried about any of that.

This time around I was because I platted the other games.

It's like I can't not plait God of War now.

So I did go in with the, I looked up,
there were no missable trophies and I went,

"All right, I can play the game
and clean up stuff at the end."

And I did.

And you were actually, we were together
when I finally beat the Queen Valkyrie and platted the game.

So that was a very exciting moment.

What about you, my friend?

So yeah, I played this one. When it came out, I literally took the day off of work to play this, so I went and got it.

I actually think this might be the last game I got at midnight? For any sort of release?

So you bought it physically?

I did buy it physically. I'm sure that's probably wrong. There's probably some other game I went and got at some point.

one like oh like I yeah I got Death Stranding at one point one night
um but yeah I went I got this at
midnight or nine o'clock or whatever the heck it was with GameStop
and took the day off from work to play it
back when I had a not dumb job
associated with video games this is back when I was working in an engineering

company

so I used a real big boy PTO day off

to play this game.

Did nothing but play it all day.

Woke up the next day on Saturday,

did nothing but play it until it was beaten.

And that's...

about it.

This time around I did not do that.

I still played it pretty quickly.

I'd say it took about a week

to play it this time.

In a couple

good chunks of time

though, is how I played it.

So yeah, first time I played it though,

though. I immediately was done with it and have been waiting on what is now Ragnarok for the longest time. I don't think there's anything...

Didn't you... am I remembering this right? But didn't you buy your TV for this game?

Kind of. Like this was when I bought my TV, I think I had bought my TV like six months prior. So when I was thinking about games that were coming up, that I was like excited, very excited to play. This was definitely one of them. So this was, yeah, one of the first games I really played on my 4K TV that I could think of that was like a hot new release and I had a PlayStation 4 Pro and I was like, "Okay, this is gonna look great. This will look awesome." And it did. The game still looks great. I mean, I played it on PS5 this time, as did you. Looks very good. It was a very weird thing coming this game being "Alright, another God of War game, let's sit down and play this."

Oh!

Oh yeah, this game's not that old like all the other ones are.

That's kind of strange.

So yeah, the game, I don't think it, resolution-wise, did you think it looked a lot better on PS5?

Did they bump up the resolution at all?

Okay.

You have to...

What's the context to how I played it again?

I played it on a 21-inch 1080p monitor.

I was now playing it on a 55 inch 4K OLED at 4K60s.

So like the upgrade was big to me.

- Yeah.

- I think it looks great.

They do, it's a checkerboarded 4K on PS5.

Well, it was on PS4 Pro as well,

but to get the 4K60, it's a checkerboarded 4K.

The PC release is confirmed to have native 4K, so.

- Okay.

The bad thing about that is I don't have a 4K monitor, so.

So time to take the tower downstairs, buddy.

I don't know.

I don't know about that.

I probably will not be doing that, but I guess I could.

You could.

Unplug.

But do I want to?

No, I don't.

Bring the TV upstairs.

Carrying on the tradition really quick, your first trophy was obviously April 20th of 2018 and you got the platinum on May 6th, so it took you just about two weeks to plat the game.

I remember when I platted it too, I believe, wasn't it like 3 or 4 a.m.?

The trophy says 5 in the afternoon, so. But I don't know where that's localized.

Yeah, or even when it would have synced, because like yeah, PS5 syncs immediately, but PS4, yeah, you weren't syncing right away, so.

Because I thought I popped it, I thought I stayed up very late, and I was like I will not go to bed until the Valkyrie has died.

I do understand that feeling now, and we will talk about her.

but before we get into gameplay, I'm actually saving gameplay for the end, we have, I feel like we need to talk about the story first, which is weird for a God of War game because really the story, yeah, maybe outside of like two ghosts of Sparta and three, I think those are the most narratively heavy of that Greek bunch and that's not a lot of weight, you know, it's like lightweight story. This is obviously pivotal. I recall when the game was revealed a lot of initial online reactions or jokes was, "Oh wow, they've Last of Us'd the God of War. Look, Kratos and a boy like going across the Norse realms." It's hard not to deny that especially considering what PlayStation was doing at the time and Last of Us Part 2 was already announced. It was, you know, it was just kind of the thing at the time but this is so much obviously more than that and so we've pivoted from Greek to Norse he's actually got a child that he's actually a father to there's a lot to dig into here where do you where do you want to start um I think the place to start is just Kratos in general because he's still very much the same character and that's the best the best thing about this game in the general sense and you've said this before

Is that they did not reboot it and throw out everything that came before which they probably could have they could have just been like

Okay, we're gonna make Kratos the main sort of

catalyst for this war that we're gonna have develop in the Norse realm

But he's a totally different character and more basically. He's just gonna be a conduit for the player once again

Rain down havoc upon the Norse pantheon and have that be it and I feel like if that would have been the direction

We would have been like okay. That's fine. That's understandable

You can't just have this man going from realm to realm and trying to kill all these gods, but no they did not do that at all

But in the process they made Kratos an actually

Interesting character I would still say even though we played the other six games in this franchise

I would not say Kratos was a great character that I really enjoyed whatsoever until this game this game

This game retroactively I think makes him a more interesting character in those other games if this game never came about I don't think I

Think anything positively about Kratos from the previous six games. We've played it's like a you know rising tide lifts all ships

but yeah, this is like a

Retroactive tide that's lifting the ships of the previous game. Yeah, this game has retroactively added more

Like because there's so many callbacks in this game to to the previous games

Like that was the cool thing this time is that I was picking up on

Small little lines here and there and I was understanding what he was talking about

One of the ones that stuck out to the me most I think is pretty early on

Atreus says something about how the fates have determined something has to happen and Kratos just says the fates don't know anything or something

Like that and it's like oh he totally

he totally is referencing God of War 2 or when or when

Freya makes him go to hell and he says the realm of the dead and she says have you been there and he's not this one

Yeah, there's so many and it's not

It's not in a fan service II way either. It's in a no rich debt meaningful way

There's even kind of building off at Reyes in the fates

There's a line later once you have a Mameer who adds so much texture to this world both for the player and for them

Yeah, there's a line where there's specific thoughts on a mere - yeah, there's these

This texture he's talking about

Him and a trace are talking about you know fates and predetermined and like Ragnarok and it's all written and stuff that

sort of story. I don't remember the specific one. And Kratos says along the lines of, you know,

"There's nothing that is written that can't be unwritten." And Mimir says, "Well, maybe you and

Odin actually agree on something." And it's just so good. They give you such insight to Kratos

and that, but I also don't think that it's stuff that would be lost necessarily. Maybe the

richness of it could be but

the the core context isn't lost on someone who's never played a god of war game and I have to think a

bulk of that nineteen and a half million

Haven't played a

God of war game or all of them or you just don't pick up on it

Like I had played most of the god of war games before I had played this one

There was a lot of things I didn't notice the first time around just because I had not played

The other six right before it and I and to to be fair I did play one through three

Right before that was the last time I had played those games. I played them right before

This came out and so those the core three were fresh in my mind. So I I was picking up those things then

The only fan service II thing and it's the perfect fan service II thing was the the boat captain treasure

There's the note specifically calls out like I've left

The Greek realm I have the key. I

Don't remember that happened. Ah, it's I didn't find it. Is it a side quest? It's one of the treasures

So when you played the game you saw it. Yeah, you likely did not do it this time around. Yeah, it's a

Shit, that's actually something I meant to mention previously but to shed some insight on to how I played it this time around

It was totally just a story run through and then I was done

And that's not because I don't think the side quests are good or anything like that. It's just time-consuming and

You weren't getting trophies this time. Yeah partially

Well, you know when you play it on PC, you'll get achievements. So it's it's the best

I think it's one of the best decisions they made with this game was keeping Kratos the same

Both, you know physically he still has a scar on his stomach from when he stabbed himself or when Zeus stabbed him

however, you want to portray that one and

It lets the dynamic I

Mean the whole really this the story of the game is that people can change

It's Corey's own story because when he had left Santa Monica he was

Not married. He could have been dating who knows he was a single guy

went off to go work with

The Mad Max guy I'm blanking on his name Crystal Dynamics. No the the Mad Max director guy Oh

Romero? Is that his name? No, George Romero. I don't know. Now I have to look this up.

