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Hello everybody and welcome to episode number four of season two of chapter select where we are diving into the God of War series

Chapter select as a whole is a podcast here where we bounce back and forth between different entries in a single series of games and

explore its evolution design and legacy

Today's episode as you can tell by the title is all about God of War ghost of Sparta

which is one of these spin-offs for the

PlayStation portable that released back in the day

Joining me on today's episode, as always, is Max Roberts.

Hi Max.

Hi Logan.

How are you this fine evening?

I'm getting tired.

It's been a long day.

I started a new work schedule today, so I'm working normal human operating hours now.

So that's fun.

Welcome to the workforce.

You know, it is late when we're recording this.

It's 1126 PM Eastern Standard Time and I have to say, I mean I know we're going to talk about the date and stuff here in a second, but ironically today is the 11th anniversary of this game's release in the United States.

Yeah, that was going to be one of the first things I brought up because we always talk

about the history of these games and yeah, you messaged me earlier, or actually you sent me a tweet from Cory Barlog where he kind of reflected on working on God of War, Ghost of Sparta and what he did with the team at Ready at Dawn, who was the primary developer this time around.

And he was like, "Oh, this was such a great game to work on.

I have such fond memories of this, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Happy 11th anniversary."

And then I messaged you.

I was like, "Well, I feel like we probably have to record this episode today now that we are now that that happenstance kind of fell in our lap.

So yeah, God of War, Ghost of Sparta.

Let's just dive right into it this week.

This week, this episode, I don't know, whatever you want to call it.

The people understand.

Yeah, I'm so used to our old weekly format of our show we did for however long.

Anyway, Ready at Dawn was the primary developer on God of War, Ghost of Sparta.

Sony Santa Monica, as I mentioned there with Cory Barlog, some members of that team still assisted with this game.

- Actually, they weren't working at Sony Santa Monica at the time.

- Oh, they weren't?

- They were brought on as consultants.

- Cory would have been working on, what would he have been doing at the time?

- Tomb Raider pre-production probably?

- That's what I'm thinking, that's what I thought, yeah.

So he probably would have been, interesting, interesting.

So this was solely ready at dawn,
but they just brought in some other people from the outside
that were more familiar with the series.

Thank you for clarifying that.

- Sony, I'm sure, made that all amenable.

And Sony Santa Monica, like I'm sure all of it work,
you know, they work together.

- You don't just pass off one of your largest franchises
to a studio that has no familiarity with the brand
or the property.

Not that Ready at Dawn didn't obviously know anything
about God of War, but you want people to be shepherded
into that universe just a little bit.

This was Ready at Dawn's second outing though, right? They did Chains of Olympus as well.
Correct.

With this one they were a little bit more familiar. Chains of Olympus is obviously a game we will
talk about actually on the next episode.

On episode 5 we will be diving into talking about that.

Like I said before, the game released on PSP.

It came out on this date, which happens to be November 2nd, 2010.

It came to the Playstation 3 a little over a year later, or a little under a year later,

I guess technically, on September 11th, 2011.

Yeah, when this episode goes live it will no longer be November 2nd, but it just happens
to be the day we're recording it.

The game director on the project was Dana Jan and Ru...

You see...

R-R-Weera Sor-Soria?

You wrote that.

>> SEAN: We...

Now it's Rerasoria.

Weerasoria.

Yeah, the pronunciation you put in parentheses next to the name tripped me up more than the name itself.

I just did it how it sounded in my head.

I went back, I actually watched a panel discussion where they said his name and I broke it up how at least my brain could interpret it.

This is by no means an official breakdown of pronunciation.

Dana was the game director on the project and Ru was the creative director.

The producer was Mark Turnedoff, Turnedorf, like Ganondorf, Turnedorf.

I do, one thing about Mark, I should have gone back and watched the credits.

He was technically the director of production.

But online when I looked at the credits I couldn't find a strict producer, at least from Ready at Dawn.

So I put in...

I mean producer is kind of just a term for production.

That's why I put him in, it seemed to fit, but his technical title was director of production.

That's an interesting one.

I don't think I've heard that one before to be honest.

I write about people's job titles quite a bit.

The combat lead was Derek Mulder, and then the music this time around was done by Gerard K. Marino once again and then Michael Regan, the same composers from God of War 1.

And then as I mentioned before, Cory Barlog actually helped with the story on this game, so he kind of stitched together.

And we'll get into why that was the case.

That's actually something we've talked about on previous episodes, how the story for this

game was kind of outlined years prior to this game becoming a thing.