Now it's gonna fuck me. Why did I think Romero? Because I- George Miller. George Miller. Went

to work with George Miller, you know, he was out working. I had the first word, George, in my head and then I went to Romero. Went to Doom. No, I went to Night at the Living dead. So he went out and by the time he came back in August of 2013 he was married and he had a son, Hilo, who you can see prominently in the documentary Raising Kratos. And it's this whole, Corey's own life is a huge inspirational thrust for reshaping Kratos. And it's hard not to look at that and compare it and think of it as what really pushes it over. Because

this game is "people can change."

I think there's a lot of things we could talk about with the story of this too. There's a lot of moments in this game, so I don't want us to try to break down all of them.

But the best thing about what you're saying, or about the through-line theme of "people change is that the biggest issue with the game, and I think this is true for normal people too, is that people can change but the people who have the most trouble with trouble with forgiving themselves and moving past who they were before is the person themselves

who is trying to change.

And so by all accounts we follow a Kratos throughout this game that we as the player know is very different by just from how we see him behaving from the first moments of this game. He is very much the same Kratos as before, but we know he's drastically different compared to where we last saw him. He still can't let go of what he was previously. This game is just as much about him trying to come to grips with what he was before and moving past that. Maybe not moving past it, but coming to grips with "this is my past and I don't have to be that anymore" and that's what he tells Atreus near the end.

And that's kind of interesting because the end of God of War 3, him roaming through the darkness is him forgiving himself and getting hope, which eventually leads to this. But that he thinks change comes from not telling the truth or controlling the truth?

He thinks change comes from not making apparent what he was before. Which is why he went to

a totally-

Admitting past mistakes?

Or I just think he wants to- the whole reason I think he ends up in the Norse realm is because it's a place where no one's gonna know who he is, he can go live in the middle of nowhere away from everybody and he doesn't have to be who he was before because there's literally no one around him who's going to remind him of that other than himself.

This story is very much him having to come to grips with it personally about who he is

and he's very paranoid about that too.

You see that from the first minutes of the game when Baldur shows up at their house and what is the immediate knee-jerk reaction he thinks?

I don't know how they found me, but they found me.

Like he is so freaked out that, I mean, that would be the natural inclination.

And we think that too, because we know what Kratos is.

But really, we all have no idea, he's really looking for the giants.

But even, however much later this is after the Greek games, we don't really know.

I think we've talked about it before, but like fan theories and people have tried to piece together things that this is like hundreds or thousands of years potentially after he destroys the Greek Pantheon.

We're not really sure, but even all those years later he is still freaked out that outsiders such as Baldur showing up and knocking on his door is going to know who he is and is going to like he's going to get served or his sins from the past.

Well not only his secret but his sins from the past are going to come due and he's going to get punished for it.

still very paranoid about that to the point that he doesn't even want to tell those closest to him such as his wife or he doesn't want to tell it.

Fane knows.

Fane knows but he also says, I don't know, he, this is, we could get into the weeds of some of the story beats of this game.

He says to Atreus that she knew my true nature.

He says she knew his true nature but he also acknowledges that he keeps, he kept things from her.

Because he says at the end when they find out she's a giant, he says "huh, looks like I wasn't the only parent with secrets."

Which to me says that he did keep some things hidden.

To me that's just saying that both parents kept secrets from Atreus.

Well he didn't even know she was a giant.

So that means that that was hidden from him, which for him to say apparently she wasn't the only one, I wasn't the only one that had secrets means that he hid some things from her in turn.

That's how I view that.

It could be what you're saying as well.

Yeah, but yeah, you know, there's there's some nuance and texture there that we could be dug into but you know Mimir also knows who

Curtis is well, so he's got a good idea. He says that at one point to like, oh, I thought yeah

I thought you were Greek

Well, no, what he he said Athena dead giveaway, you know, yeah

He said I thought you were Greek before but Athena that's a dead giveaway. Yeah, it was like such a good moment anyway

to kind of rein this back in let's

Yeah

You know they can't about Atreus at all and how he's kind of the catalyst for all of this

I don't know if you were gonna take the conversation in different direction

But I feel like it's important to mention Atreus here because he is

Atreus is very important that the character in this game alongside Kratos

I think the thing I continue to be very happy about with Atreus's inclusion is that I genuinely love Atreus as a character

And he's not just this annoying

bratty child or something that I feel like that was the main worry people had going back to 2018 like oh is this kid gonna

Actually be good. Is it gonna get annoying? No, he's a character is great

I love his whole arc in this game even that including them two hours where he's kind of a brat but it and even my like sigh of

Frustration thinking about those two hours where he is a brat

it I think that just speaks to how strong this

plays out narratively. They both go through an arc and change. It's in the documentary,

Corey says, "Kratos teaches Atreus how to be a god and Atreus teaches Kratos how to be a human."

And I think that's kind of just like the nugget or like the big idea for this game. But they do, there is a true bond for them throughout the whole game and it's a relationship that grows and develops over the course of these 30, 40 hours

if you're playing, you know, 100% here.

Every single, obviously narrative point, side quest, combat encounter, does something, boat trip, does something to develop their relationship of father and son.

And they use that to also teach us, the player, about the world around them and push the story forward.

- Yeah, that's what I was gonna say too.

And that is why I was gonna say Mimir is such an important character.

Because Mimir is basically a conduit to just dump lore and history of this world on you, which typically is the worst thing you can do as a writer, is to just give,

"Hey, I'm just gonna explain everything about this," like that sort of thing in media, like when a villain explains their large plane, it's like, "Why is this guy just explaining this out of nowhere. Usually those things don't make sense. Mimir is a good character because he is basically just a lore dump on the player to explain everything that is happening in this world,

but he does so in a way that doesn't feel awkward or cumbersome.

Well, I'll say the only- there's one awkward bit, but most of the storytelling takes place while you're in the boat, which the only thing you can do in the boat is row. So it's a perfect time

to do it. But the awkward bit is usually you get to your destination before he finishes the story, and you either have to sit there and wait for it to finish, or you get out and interrupt a story.

And it's a shame to interrupt the stories because Mimir and the actor whose name I should have

wrote down, but their performance is so good and engaging. It's that story around a campfire type

acting that really draws you into these stories about the giants in Odin and Thor and things like

that and really Santa Monica I think takes advantage of the fact that Norse mythology

in general is not what definitely not as widely known as Greek or Egyptian for sure you know

really I would I think it's safe to say that the masses what they know about

Norse mythology is Thor is a muscular dude that wields a hammer and Odin is

his dad and Loki is his mischievous brother and where do you think those

people learn about that from the Thor comics which did now arguably is just

the MCU like when people think Thor they think Chris Hemsworth I feel like

that's fair I think I feel like the most yeah those three things as guards where

where they live I feel like is another key thing

that people know and then--

- That's super known.

- That's about it, yeah.

- So they use that as a way to manipulate the players

into not knowing who these Norse characters are like Baldr,

they use the stranger, or even knowing the fact

that Baldr is weak to mistletoe,

which is a huge thing in Norse mythology.

I read, before we played the game I read,

It's called Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman.

Great book, it's like 10 Norse stories told

with some modern, in modern English,

but true enough to their own source material,

which itself is scattered and not fully well assembled.

- Yes. - It's a great read.

But if you had known Norse mythology
like we know Greek mythology,
you would immediately know,
Once you figured out who that was,
or even in the first fight,
you could have figured it out because he feels nothing.
No pain, he comes back.

- I will say, I don't think we know
Greek mythology that well, honestly.
I feel like we just know more characters
from the Greek pantheon, if that makes sense.

- Well, maybe I'm speaking for myself.
I did read a lot of books that took from Greek mythology
or played with those characters.

- Like, are you talking like Percy Jackson back in the day?

- Hey man, that's good stuff.

Yeah, Percy Jackson.

I do feel like there are more Greek gods that are more widely known for sure.
But I would say some of the story, through line stories, I don't know if people are aware
of.

But yeah.

It's definitely, I would think it's safe to say it's more popular.

But they use that to their advantage and it works out great and it's fun to learn new
things I think.

Well it's fun to learn from Mimir too because you learn that this is a very different Norse
realm than the one you're used to hearing in popular media. Like Thor is the hero character,

not in this world. The best thing about Mimir is that moving into Ragnarok, I feel like I have clear ideas of who all these characters are and they are not in this game at all.

You never see Odin or Thor. You kind of see Thor, but not really.

You see Thor's hip.

You see Thor's hammer.

You see Mjolnir.

But that's about it.

Yeah, but outside of that, I know a lot of very well-detailed things about the major players in this world moving forward.

And I know a lot of key details about the histories of some of these characters as well that are in this world.

And that's all an achievement to Sony Santa Monica's writing.

The one thing I would praise about this game from start to finish is that the writing is just so good.

I cannot think of any bad lines or awkward lines in this.

I think I pointed out the one thing that a lot of people take onus with which is Atreus's whole outburst about halfway through the game when he learns that he's a god.

I know a lot of people don't like how his character develops from that point onward.

I think that makes sense though.

If somebody came through that door right now and told me I was an immortal god I think

I would change how I feel when I then go to the grocery store and I see a bunch of oh

Get a load of these lowly peasants. I'm the god here like and you like you

Like oh, yeah, he's like a 10 year old kid. So if you tell a 10 year old kid that it's gonna really be amped up

Especially when he knows that his dad is like I think the biggest thing about that too is that he pieces together these things about

His dad in that moment. It's not it's not just that he is taught. It's not just that he is

cocky and being mean to people because of his own power like I'm a god I can

kick your butt or whatever no it's because he now understands why his dad is so strong and why his dad is able to do the things that his dad does so he's really trying to he's really running his mouth with the hope that his dad will cash those checks with his axe later on because he because he doesn't he doesn't really understand why his dad just has this super strength or whatever.

Story wise I don't know where we want to go from here.

We've touched on a whole lot of things.

There's a lot of other things too.

I guess the one other thing I would like to say about this game though really quickly, and I think one of the biggest achievements about this story, is that they do some fantastic

Storytelling here and there are really no characters in this like the amount of characters in this game

You can almost count on one hand it is

Really is bald. It is it is balder atreus kratos mimir

Freya and

Then you can you can throw Modi and what's his brother's name? Magni?

Yeah, you can throw Modi and Magni in there and then the dwarves

Bronson century

That's about it and and Modi and Magni really aren't any to really even count his characters. I would say it is really

The dwarves Kratos Atreus of Amir Freya Balder

That's the cast of the game and then I I would count Thor and Odin because they are just discussed so prominently

They are they are sure can be felt and Thor's can literally be seen in the statues and and even

Even Odin's Ravens where you knock them out, but you know

Odin is everywhere.

But can you think of another game where a player or a character has such a large impact on the storytelling that is not ever in the game?

Like I can't think of an instance like that.

No it's pretty rare and hard.

Like they do a lot of really heavy lifting in this script and in this story with very minimal players actively being involved with what's going on.

It's a quantity quality thing and every character is there to serve the purpose of pushing Kratos and Atreus forward and developing their relationship and leading them through change. Every single

one of them. There's a video, I watched it before this, I said that you've watched it before but there's-

I'm pretty sure I've watched it, yeah.

Untangling God of War, it's by Good Blood. I think the guy's name is Jarrett. I just watched it before but he talks about this and how each character has a family, a broken family dynamic or relationship that those elements are used to help push Kratos and Atreus through their own change in relationship. You know, Brock and Sindri's brother kind of fracture-ness, Freya and Baldr, Odin, Thor, Magni and Modi with their father Thor. It's this whole, each relationship is used to help reflect back on Kratos and Atreus and it's a really great video I highly recommend it. So it's it's just one of those games where everything is layered everything is there for a purpose and a reason and it comes together in a rich tapestry that when you're done with the game you just you have nothing left to say but wow and there's really a lot and I wish we could go on forever we really really could we I feel like we have to draw a line at some point when we do some of this stuff yeah there's there are a lot of things we could say and I want to try and keep this a little bit tighter. So I want to kind of move on to the the looming topic over this whole season, the music. We actually probably have some very nice things to say about the music this time, or not not nice things, we've said nice things in the past, but I think we'll have more naturally to say about this one. Yeah I've talked about, I

I think I mentioned it in a previous episode, but my favorite thing about this score and the reason that I like it so much more is that I feel like it has such a diversity of instruments that are involved here.

It's not just your standard orchestral score.

There are some more unique instruments that are core to this score's... the music in this score than a lot of the previous soundtracks in this game series.

I think just from a...

I mean that just makes the soundtrack more diverse.

But there's...

I don't know.

There's like a looming darkness to this score, which I really, really like.

Even the main theme of the game sounds just foreboding and I wouldn't say evil or anything like that.

It just sounds ominous.

Like something is happening.

And that's one of the first lines from the game that I actually really love.

Actually, I didn't mention that before, but one of my favorite lines in this game is right away when they chop down the tree and they say "something feels different" and Credo says "yeah, don't try to think about it too much."

Which is an awesome line because it's referring to one that obviously we know what it actually did was chopping down the tree and all that stuff and how that affected the world around them.

a message to the player like yeah we know we changed how this game works and the how this game plays and it's not a top-down action game anymore and it's a third-person action game try not to try not to dwell on that too much though anyway back to the music sorry yeah I I think I think this is one of my favorite modern scores in a game I just think Bear McCreary's work in this

game is, it just matches God of War really well too in all the ways, whether it be the main themes with Kratos and Atreus or the different character themes that come up throughout the course of the game, some of the fighting themes, I think the Magni and Modi fight that I'm thinking of, I really like the fight music during that battle. It knows how to get really big for the huge moments, but it also knows how to dial it back as well, which is something I really can't think of specifically with the previous God of War soundtracks. Mainly because I don't feel like the previous God of War games really had quieter moments, but this game does and those moments are really paired quite greatly by the soundtrack.

one of the things I kind of wrote down was this soundtrack has room to breathe and a chance to

have subtlety. There's touches and sometimes the game is just quiet. There's no music at all. It's

just sounds of nature and the environment you're in. There's room for everything to kind of have

space instead of just a bombastic, "bom, bom, bom, bom" type sound. And it fits what they were

going for here. It's all lined up quite well. I think back to the reveal in 2016,

that was the orchestra came in and opened kind of the show. And then when I was watching the documentary again, I was reminded that the orchestra was scoring the gameplay live.