So they had ideas for what they wanted to do here

far before Ready at Dawn ever

probably got attached to the project.

And then Eric Williams is also a consultant this time around.

Do you know exactly what he did on this project?

- He was just a consultant as far as

what he was labeled as, but he was working

as a consultant outside of Sony Santa Monica, I believe,

is what I was reading at the time.

- Well, when they announced that he was going to be

the director of Ragnarok, I mean, he very--

He's worked on every one. I was gonna say he very loudly was like, "I know you guys might not know me,

but I've worked on every single one of these we've ever made, so trust me that I know my way around God of War."

On Metacritic, it received an overall score of 86 out of 100,

which is the lowest...

It's not the lowest so far. Ascension is still the lowest so far of the four episodes we've done here.

That's solid, especially for a PSP game. User score is higher.

even though user scores on Metacritic mean nothing because I could go give this game a zero out of

100 right now if I wanted to because sure

And so yeah, that's all the key details of it. Max, let's talk about our histories with this

I'm actually gonna pass this to myself first because my history with this game is that I have no history with this game

With me now completing this game

I have now played every God of War game except for I guess betrayal if we're counting that but uh

This was the one lingering God of War this and ascension were the two lingering God of War games. I had never

played and so

We've now played both of them as part of this

Seasonal endeavor here on chapter select, so I've now played all of the games

But yeah, that's basically all I have to really say I remember seeing this game shown off at like e3 on TV one year

Probably watching G4. I remember the demo they showed was for the section with Midas, I believe

That's a cool spot. All right, that was the one thing I remember

Prominently seeing and like keeping an eye out for in this game like oh, when's the Midas section gonna show up?

I know that's in this game. Where is it at?

Surprise, it's like the back half

Yeah, I was I was keeping an eye out for quite a long time and I thought it was a larger portion of the game

but it's really just kind of a

15 to 20 minute offshoot, honestly.

But yeah, that's my history with the game. I had never played it before. I have obviously

known about it for quite a long time, but just never got around to actually playing it. So what about yourself?

This, just like I had mentioned in our episode on God of War 2,

this was one of the first

games that I purchased when I turned 17, which is the age here in the United States

When you can go out and buy rated M video games

So I bought this with God of War 2 and Chains of Olympus all at the same day

Along with the Animal Crossing city folk, you know really had that good widespread there. It's like Doom Eternal and

Animal Crossing New Horizons on the same day last year. Yeah. Mm-hmm. So

that is that's my

Like history as far as purchasing and stuff and I obviously dove in and was playing all of those games at that time

I was really actually not too dissimilar to now with us playing all of these games for the show

I was definitely in the God of War zone just playing and living and breathing all of these games around that time in

What is that? That would have been

2000 I think that would have been 2011 because

Was that when I turned 17 so 94? Yeah. Yeah 2011. So this game probably had

Well, if it was November 2010, okay. Yes. So yeah, it was out. I bought it new. I remember that and

This

became

Like after God of War 2 it was my favorite God of War game up until

Obviously, I would say 2018 and now replaying through the series

I'd probably reassess a little bit of its placement, but I have always been a big fan

of the Ghost of Sparta. I also think it has the coolest name out of the God of War games.

I think... I've always liked the Ghost of Sparta name.

I do too. So I just, I like this title of this game. It's a good name.

I remember when this game was announced and they announced what the title was, I thought it was a very bland name, honestly.

It just seemed like they really weren't inspired by anything within the actual game, and so they're like, "Oh, well, should we call it 'Vole'?"

This has always been his nickname.

We'll just subtitle it that," I guess.

It comes off as one of those things where they really didn't have a better idea, so that's just kind of what it became, I guess.

Which is fine.

The title of the game itself is a strong title for a game, but it also comes off as like,

"Oh, this is like the sixth one of these we've made, what should we call it?"

Sure.

Ghost of Sparta.

Ship it.

Do you remember the limited edition PSP that they made for this one?

I think so.

Was it all red?

That was the Chains of Olympus one.

I just sent it to you.

I've always thought this was a pretty slick looking PSP.

I did not ever see this actually.

It's black with red accents.

It's nice.

It's a good looking stuff.

It's pretty cool.

That's back when they made a bunch of stuff.

Yeah I think when this game came out the reason I never played it was because I didn't own a PSP at the time.

I think I ended up getting rid of mine eventually for one reason or another.

My PSP still, I still have a PSP 1000, but it's never had, I got it used from someone, so it's never had the pad on top of the thumbstick.

So it's always been the analog nub, like sticking straight into your thumb.