Like there were, it was all, there's an emphasis of the music this time around and it just comes in

and matches wonderfully. There's even the choir, which they went to like Iceland to get the choir

there to sing in, you know, as close of a native tongue as possible and it's, so that, you know, that's just a level of authenticity that really only big budget could get. But it ties back to the roots of God of War as well. It respects the lineage it's come from by having a similar style at certain parts. The choir and some really big moving bombastic sounds of especially in combat. But there is a cadence and rhythm here that you know mirrors the plot and what you're

doing quite quite well. It doesn't overwhelm you.

Yeah, I think in the same way that I always said that I didn't overly love the previous soundtracks too, the one thing I always said that it did well was kind of match the Greek atmosphere or what you would think of with like, "Oh, what would Greek music sound like?"

It did a good job of at least matching that sort of time period and that sort of region.

And this does the same thing with the Scandinavian vibe with the Norse realm as well.

That's why I mentioned before the diversity of instruments that are used in the score is one of the big things for me because it's that diversity of music.

And then you mentioned the chanting and stuff like that.

I feel like that all really well matches what I think of in my head of this region of the world.

At least from my westernized American view of it. I've never been to I've never been to this part of the world

I don't know what it's actually like but if you were to ask me what music would sound like from this region

I'd say yeah, it sounds like that based on everything that I've been told at least from this

You know pre you know mythological perspective. It definitely mirrors it quite well. Yes

It's one of the best it's you know

Sony actually really crushed it as far as soundtracks go for a lot of their exclusives in the ps4 gen and this is no exception

I'm excited to see where they take these themes in Ragnarok and

Push that forward because we could see that in the Greek games like where they would take the themes and push them or not

And so I'm excited to see bear McCreary's second go at this soundtrack in this world and these themes

Because you have to imagine, you know phase theme

has to be in Ragnarok.

Like these moments and themes are gonna come and evolve.

How is Freya's different?

- I wanna hear that Thor music.

- Yeah, where does this all come in?

So I'm very excited for the future of it.

And I love how they've started this particular one off.

Let's bounce into the world itself,

this lake of nine, these nine realms

of the Norse world, Midgard, Alfheim.

- Technically what is it, six?

I think you can go to six.

- Six, I think. - There's a seven.

- There's Alfheim, Niflheim, Musvlheim, Midgard, Hell,

and Jotunheim for a hot second, so six, yeah,

out of the nine, and Ragnarok is supposed to have all nine,

so we'll see how that goes in the future there.

But, this world, it's not open world.

I would lean it in the wide linear.

- I always compared it to Ocarina of Time.

I said, when I first played this in 2018,

I said this feels like modern Ocarina of Time

to me in some ways.

'Cause it is kinda open, you can run wherever you want,

but there are set destinations.

- Hyrule Field in the middle, yeah.

- Yeah, but there are set destinations

you are traveling to.

It's not just you're running around and jumping off buildings as Kratos or something like that.

No, you're traveling to different points of the map, but you are having to travel there.

Would Wind Waker be a better Zelda game to compare to?

Too much water.

Oh my gosh, that's Pokemon.

Pokemon's got too much water.

This...

I hate to use this term to compare it.

Mostly because it's lazy.

- Dark Souls?

- No, stop, not that bad.

Well, maybe that bad.

But it does have a Metroidvania style design
in the items where certain items open access
and you're like, "Oh, I got these, I got this.

"I can go here, I can do that.

"Oh, Atreus's bow, now she eats electricity.

"I know where I can blow things up."

- Actually, this is why I like this game.

It's more akin to Zelda, I think.

More so than Metroid, because Zelda has those elements as well.

Same exact style, yes.

Yeah, and coming off of a 20...

I think the reason why this game clicked so much with me a couple of years ago is because
it did feel like a modernized Zelda in a lot of ways.

And that's a very easy way to just write off a lot of what the game does, but it gave me
those sort of vibes that I was looking for from a modernized Zelda game that Breath of
the Wild didn't necessarily do the previous year, and I don't want to get into a contrast
between the two, but it felt like we had been... it feels like we have not played a game like

this in this sort of way. Like you mentioned Metroidvania style games are games where you collect different items that open up different paths and routes and stuff like that. Like that's a pretty common thing. But I don't feel like we've seen it done in this sort of setting in quite some time, unless you can think of anything else.

Not off the top of my dome, but this,
I think it also, it mirrors the narrative as well,
because when you get to the Lake of Nine the first time,
obviously the World Serpent,
like everything is surface level,
and then it's one level down,
and it opens up and it spreads a little bit more.

There's some side quests that tie in to the story
and their relationship, and then it lowers more,
and then you go to the frozen giant,
and you learn even more,
and then it drops all the way to the bottom,
and then you have full reign of Midgard and then the other realms as well.
And it is, as you learn more and as their relationship deepens, so does your ability
to explore all of these realms.

It's truly, it's really smart design from just opening up a player to.

It's not like, to compare it a little bit to Breath of the Wild, you know, they start you out on the Great Plateau, which is kind of a sample platter of everything, what that game would have to offer. And then they let you out and guide you to certain places, but you could go anywhere and do anything in that game. This is, let's ease you into Norse and Midgard and then now here you go, have the whole thing. And so, I really enjoy it. I

I think the realms they chose, Midgard, Alfheim, and Hel, all feel fully realized.

Hel maybe not, I mean it's kind of the bridge here between the other three which would be

Niflheim, Muspelheim, and Jotunheim.

I would say it felt fully realized more from a narrative.

Yeah, storytelling aspect.

There's a lot of stuff they tease in hell too, like that big Valkyrie bird thing, I wanna fight that.

Yeah, we didn't even talk about how, like, with the storytelling stuff, how all the Greek stuff kinda directly comes back into play with that part of the game, which we don't necessarily have to talk about too much, but.

It's, so, those are fully realized, but Niflheim, that's the brown, foggy, randomly generated triangle or diamond that you go through.

And then Musvahir is just a combat arena up a volcano.

And then Jotunheim is literally a narrative walk up a mountain and then you don't go back.

I don't even know if you can go.

- I don't think you can go back there.

- You can't go back post-game.

- Yeah.

- So I'm hoping in the future that those are fleshed out more and that you could do more in them.

That would be great.

If not, I'm a little bummed.

because it does make the game feel smaller especially when you're chasing the platinum and a little bit of the post game but Midgard and Alfheim that is the bulk of the game and I like it and then hell is a bit more puzzly there's it's good like what do you think I like the tees as well of the other realms that we three that we can't go to it just you know you want to go to the one you actually know the name of, Asgard, and you can't.

- You wanna go to Asgard.

No, I love that you can't.

- Yeah, no, that's great, but it's so smart
to take the one thing that people do know
and not give it to 'em.

- 'Cause I remember the first time I played this game,
when I could start to see the end of the story
coming about, I was like, wait,
we're really not gonna go to Asgard in this game?

And at the time, it was such a surprising thing,
because you just assume that that would happen at some point in this game.
Just like you assumed you'd see Thor at least.

Yeah, you assume that these certain gods are going to show up and they never do.
And that's great because I feel like that stuff keeps, as we said before, it keeps the
story focused on Kratos and Atreus and it really lays the groundwork for them, "Okay,
now we can go do that stuff in the next game."

But Kratos and Atreus are much stronger characters.

Like it's funny because the things I am looking forward to in the next game are more
now about how Kratos and Atreus and everybody else are going to develop as characters.

Less so coming into this one the first time I was like "Aw man, I hope I fight Thor
as Kratos.

I hope I fight Odin as Kratos."

Like those were the things I wanted coming into this game and now it's totally flipped.

And I think that's an old God of War mentality.

What were we all thinking when we went into God of War 3?

"Aw I want to kill Zeus.

I want to kill Hades.

I want to kill Poseidon.

- Yeah. - I want to kill them all.

And I think they intentionally stripped us of that
and then built up a better, stronger, healthier desire
to see this relationship grow.

It's just-- - It's the character stuff

I'm most excited for. - Yeah.

- Which is very strange in a lot of ways.

- Yeah, for God of War, it's great.

- As far as how the world is structured
in a general sense though, I do really,
it feels large but not so large that it's ever like,
impossible to travel around or anything like that.

I guess the thing that I like is that you start walking towards the mountain early on
and then you can slowly continue to see yourself like getting closer and closer and closer to it.
And you feel like you're making progress towards it.

And that, I feel like the mountain at least in Midgard always kind of centers where you're at in
that world.

They use it as such a centerpiece, landmark-wise, early on,
on that I always kind of find myself in proximity in the larger game world to how closer I am
to the mountain if I can see it. I don't know if that's the same way for you. What I'm saying
is it really makes this world feel interconnected and more fleshed out and you feel like you
know all these different areas of the game. Like even when you get on top of the mountain
later on and you're kind of surveying everything beneath you, you're like, "Oh, I know that
spot. I know where that's at too and I know where that's at." Like it feels like a vast
world but not so vast that you don't know all these places that you're traveling around
because they take time to show you around all of these different areas.

Yeah, it's a knowable world. It's not even like a Witcher 3 where...

Like, 'cause a lot of, again, we said this is not a normal open world game in the way that you would think of it, but a lot of open world games, like, I can't tell you anything about them really? Like I can't tell you anything about the game worlds themselves. Like I don't have it mapped out in my head. Like I feel like I know every area in this game for the most part.

Yeah. It is, that's why I keep calling it wide linear. It is, there's room to explore but there is a direction to go. And they funnel you down. It's like the Madagascar part in Uncharted 4 or the Seattle part in Last of Us Part 2. And I'm using those two Naughty Dog example specifically, but it is a wide open space that hasn't... they're funneling you a certain way or certain paths, but there's room to explore. Now God of War is an evolution...

like the next step of that, where there is more to do in smaller contained areas and zones and richer exploration than those two games have to offer and it's super smart and well done and I love it. I did feel like this world felt smaller this time around, but that's because I was familiar with it, already going into it.

I knew where everything was going and how big the scope was, and I think that made it feel even more knowable and the platinum ultimately more attainable.

So I really like this space, and I'm curious to see how they expand upon it, because back to Zelda briefly before we pivot, look at Majora's Mask, which took Ocarina of Time's assets and engine and built a sequel rather quickly.

This is a similar concept of taking the same worlds, adding three new realms, possibly expanding on things we already know.

Clearly Midgard is shaken up by everything being frozen in winter, so there's a setting change, but the physical space is the same.

Like Midgard, you could go to a new space in Midgard,
but Midgard's still gonna be Midgard, no?

- Yeah.

I'm curious to see how they do that, how they expand upon the world we know and how they
add to the parts that we don't know.

So it's gonna be fun to see how that goes.

Not to get too in the weeds but it looks like Fimbulwinter, I think that's what it's called.

That's gonna totally change how you get around Midgard specifically.

I don't know how that'll affect the other realms as well.

But change in climate seems to be the main answer to your question there, at least in
regards to Midgard.

Yeah, I've just met more physical space locations, like things to do.

So before we sink our teeth into the other real big element in the gameplay, I want to
talk about the visuals.

Obviously this is like the biggest leap from PS2, you know, for God of War, this is the
biggest one and so there's a lot to kind of talk about.

I mean we kind of talked on it a little bit previously about how it looked just on our
TVs and all that jazz I think.

- Oh yeah. - So at least from a
visuals and performance standpoint, game good.

Still good.

It's been almost-- - Yeah, 4K60's
an absolute dream.

It's, but-- - It's been almost four years
and this game still looks like it came out yesterday,
honestly, like I don't really know what else they could do
to make it look drastically better.

- I mean, it's a miracle it runs on a base PS4.

- Yeah. - And it's gonna be

an even bigger miracle that Ragnarok runs on a base PS4.

It's actually one of my big concerns,

like just, or not concerns, but frustration points

with a lot of cross-gen game development.

But on PS5 with the PS5 patch, and I'm sure on PC,

this game, you know, holds up really well.

When you put a lot of power behind it,

they've kind of future-proofed their design.

It's realistic, but still has an art direction.

This is not one of those realistic games

like a Call of Duty or,

know I'm trying to think of just real maybe even like days gone sure the

freakers themselves have a design to them that's unique but this has a I

wrote like a fantastical kind of design an element like these enemies this world

feels almost Lord of the Rings II where it's real but there's fantasy and it

fits and jives and I think this will age well we're not super far removed from it

not like God of War 1 on PS2,

which I think still is, it has a unique style

and I think has aged fairly well for that game as well.

At least the PS3 remaster did.

So, you know, I like the way this place looks

and excited to see where they can push it.

- Yeah, it looks like a normal landscape

until you kinda turn your camera every now and then

and you see a giant snake is,

got its tail sitting over a mountain.

And then you're like, wait a minute.

Uh, and so, yeah, I agree with pretty much everything you just said.

Like it's stylized in such a way that it looks grounded and like it could be realistic, uh, but there are always things that they throw in out of nowhere that you're like, oh, this is like a fantastical setting, whether it be Freya's house being under a turtle or something like that, or, uh, or the world serpent's the big thing, cause you can't go to that central hub and not see the world serpent somewhere around there.

I love the one world serpent boy.

But yeah, no I agree with everything you said.

I think the art direction in this game is fantastic.

I think all the other visual choices with the characters and how they look is great, including Kratos' beard.

That's a very good decision.

Yes.

And it looks even longer in Ragnarok I think.

Give us the beard.

There's one more visual element we have to talk about, and that is the camera.

Yeah.

It is done as if it is a whole oner, like a one-style, one-shot camera.

We never cut away from Kratos.

We cut away from Atreus, but we never leave Kratos.

Yeah, that's not true.

We do leave Atreus.

They do go to a first person at that one point.

But we never leave-

We see through Kratos' eyes.

Yeah, we never leave-

Just kind of different.

never leave Kratos though. Even then it's Kratos' perspective. Like Kratos has never gone away from anything. He's always the focal point of the camera. And I was thinking about this and it's actually really kind of already a God of War thing. In the other games you never really leave Kratos. Sometimes you cut away, like you'll see Cronus walking through the desert. Like they did typical movie style cuts there and just told a story. But on the whole, you really never do leave Kratos. They would pull the camera out and zoom way out or zoom in and

get up close and do all these sweeping camera movements and stuff. So it actually kind of is a little bit of the God of War legacy, which I didn't really think about before. But the movement of this camera is so rich and engaging and really pulls you in. I love it so much. Yeah, it definitely enhances the storytelling. I think in a general sense, this idea and just doing it doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Like if other game developers were all of a sudden going to be like, "That's a great idea! We'll do that in our game too!" I don't think this whole one shot idea would work well unless you're doing it to serve the storytelling.