And playing any game on the PSP.

But this was one in particular, like really dug up.

Especially if when you gotta make a Titan scream for a minute straight, and you gotta spin that stick around.

You didn't have to do that on the PSP there were no trophies. I know I know that's why the Vita's the superior

Sony handheld because there is trophies trophies are good

So I mean I wanted to ask you before we get into talking about the story and stuff like what your general takeaways were

And you kind of said that?

So for myself, I guess is a first-timer coming into this and we've have played all of these now

I think this is a very good game actually

Yeah, I think that I think part of that is because it feels like

It feels really tight it

This is a far tighter more cohesive God of War experience than I think a lot of the other games are

Ascension feels too bloated even though it's not really ascension structure. I think is to its detriment

It's - it's not cohesive. It's yeah

Yes

God of War 1 kind of strays in some areas that I know we talked about and then God of War 2 is really

large and expansive and I think that's good. I think that's proper for that game, but it makes it feel

It definitely makes it feel more like a journey and like an elongated

experience. This felt like I sat, I seriously think I played this game

largely in two sittings, three sittings maybe, like and it was just done and that felt very nice

And part of that is just because I I just didn't feel like I ever needed to put it down like of all the games

We've played so far and part of this is probably because I have not played this one yet

So it was fresh, but the the hours definitely melted off the clock when I played this game

more so than any of the others which is

Both something to its credit and a something in like I said is surely due in part because I have not

played it before and everything was fresh from the jump.

But still, I think this game is actually quite good.

It's quite solid and yeah.

- I think a big part of that is

it was constrained to a portable console.

And so it had to be truncated down and focused,

laser focused on delivering the God of War experience

and not only just bringing that home console on the go,

but also being bigger and better than its predecessor, Chains of Olympus, really pushing

the PSP to its limits, which again I just think has leaned into the design of this game

and makes it stand out as really one of the PSP's best, I think, certainly as far as big

first party budget titles, and then also just one of the best God of War games.

Now, you and I did not play on the PSP though.

- No. - We both,

well, you continued to use PS Now.

- PS Now, again, yeah.

- For the PS3 port that we mentioned.

Now that was done with Sony Santa Monica and Ready at Dawn,

porting the game to PS3.

So that was actually a dual kinda effort there.

- Yeah, did that get an individual release on PS3

or did it release as part of like that dual pack collection

with Chains of Olympus.

- It was part of a dual pack,

just like God of War I and God of War II was.

But then later--

- They had the, I have the Saga collection.

- The Saga collection, which has all five,

except Ascension, 'cause it came out before then.

- Yeah, where he's got the giant Hercules gauntlets on the cover, even though he never uses those things, except for in one of, of all the weapons to give him, they're like, "Hey, let's play, it's cool art."

But-- - Yeah, it's good stuff.

You think if you're going to make a definitive God of War piece of art, you would put him holding the blades of chaos?

Yeah.

Anyway, speaking more to the game itself.

So we talked before about the story to this one and how Corey came in and helped with the story and part of that reason is because they had a lot of the story ideas for this one outlined with God of War.

You talked when we did our original God of War episode, I believe, about how they had this idea early on about Kratos having a brother and how they wanted to fold that in at some point further down the road, and they never really did that in the core games, and then when they started expanding into the portable gut titles eventually this kind of came back up like, "Hey, we had this idea way back when, maybe this would be a good idea to do something with this now."

So that's largely what the game centers around is the story of Kratos and him trying to find out what happened to his brother and where's his brother and also in the process maybe he sinks Atlantis or something like that.

This dude is a, he's not a good dude.

It's really funny.

I do kind of want to say like the sinking of Atlantis or the blowing up of the volcano and burning that city down and stuff. That feels, at least in this game, Kratos has done a lot of bad things intentionally, but a lot of this feels like side effects of him just going through. This almost feels like a Nathan Drake accidentally blowing up an ancient tower on a pirate island

because other people were shooting at him. This feels more accidental, especially since He has to go back to Atlantis to get to Death's Domain.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure.