Which they are in this case and I feel like it makes you feel closer to the characters and it makes you kind of sit with their emotions a bit longer too.

There are some things in this game that I noticed that are just quiet and you just kind of have to sit and watch the characters for a few moments which is unlike a lot of other games that I can remember.

A lot of those sections I'm thinking about specifically happen in the whole 20 minutes or so when Kratos goes to get the blades for the first time.

He just kind of sits and you get to watch the emotions that he's going through.

And that's something that I don't think a lot of other games would do and it's those moments that I think the one-shot camera really works well in this situation.

From a purely technical standpoint, I think this time around when I played it, I was...

a little less impressed with it. Like when they did it the first time, when I first played the game and I played through it I was like "Wow, this is incredible, I can't believe they did this." I really don't think it would be that hard to mimic this in other games, just in a practical sense. Like I said, it's more about the feasibility of it. It's more about the question of "Well okay, why would you want to do this?"

- Yeah, it's gotta be there from the beginning, for sure.

It had to be, it was designed for this game,
like coming in that was a goal, and they achieved it.

My film brain loves it.

There's a, I'll put a link in the show notes,
you know, there's a Every Frame a Painting thing
on like the Spielberg one, or I think it's Spielberg.

But it's, you know, this great cinematography type technique
that really does enhance and they use it for reveals
and pans and pushes and just,
it just sucks you in the whole time.

And I've fallen in love with it even more this time around.

I'm curious if they're doing it in Ragnarok.

- They've already said they are.

- Oh.

- They've already confirmed that they are.

So there's your answer.

- Very good, yay.

So I'm excited to see where they can push that to,
but this, it's one of the best and unique things
about this game visually, so.

And that, my friend, brings us to the big boy gameplay.

And it's not a God of War game.

We've been talking about how mushy Kratos is.

Big softy over here.

Kratos ain't no softy.

- She's trying to combat.

- Kratos wielding that big boy axe.

Logan, you know, in the God of War 3 episode,

were like, "Dang, they made some pretty good weapons here. They finally figured out stuff that I would want to use besides the Blades of Chaos, except they're just different Blades of Chaos with different weight or powers to them."

They did what I've, you know, if you had asked me before, I wouldn't have thought possible. They replaced the Blades of Chaos and then they gave them back to us.

Yeah, the accent in this game is, I mean, it's one of the best video game weapons ever.

I think a lot of that is because you can...

I think the big thing that dawned on me this time, the reason why I think it works is because you can chuck it.

I think if you couldn't chuck it, I think a lot of the reasons why I like it fall away.

And it's not just because, like throwing it in a general sense, I don't think does a whole lot and like I don't I don't just throw it rapidly one by one by one at people but it's how it just it's how it flows with everything like without that I don't I don't think the combat flows as well. It's because you can call it back. Yeah yes yeah. The callback feels so good there's a momentum there. And you can lead into different combos with it when you call it back. I think think that there is a sort of flow with that weapon because you can throw it that the blades don't have because it's more of a single target focused item weapon.

The blades are still better for large groups and you can still fight large groups of enemies with this.

There are plenty of abilities that allow you to do that.

But yeah, the way you can combo in the game with this thing, and I lean on a couple combos in particular that I probably shouldn't have spammed too much to be honest.

I feel like that's always my downfall in these games is I find one or two good combos I like and then I just spam them so much.

But when you really break out of your routine of doing that, and especially once you fully unlock everything that this thing can do, it's really baffling like how much variation there is baked in with just the axe on its own. And that's not even accounting for swapping back and forth between the blades and the axe, which the final boss fight really specifically encourages you to do.

Oh, you literally have to.

I mean you have to in the final fight. But it's something you should probably be doing throughout the second portion of the game regardless.

It honors the legacy of the blades by having this light and heavy attack. It feels really good on the shoulder buttons, specifically R1 and R2. Having the heavy attack be on the trigger,

just, and it being an axe, you know, you're kind of heaving it, you're chopping, that just feels right. And I'll admit, this time around, I had trouble because we had just come off playing six

God of War games, and at first I was like square and triangle, I was trying to use those the whole

time but once I got into the rhythm with this game this time around R1 and R2

just feel really good and then you use L1 to aim and throw and you can call

back there's just a cadence to it all that feels really great and then you add

your runic attacks which are kind of replacing magic in a way I mean there's

still magic to a degree but it's replacing the the Poseidon AoE or

shooting Zeus lightning bolts which actually Atreus does for you instead.

So he's gonna say Atreus how he fits into it this too which is just spam

squire but spam square so it it makes Atreus useful in combat and you know you

rarely I think only once or twice and that's including if you go for the

platen Musselheim once or twice Atreus actually gets attacked by an enemy and
and you have to go defend him.

But the rest of the time he's just out there.

He's kind of your magic in the game
with arrows and then his own summons.

And so I think that was probably the right call
as far as not making him a burden in combat
and letting you be Kratos, the God of War,
and just murder everybody.

But there is a solid, it's a fantastic weapon.

They really, you know, it's one of the big bold things they had to do for this game,
was we're switching everything up and he has a new weapon now and you're gonna love it.

Well let me say that my biggest takeaway this time around is that the chains are still awesome.

I like the chains so much more this time than last time, and that's not even to say I disliked
them the last time, but I was really taken aback by how much I still love these in this
game. They're great! And the thing that I love is that they are the same. They are the
same down to the combos that you do. Yes. And it's so good. And I think that's why it
stood out to me is because we just played the six other games where you primarily use
them and then you come into this one it's like "Oh the chains are here, they're back,
but it's not really the main thing." And then you use them again it's like "Oh I know exactly
what to do with these. I've been using these for the other six games I've played recently."

And that was so cool to me, and I always knew that when I played it previously.

Like oh, there's some similar moves here that have passed.

I remember doing this.

Yeah, the moves are pretty much the exact same in a lot of ways.

And it's great, it's so cool.

Obviously they add new things here and there, being able to throw away some of the runic

abilities and things like that you have.

But yeah, my big takeaway from the comment this time was just like, "Whoa, the chains are really good.

I really like these as weapons."

still in this game.

- Yeah, one of my notes was that they translate into full 3D beautifully.

Like, it just works.

And I don't know, on paper, almost it shouldn't work.

You know, you look at God of War on PS2, and you go, that combat works in 3D over here.

Like, that doesn't compute in my brain.

It makes more sense for Kratos to be in Mortal Kombat then it does necessarily translate the blades to 3D on paper to me.

But in action, it's flawless.

- Yeah, I mean, I didn't think we would see these, I mean, I remember when this game was first coming out, I was like, they have to put the chains in there somehow, but I didn't know how they would do it.

Like, I felt like they had to be in this game, but I wasn't sure how they would be implemented.

- And I was the opposite.

- The exact way that they were implemented before, basically, like they really didn't change that much.

And I don't know why that wasn't something in my head that I didn't think they could just do.

Yeah.

- But it's really wonderful to have them be in the game and feel as good as they do.

It's just, it's like, wow.

They basically, we've said all season long that like the Blades of Chaos are one of the most iconic weapons of video games.

And the fact that they made another most iconic weapon and video games, you know, that's a, you know, they kinda had to one up themselves or at least meet expectations.

They really set the bar 15 plus years ago.

- Yeah.

- So to do it again, it's quite a feat.

It's, you know, bravo, bravo, because I love it so much.

It's so good.

The, the puzzles, the puzzles,

Very light. Like, just spin a tile, find a letter.

I think I like that though, honestly.

I wrote that they're like little Rube Goldberg machines.