Yeah, he's not like going out of his way to intentionally just go crazy. I mean, the opening of this game, he's just chilling on a boat trying to go get to this town, see what's up with his mom, and he starts getting attacked by all kinds of people. So yeah, for sure. But it's still funny when you start to put together a list of everything Terrible that this dude's ever been a part of it's it's very it's quite funny actually because it's so I think we're near I think

Replaying these games like especially in the lead-up as we replay God of War 2018 in the future like so much of that game is centered around like his

Angst and his like regrets for what he did here, but it's almost like

Everything that he has done in the Greek world is so so blown out of it's so just

nonsensical and stupid that it's like Mortal Kombat levels of like ridiculousness where I almost can't even like take it seriously anymore

some of it I yeah, they've

Well, I've said before I love how they keep all of this canonical and like this Kratos is the same Kratos in God of War 2018

but they definitely keep like the character strokes and

tailor it back. It's... this definitely feels like an immature Kratos of... he just yells

"Demos and Athena!" and actually, we'll touch on it, I actually think he actually has a bit more of a range here emotionally than in the games we've played so far. But nothing like compared to what we get in the PS4 reboot. It's just... it's hard to think of the guy in the Norse realm as the same guy who...

Sugg-Adladdus blew up a volcano...

and went into Death's Domain and...

Unleashed all the Titans, destroyed everybody, killed the gods...

I mean, we're getting ahead of ourselves with how God of War 3 unfolds, but yeah, like...

It's very silly. It's so...

When you say it, it's silly.

Yes. Like, when you think about it at face value, it's like,

"Wow, this guy's got a really bad past, he's got a lot to deal with,"

and then you think about it and it's like, "Okay, this is very goofy."

In a general sense, actually, you reminded me of one thing there that I did want to bring up and I mentioned this before the show, but I felt like there were some strange continuity things in this story or things that I felt like they needed to, maybe not continuity, things that, especially involving Athena, because later on you find out Athena is not necessarily the best person around, but they continue to portray her as this like beacon of like good in the games up until this point, but did God of War 3 come out before this or after?

Yes, it came out before.

So that's what I think is strange, is that by the time God of War 3 is out, and it kind reveals that she's not the best person and then this game comes out and it portrays her in a very positive light at times.

Okay. And I don't, again, we have not played God of War 3 yet so it's kind of hard to have this discussion because I don't remember how everything unfolds in God of War 3 because it's been so long, but seeing how they portrayed her in this game was very odd to me at times. That and they felt the need to tie up some other threads that I didn't really feel like they needed to tie up, namely everything with Zeus being the gravedigger because, okay, I guess we needed to just really put that, really make that apparent to everybody as much as humanly possible.

Well, allow me to chime in with my two cents on this.

So the Athena bit.

She, let's take into context, she dies in God of War 2, which is post Ghost of Sparta.

Yeah.

And when she, she doesn't plan on dying, this is not her plan, but when she does die, she enters an existence beyond the, a higher power than Zeus.

And then, in God of War 3, when she becomes this ghostly, all ruling God lady, that's when she's like, "Oh, well I have more power here.

"I control the will of mankind,"

through Pandora's Box and all this stuff.

So she really kind of becomes this evil, evil, evil in God of War III.

Now she's still manipulative and pulls strings and that's kind of what you see here in Ghost of Sparta where she spares Kratos, her brother, which I guess also makes Demos her brother.

So like they spared, she spared him and at the end, she's like, "Now you can become a god."

So she had aligned with Kratos to kill Ares, also her brother, very Greek through all of this, but she wanted Kratos to become the god of war.

And so the side effect of this journey was that he had shed his mortal connections, his ties.

And so she was trying to make him a god, and that comes to bite her in the butt later, obviously, but then she gets special powers.

Well, that's the thing with the end of the game too.

This is kind of a little bit separate from what we're talking about here.

But the final line of the game is her calling him "brother" and it's like, "Okay, we know that.

We've known this for a little bit."

It was presented as almost like, "Oh, here's a revelation for you to end this game."

It's like, "Yeah, okay, we knew this though."

And then...

I don't know.

There's some weird stuff.

her with Deimos and them taking him away and her being like "Oh I saved you" like yeah that stuff played a little strange I guess and I guess it'd be hard to go from God of War 3 to this and see those as being the same characters. You are right though that she doesn't get really bad until yeah she bites the dust sort of but she's still around in 3. Anyway yes we'll talk about that more when we get to 3.

quick the the gravedigger bit I think well yes it's oh look it's Zeus in his gravedigger disguise again well that was always the fan theory and that was always like what fans thought and assumed and like they kind of spell it out a little bit in the first game not super explicitly but it's hinted at but now it's like oh hey ten years or however many years later we need to make sure that you knew this was definitely Zeus. But it, I think it actually lends itself to the narrative and shows just how far the gods of Olympus, and Thanatos I suppose, are trying to prevent Kratos from finding out this truth. Because they were worried that Deimos was this marked warrior that would bring down Olympus. So it was interesting to see just how far and I liked that having the gravedigger while cool kind of fan service reference, tie-in easter egg thing however you want to put it, it also does just show how far they were going to try and kill them and even with the end credit scene where it shows and there's one grave that

remains, it's supposed to be for Kratos, and then I think they kind of really spell it out

if you grind out a million red orbs you go into the temple of Zeus and in the basement is the grave digger shovel.

So it kind of ties it up together.

Which is also just hilarious that Zeus, this all powerful god of the gods is like "Oh, I'm in a moonlight, it's this grave digger dude, but where will I hide my shovel after I have to run it under my statue?"

Yes.

It's very, very, very silly.

Yes.

Very, very silly.

Speaking, last thing with the story.

So what did you think about everything with Deimos in Kratos?

If you had asked me back in 2011 when I played it, this is awesome. I'm a sucker for prequels.

I always have been. I love anything that fills in context. So prequel, check. Oh, really cool

looking brother. Just like the glowy scar and the beard, check. This time around, I struggled with

it a little bit. In the sense that, especially at the end, when you finally make it into

Death's Domain and you fight Deimos, Deimos is like, "I've waited for this moment, and

I shall kill you now for my revenge." Which was interesting to see someone trying to get

revenge on Kratos. And then, five minutes later, a Spartan never falls on his back,

and then they're all "Buddy Buddy."

I never understood why they fought in the first place.

Like, what is he, would he expect his 10 year old brother

to fight Ares on the spot when they were kids?

Like, oh, I'll never forgive you for letting

the literal Greek god of war haul me away back in the day.

You're dead to me.

It's like, what is he supposed to do?

He's a little kid.

I don't know.

It came across like he had been trapped for so long
and he was probably, the way it came across
was that he was mentally not really there any longer.

That was kind of how I explained it to myself.

'Cause face value, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

Like you would think he would be trapped there
and he'd see his brother and be like,

"Dear God, you didn't forget about me after all these years.

"My brother's here, ah."

But no, he's like, "Oh, I'm gonna kill you."

- And then five minutes later, we're bros again.

It's interesting because part of that Zeus Temple thing
is you unlock a bunch of concept art and video clips.

And one of them is like this cut scene, so to speak.

It's more just painted pictures

and then Linda Hamilton's voiceover.

- Oh yeah, like fleshing out the lore
and backstory and stuff.

- And one of them is fleshing out Demos' turn
from waiting for his brother to revenge.

And I feel like that would have made more context
within the story somehow instead of like an unlockable bonus.

It just, Demos' actual presentation doesn't,
doesn't work for me now.

It just--

- And when he shows up, he's dead within 15 minutes of showing up in the game.

Yeah.

You chase after him the whole game, and then he, boom, gone.

- I do think Kratos' motivation, while there's not a lot of depth in terms of narratively, it starts out he has a vision of his mother dying and his brother, and he's like, "Oh, I can change this."

And I like the idea of Kratos trying to actually save someone, do something.

Most of the games Kratos is out to get revenge or kill someone.

First game Ares, second game Zeus, third game Zeus and everybody else.

This time he's actually trying to do the right thing so to speak.

Actually trying to change his own destiny.

- And that feels like that would fit within his character

at that point because he had just lost his family

and he's still grieving over them greatly

and he like, he can't get over it, frankly.

And so if he has a vision that his mom

and his brother are in danger, like yeah,

it totally makes sense for him to go out of his way

and try to resolve this.

- And it definitely sets up God of War II,

I think in a better way.

It sets up why he is fighting the gods and trying to rule over, you know, Greece through his Spartan army, I think, a bit more.

Like his frustration.

So I do--

Yes, I agree with that too.

Kratos' arc I really enjoy.

But Demos himself, even Thanatos, like why is Thanatos in charge of torturing him?

Like why is he-- I don't know.

It just like seemed like an excuse to have a cool god of death.

I mean he is cool.

I think of Thanatos as like the sexy god of death though because of Hades.

Hades.

That's like the first time I really was, uh, like I think I'd been, I'd seen different

Greek versions of a lot of the Greek gods before I had ever played Hades.

But for some reason I can't think of an iteration of Thanatos before I played that game.

So whenever I think of Thanatos I think of Grim Reaper dude with a scythe who's sexy showing up to face off with his Agri-us.

That's another Greek god game that you should play.

good. Don't listen to what Max is going to say about that game.

I just, it's a very good game. I just wish that...

Just don't get the platinum.

Don't go for the platinum. That's all I'm going to say. It's very long.