You're not necessarily pushing blocks or anything.

I like how it centers around the weapons.

Because that was the one thing about the previous games that I never thought they did well.

The puzzles were always just kind of their own thing and they never really involved the chains.

In some of the games you would get different one-off abilities and like, "Oh, reflect this beam or something."

Sure.

Like, it would give you things like that that you would have to use every now and then.

I mean, it really only centered around the weapons in the sense of, "Hit this switch or break this job."

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Like, this game, no, right from the get-go, it's the thing they lean on the most, which is, "Use the axe to freeze things in place."

Yes.

That's the most common type of puzzle they show you, but I still like that they are using the axe in that way to solve problems yes that is good yes the the only real puzzle puzzle I think is the like the tier temple stuff where you kind of have to like navigate an obstacle course yeah and figure out that you have to flip to the temple but that's not even really difficult per se it's just narratively you figure it out and then you go do it.

- Yep.

- You know, God of War was never really all, its earliest incarnation is the most puzzle action platformer it ever was.

Maybe God of War 2 to a degree as well, little bit more puzzle stuff there, especially with the reflections like you were talking about.

I would like a little bit more variety in the puzzles in the sequel.

And actually, that leads me to my other thing.

I wish there was more variety in executions,

I guess you could say, and boss fights.

There are really only three, there are three narrative main fights.

There are nine Valkyrie fights,
which are fairly similar, like on the whole.
And then you have bigger enemies, the trolls,
which are boss fights, I'd say trolls are boss fights,
but they're all identical as far as what you have to do
to fight them.

And the kills are the exact same.

They feel good, they're great kills.

Every kill animation is satisfying.

- But there's only one.

- But there's only one for the trolls,
there's only one for the ogres,
there's only one for the lizard things.

Like I want a little bit more variety in executing enemies.

And you know, God of War, the previous games
have a similar issue.

Like a cyclops, you rip their eye out.

A centaur, you slice their gut open.

I just, maybe more contextual would be a better way.

Like if I kill an enemy this way,
or at least just come, I'm sure those animations
are hard to come up with, but at least just give us a--

- I'm not saying this is easy.

- Yeah, I'm not saying this is easy.

- Yeah, at least just give us a couple different ones
for each weapon or something like that.

- Yeah, so--

- Like the blades, the axe,
and then inevitably Thor's hammer when we get that.

- What? - Because I feel like
that's a guarantee. - No.

Like if you kill a troll with the Blades of Chaos,
it's the same execution.

You just stick the blades in their giant pillar
and crush their head. - Yeah.

- So I just, I wish there was a bit more diversity.

And I get this was big and pivotal,
it was changing everything.

It's a lot of hard work. I'm not saying I take six months to make one of those animations

Yeah, I'm not saying this is easy at all. I'm just I would like a bit more and maybe now that a lot
of

The groundwork has been laid for the sequel

Maybe we can see that kind of diversity going forward or more boring boss fights because I
would like more bosses

I think the thing I would like to see is

Not as much puzzles. I actually like that

There wasn't a ton of puzzles in this game and going into a game that is literally called the
Ragnarok

I don't know if I would like to see more

cumbersome puzzles what I would like to see though is more

Puzzles when it comes to the combat and the gameplay like I mentioned the final boss fight

with Baldur being somewhat like that where it's not really necessarily like something you have
to

Figure out it's just he glares blue or red like you know what you got a switch

It is prompting you to do other things other than just spam different triggers whether that be
switching

up Atreus's arrows more or switching up the weapons you're using. I think if the game could encourage you to use all the weapons in your arsenal a little bit more, this is something that Doom Eternal does really well, that I like about Doom Eternal. It forces you to kind of use every weapon in your arsenal in a certain way.

>> And almost every encounter.

>> Yeah, yeah, and almost every encounter. And I think that's really good because it makes sure that you're using everything that you have on you and it makes every encounter also feel like it is pressing buttons.

It feels like it's challenging you mentally rather than just your reaction time on your fingers or something like that or testing how many different combos you may know to pull off.

It's more engaging in that sense.

So that is what I would like to see I guess on a puzzle front is more combining the puzzle the combat in that sort of way and give Atreus some more things to do.

The one thing I don't think we need to talk about too much, but just in a general sense, what did you think of Spartan Rage and just the fist fighting combat system as a whole? I treated it like I would treat Spartan Rage or Rage of the Titans or whatever in the previous games.

It was a, "I'm either in a pinch and I really need to get out of this or I just want to crush my enemy. I didn't... The regular fist combat, not Spartan Rage, I liked because that triggered the stun meter, so that was making me think a bit more of like, "Do I want to stun this or use Atreus to help stun and then rip this enemy apart?" But the Spartan Rage in particular just felt like Superman mode, like punch, punch, punch, punch, punch, get you out of there. It was something I didn't use all that often outside of the final fight with the Queen Valkyrie, so, you know, maybe something there too, but it's just, you know, eh, fine, not, it's, I'm glad it's there, it's definitely more of that lineage, but I wasn't, you know, whew.

This almost kind of leads me into my other kind of big complaint, I guess, with the game is the RPG element of it, swapping your armor, your runes, your stats, all this stuff. It was a bit much. I like that it's there but I think it's too much. It was, there's too many things to worry about. Yeah, I think if they can narrow the focus of the system just a little bit in the next game, it's a, because in a general since I do like the RPG progression of "Oh, I just tore open a tear and these level 7 enemies just poured out with my butt and I can't beat them. I will have to mark this on my map and come back later." I like that, but yes, the means by which you level up is pretty... I used the word cumbersome before about something else. It's definitely cumbersome, once again, in this way because there's just so many different things that you have to take into account and so many different things that you have to...

You're constantly worried about, "Is my chest armor enough? My gauntlets? Oh, which runes do I have attached to this? Oh, these have sockets, so should I quit?"

The thing that I kept debating is, "Is it better for my overall strength to be really high or should I want to boost my overall level?" Or not my overall, just strength, like I would slot in certain weapons or not weapons I would slot in some or certain art of armor items they would like increase my overall Kratos level or something like that yeah I'd say oh your overall level will go up if you equip this item but it would look like it would take my stats down if I did and it's like wait a minute am I getting better or worse here like like what's that what's the deal mm-hmm so yeah it's just kind of unclear in some ways because there's just so much going on. Yeah and there wasn't and they poured all of this into Kratos and then Atreus was fairly light and even the shield yeah really the shield had nothing just change its aesthetics and then you would upgrade it with Handy in combat but by the time I was done with this game I think I had almost a million in hack silver currency and over half a million and experience points, like there was just nothing

to pour all of this into, like you reach your max
fairly quickly and then there's nothing else to pursue
or turn that into, so some of the end game
is just like what's the point of this?
And then also it's just very bloated,
mechanically speaking of, well what do I upgrade here
or do I need to do this or do that?
And I hope that gets streamlined a little bit more
laser focused going forward, but it definitely feels
like too much and they throw a lot at you up front and it's like whoa I gotta
level up Kratos now like what is this like before I just leveled up my weapons
like that very simple clear to the point and this was the we're gonna let you
upgrade everything I do genuinely like that though I just think there's it's a
lot too much going on and they could do a bit they could streamline some of those
things together a bit to make it just I don't know more it's just easier to know
how clear cut build out your your character yeah cuz too often I felt like
I was I wasn't building properly yeah so yeah and as a personal though I never
chose any armor that was like full chest armor for Kratos because Kratos should
never have like fully clothed armor on. He is a man who runs around in a tunic
shirtless like he doesn't need armor so I never I never thought he looked good
in any set of armor that like was a full chest piece so. I think some of them look
okay. Alright the full chest piece ones? No those look bad. Yeah those look bad.
It's the one where the shoulders the ones like the three-quarter sleeve
looking ones too? I kind of like those if you know what I'm talking about. Those look okay.
I do. I pretty much had one armor the whole game and then when I got to end game I figured
out, I searched what the best armor was and went and got that. Which thankfully was just
a shoulder guard. I was like, "Whew, at least my Kratos doesn't have to be ugly here for

the end game." And we know that's the most important part of any game. To kind of wrap it up, I just want to like briefly touch on the legacy of this game. Which, you pointed out in the pre-show where you and I were talking. We kind of really did that with God of War 3 as kind of this end of the Greek era into the Norse era.