Story wise, yeah, I think the story is, again, solid. Everything about this game is solid, including the gameplay. I think the gameplay in this, personally, is just very, very tight.

It feels, it doesn't have as much flash as some of the other games and there isn't as much that you can do, I don't think.

But that almost felt better to me in a lot of ways.

Especially compared to something like Ascension, which almost gives you too many options and...

And forcibly so.

Yeah, and a lot of them aren't that great and there are too many interconnecting systems and mechanics, they just kind of all fit together in a clunky way.

This felt very streamlined, but to good effect.

Also some more minor things though, we mentioned this when we first started playing it last week to one another, the block actually feels good in this game from once.

Oh, it's so, it's a very God of War 2 type block, like that slow-mo once you get the fleece, but it feels just that much better.

The window on it feels very forgiving, but that's how it should be.

You shouldn't have to nail these block timing windows to the hundredth of a second.

I've never liked that.

The block feels great.

Rolling not so much.

The rolling just feels like a step back compared to the other ones, I think for sure.

Part of that is probably because the PSP doesn't have a right stick to roll with.

I don't know if that is the excuse.

- I know you can't press-- - Yeah, do you know how you do it on the PSP?

- You hold the-- - L1R1 and then move, yeah.

- Yeah. So, I totally agree.

I think, again, it's this constraint of the PSP and being a portable game,

so the design of keeping players engaged for shorter periods of time,

while they're on the bus, in the car, out and about, whatever.

It's just tight and focused and it gives you just enough options and diversity to really kind of play how you want without overwhelming you.

I think the roll in particular, because you mentioned it, I wrote down that it's snappy. There are definitely fewer frames of animation.

like you roll and Kratos is already horizontal

to the ground, like there's less lead time

into the animation, so it makes you snappier,

but it almost has a ascension-like slowness
on the back end of it where when you roll,
you can't immediately get back out of it or roll again.
Like you roll and you're committed
to where you stop for a bit,
and you really feel that with some of the enemies
like the, the witches, I don't know what their technical name
was in this game, but the witches--

- The underground burrowers.
- Yeah, underground burrow witch ladies.
- I hate those things, a lot.
- They were pretty rough.

They were some rough foes.

- There were some encounters at the end of this game
that I was not a fan of.

For reference, both Max and I played this
on hard mode as well.

- We both got the plat.
- We both got the plat.

It was like a less than a weak plat.

Haven't done that in, I don't know, a really long time, probably.

My Name is Mayo 2 was probably the last one I got in that short of a time.

Oh gosh.

Something like that last year.

So yeah, I don't know.

I don't know how much there is.

I guess with the...

We've talked about the blades and stuff.

The game obviously also adds a different secondary weapon with the Spartan arms, which are interesting.

I did not like to use them in combat almost ever.

I like the spear throwing function, but that's about it I think.

I would use them every now and then.

I probably used them a lot more back in the day.

I like the multiple jab, like the quick jab type stuff.

just gave you a little bit more options and then I found out later post story mode that a great way to fight those little witch ladies, underground burrowers, is to double jump and then just throw your spear at them because you stop falling. You just stay kind of in the air. So I really wish I had learned that or thought of that sooner. That would have helped a lot. It definitely, they're cool. They give you this kind of nice, you're immune with the shield. And I liked thinking of that a little bit because the shield plays such a factor in the 2018 game. I was like, "Oh, at least there's some lineage here with Kratos and circular shields." It was cool. I think the better weapon upgrade feature, what have you, was Thera's Bane, which turned your blades into fire, but tied it to a meter. Way better than what Ascension would go on to do and give you different elemental types for the blades which we've talked about.

I loved Therazbane.

This was so good.

I think it's really good.

It's something that makes you feel like your attacks are vastly more powerful and I don't know how much more powerful they are but what's great is like you can charge it up on people and then continually... basically if you got in a large enough group you could smack some people around with it, turn your back on those people because you know the fire is going to detonate them and probably stun them again for half a second and then focus on other groups of people.

It was really a good way of tackling large groups of enemies at a single time I thought.

It's also just cool because you're catching people on fire.

- Yeah, and then they would tie it to certain enemy types

with armor, so then they would factor in strategically

if this Cyclops had armor on or those automaton things.

Which I love that too, it made your strikes count more

because it was tied to a bar that had to regenerate quickly,

not terrible, it regenerated on its own

instead of having to find special orbs or something.

This just, this feels like a great sequel step

And I don't remember if this is in Chains of Olympus

or even God of War 3, I definitely don't think it's in 3.