And I think you even said here at the top of the show, this is the game that turned you into a fan of God of War and not that you're a fan of God of War the franchise so much as you are a fan of God of War on the PS4. I think that's the legacy.

Yeah, I think this one definitely, it's weird because it's the seventh game in the franchise that I feel like really opened it up to everybody else and brought them in.

I don't feel like, this was obviously not a small series or anything before this game, it's not like people aren't informed of what this series was before.

I think that's why this game is so popular, because people know the broad strokes of God of War, the original God of War games, is "Oh yeah, you play as a guy and you kill a bunch of gods and maybe not the best guy in the process of doing that. So I think this story's, the story of this game and its focus on change and, I don't even want to say redemption,

because I don't think Kratos is redeeming himself necessarily. He's more trying to, I guess redemption more through his son, would be the big key thing in this game is to make sure that his own legacy, yeah to make sure that his son doesn't turn out the way that he did in so many ways and that he can undo this cycle of fathers killing fathers and such.

But yeah, I don't know.

It's hard to talk about this game's legacy because this game's legacy is very much just its own, but it is very much also still tied to everything that came before it.

But I think it finds a way to stand on its own and just be a great game that anybody can enjoy regardless of having experienced the other games in this series.

And that's the thing that stands out to me the most with this game.

It's one of the things that makes it truly special.

I think the other thing, really quick, is this is the game that sort of saved Feels but save Santa Monica Studio.

Because Ascension was critically and commercially not as big of a success as the previous games.

They had spent 36 months in pre-production on a new IP that ended up getting canned.

They were in this period of transition and out of it came this.

Arguably one of the greatest games ever made, and certainly the most successful God of War game, clearly.

Not just by critical reception and sales, but just pound for pound.

It's the best God of War game for now.

You know, assuming they can surpass their own work here with Ragnarok.

And that's truly remarkable.

This was not an easy feat, and you know,

This game saved Kratos, it saved Sony Santa Monica, it made all of this relevant again.

It put the studio back on top,

it made Kratos a character people actually are invested in beyond people like me who were just like,

"I love slicing up gods in Greek mythology."

And that wasn't easy, and they crushed it.

I feel like it really solidified the PlayStation brand as a whole too.

This game more than any other game I'd say of the past five years of PlayStation I feel like really has, at least in our current era of PlayStation, I feel like when people think

of like, "Why is PlayStation a good video game publisher at the moment?"

They think, immediately think of games like this.

Uncharted as well is up there.

I mean single player narrative driven games is Sony's bread and butter.

Is what Sony does and right now this is the game people think of.

Especially because Last of Us 2 is divisive and we haven't had Uncharted in a while.

So this is like the flagship game I feel like for what Sony has become in recent years.

There's a reason they're finally putting this out on PC after doing it with a couple other games.

There's a reason it's this one.

I want to ask one question because I know we're about to wrap up here.

You mentioned before about how this is one of the best games that Sony Santa Monica, one of the best games ever, the best thing Sony Santa Monica has ever done.

And you said the best God of War games so far, maybe they can outdo themselves next time.

Do you think Ragnarok will be better than this?

I can hope.

I certainly hope so.

I mean I hope so too.

Yeah.

I don't think it will be.

Because I think this game's tightness is its ultimate strength.

Like I think the narrow focus of this game is why it is so strong.

And we obviously don't know what Ragnarok has in store, but based on the name alone and some of the things that are going to have to happen in that game, it's going to have to get pretty bonkers.

There are rumors out there that the game's story is going to last 40 hours.

I don't know if I buy that yet.

I'll buy that.

David Jaffe was the one who said that.

He said he's heard that the game is being planned to be like 40 hours long.

So he could know.

- The one thing, the difference I think will be this game's place in just the series.

This was the pivot, the transition game.

- Yeah.

- And it pulled it off.

So like Ragnarok could be 10 out of 10, top dog, killer game.

Ragnarok is not as important.

- It's not as important to the studio, the series, the company, everything.

- Even the fans, I would say.

- Yeah, it is, this game just changed all of it.

And that, you can't shake that or scrub it, I think.

It is too important.

I think that is the part that would keep this game, theoretically from as the top God of War game.

Context, surrounding context I think is what elevates it.

- Yeah, yeah, I agree.

- So that does it, that's the season two finale, quotes around that.

We will eventually do a God of War Ragnarok episode.

Whenever that game comes out,
we will just upload this into the feed
and it'll be season two, episode eight.

talk about it assuming Logan can keep up his normal pace he'll have the game beaten in two days

I will be the slowpoke so whenever that game does come out hopefully on time in 2022
hopefully

look forward to hearing our thoughts on that not unlike our episode on the last of us part two
shortly after we played that game we recorded that episode so that will be fun you can follow
Logan over on Twitter at more man 12 he writes for comic book calm and will be
reviewing God of War on PC which when that review goes live I'll update the
show notes and you can check that review out there you follow myself on Twitter
at max Roberts 1 4 3 I write over at max frequency dot net I don't write as often
or as much as Logan does but I do see you know some stuff every now and then
you can follow the show on Twitter at chapter select and tweet at us there any
ideas you have for future seasons. We already have season three planned. That will be coming
into the early, the front half of next year.

That was one thing I did want to touch on is, yeah, follow us on Twitter @ChapterSelect
if you want to keep up with the season three of the show. We're working on it, or well,
by working on it we have it figured out and so we're gonna start doing it at some point.
I would say...

It's the first half of 22.

Yeah, Rough Outlines first half of 22, I would say more springtime. I would say to expect
it is the general outline we're looking for, so don't expect January or February or anything
like that.

Come on, we gotta play Horizon on time, you know, when it comes out.

Yeah.

And Logan has other stuff he has to do, like work.

Yeah, we are working on season three though, we're trying to figure everything out. On our end, it'll be a much different series that we're gonna do next time.

That's gonna be fun.

- And then, you know, we have ideas for season four and stuff, but if you want to share your own ideas or just talk about God of War or Paper Mario, you can reach out to us on Twitter on all three of those accounts.

And with that, that's God of War.

We did it.

We played all of God of War for like my bajillionth time and your second time in all, honestly, for all of it.

Or first time for some of those games.

- You're free to play Metroid, Max.

Congratulations.

- I am.

It's really good, Logan.

Quick aside for those not listening, Max has not played other games that have released over the course of this year until we finish this season.

So now he will play Metroid Dread like he's been wanting to do for months.

I know I'm so excited.

And then Pokemon?

It's like other games came out.

My brain can only do one at a time.

So I'm very excited to dive into that.

Thank you all for listening and joining us for this season on God of War.

Really appreciate it.

I hope you all have a wonderful rest of your day.

And until next season, catch you later.

Adios.

Bye everybody.

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.