So this just feels, I wish Ascension had copied this,

like in hindsight, I wish this bar existed.

And I guess they tried to do that with the rage meter,

but that was contingent on damage and maintaining a combo.

And this was just, you wanna throw fire now?

Well, hold down the button and go for it,

but you only have so much.

This is definitely my favorite part of the combat,

was adding that element.

- And I felt like upgrading it really upgraded it.

This was the first game where I have not,

typically I just feel like I main line the blades

and upgrade them first and then move on.

I upgraded the, I upgraded Therazbane right away.

That was the first thing I did.

Mainly so that my power would regenerate a little bit more.

And I was also being cognizant of the trophy associated with this, to be honest?

- Sure, it's a lot of enemies we had to incinerate.

What did you think of the enemies?

Because there weren't a lot of boss fights, which is somewhat understandable being a PSP game, but I thought they introduced a lot of new enemy type, and maybe they're not new, maybe they were in Chains of Olympus and I'm just forgetting, but I really liked what they did.

They were like the boulder guy who would teleport,

- Oh yeah. - The electricity, the automatons, they had new Cyclops kills, they were like the boomerang guys, spiders, like they really mixed it up.

It felt nice and refreshing after essentially Satyrs and Witches and Minotaurs and Medusas.

I mean, and those are still in here.

- Those still show up, but there's more--

- But they've diversified it.

- I felt like there was more new enemy types as well, And a lot of that was because I felt like the locations were vastly different than before.

Like, okay, we're gonna go to Atlantis in this game.

We should probably not just have, you know, regular minotaurs showing up around every corner.

Let's come up with Atlanian lizard men

or whatever the heck they are, amphibian boys.

- Mermen.

- Mermen, I guess would be the technical term.

Even though I don't really know why they're mermen

if Atlantis hasn't sunk yet.

Does that mean they just--

there were some that were clearly fish people.

Yeah.

So I don't know why Poseidon's getting all upset.

Clearly, sinking Atlantis was for the good of the people.

Like they can still readily access the town.

So come on.

Um, yeah, I agree.

I think there was more diversity than before.

I did like the electric dudes with the boulders.

I thought those were really quite random, honestly.

It's a very strange enemy design, but it was also...

They just come out of nowhere, but they're cool.

Yeah, they look cool and they're unique and they can teleport around.

One other thing I really liked about this game too is that it incorporated the quality

of life features from God of War 3, which I feel like that's a given, but the thing

that I love so much about this game because it has not shown up until this point, except

in Ascension. The directional, the Quick Time events that are coordinated with the directional

parts of the screen, yeah, top bottom, those coordinate with the face buttons. Yeah, that

being included here was very nice because I cannot, I can't stand going back and doing

the Quick Time events on some of those older games because of that. That was seriously

such a saving grace for the series when they came up with that idea and it's such a simple idea but yeah I love that that's here too as well. Magic. Anything stand out to you with the magic abilities in this game? The thing that stood out to me the most was that you don't get most of your magic until the back half of the game. You really kind of only get one spell up front and then you don't get anything until the halfway point and it's the it's the worst electric spell ever in the series so far I think yeah the straight laser yeah yeah yeah I first at first I got it and I was like oh you can only do this to one person and it doesn't even do that much damage this kind of sucks I would use it for its invincibility frames that's what I had it for - yes that's how I avoided the witches you had a big - I could brain that.

Yeah, I would do the same thing primarily if I was about to get tackled.

- I liked, I wanna look it up so I know the name, but the second one you get, which is the screaming lady one, but the little orb would go around, and not only did it follow enemies and kind of group them together, which is already powerful, but it would also, at least the first time you used it against an enemy, take some health from them.

And on hard mode, that was actually kind of a saving grace in a few fights where you would, the scourge of Aaron-ness, you can say it in your head, but when you have to say it out loud, it sounds weird.

But the scourge magic where it would just release this orb

that kind of sucked them in and stuff

and gave you a little bit of health.

And then there was the horn of Bore-ass, Bore-Alice?

It's not Bore-Alice, it's Bore-ius.

Anyway, in my head it's always Borealis, but I've just made up, I've added letters.

And that was fine, I've used that once, maybe?

I don't know.

Didn't...

Yeah.

Wasn't a lot of magic, but I would take that in favor of the Therosbane fire stuff any day.

Yeah, I liked the one, I forget what it's called already, the second one you get.

The Scourge.

the scourge. Yes, I like that and then the final one I didn't really use ever to freeze the enemies. It was, I don't think it was terrible. I think it was an upgrade over the Gorgon head from the previous games and I liked seeing something different in that regard if they were going to give you an enemy freezing technique of some sort. Magic in this game is okay. There is being made up for what I feel like was a weaker set of abilities. I

I will say though that I liked how much more you could get out of your magic in this game because I felt like you didn't burn through the magic bars quickly.

Maybe you didn't feel like that, but I felt like I could use my abilities a little bit more and that's because I didn't think they felt as like just overpowered in a general sense like some of the previous ones did in the other games we played.

It was a good balance.

Did you have anything, actually I had one more thing I want to say before we move on from gameplay.

And this is something we've not talked about in this series consistently.

And I can't believe we haven't because it's a major aspect of the series.

But the sex mini-games...

I think this is the best one so far.

This has to be the best one so far.

Why?

Because he's getting it on with like 12 people at once.

It's hilarious.

It's so funny.

It's a very, very good one.

Spartans stand tall.

Normally they just show like an object in the room like, uh, shaking around or whatever, but this one has a lot more to it.

It's it's it's it's pitched as like, uh, they keep it by this point in the series.

I feel like the whole sex mini game thing can kind of started to run its course, but they still kept it around because you have to, I feel like at that time.

Yeah.

such a part of the series identity but I like that they turned it into more of like a gag in this one rather than like a serious like oh yeah Kratos is gonna get it on with some hot chicks now like it's more of like it's more of a it's a total joke yeah and I like that I think it's really good I think it's that part is funny for sure it's definitely it's just playing it now definitely feels like and the only reason I even played it was the trophy well the first I feel like the first one and the second one or more like overtly like why is this here like this one definitely like I said it felt and then ascension doesn't even have one yes there is still cutscenes of related but there is no actual minigame And then obviously 2018 has nothing to do with it.

- That's because Trace was conceived by many games, so.

- Gee whiz.

- So he doesn't need to do it anymore.

Music, this is the one thing I know we keep coming back to.

Anything this time around?

- I actually have things to say.

- Okay.

- Not a specific song, but Logan, I may be crazy.

Maybe I've just, we've played so many
and they all sound the same and I finally have cracked.

But they used like different instruments this time.

And I don't...

I think you're right.

There was horns.

Like I felt this music was very...

They used a lot of horns and strings.

It was moody and it stood out in a different way,
but they still tied in those older themes and stuff.

And I...

But they didn't tie it in very blatantly either.

Yeah, it wasn't the Ascension scenario.

Yes, where they were just like,

"Hey, let's recycle the main God of War theme as much as humanly possible."

It felt different. It had a different vibe to it.

I definitely was trying to pay more attention to it this time around.

It had a somber, like, melancholy kind of feel,
and I think that tied in a lot with the plot and themes and stuff.

And we've, you know, I mentioned...

It wasn't on the God of War 2 episode, it was in our Ascension,
but like that Marvel Symphonic Universe video from Every Frame a Painting,
but just this idea of music matching what you see on screen but not a
listening some sort of like you I could hum you a song from Ghost of Sparta that
I can't do that but it matches Kratos's mood and the environments like the
constant rain in Atlantis or the eruption of the volcano or even
returning to Sparta all of this was matched really well with the music and
I love the use of strings and horns here.

It actually stood out as something different but familiar.

And I really enjoyed that.

- Yeah, like I was saying,

I was trying to pay more attention to it this time around,
so we would have more to talk about with it,
but it was more just naturally standing out to me
as being much different than the other ones we had played.
And like you said, it had those like somber undertones to it.

I agree with that.

I think that's a good way to describe it, I believe.

- Yeah, it's good stuff.

And it just, it lends itself again to this title
just being really strong package all put together.
They possibly could have been limited by the PSP
and how it outputs sound,
or it could have been enhanced by it
since these were disk-based games, you know?
So maybe that actually lent itself
to create a better experience in this space.

- So let's talk about the visuals

and I'm gonna pitch you on my thoughts here

and I wanna know if I'm crazy or not.

Is this the best looking one we've played so far?

Like...

- It absolutely is.

- Yeah.

- It's so good.

- Even better than Ascension though,

which is the weird thing.

Ascension looks gross, man.

That game is muddy and it's weird

'Cause that came out the last year of the PS3,

and it came out next to The Last of Us,

which was a fantastic looking game on the PlayStation 3.

That game is just very ugly,

terrible to look at in hindsight.

Like, I hate that game's visual style.

- This game has art direction and--

- Colors. - Hat, colors and a style.

It's very, it's cel-shady in a way.

- Sort of. - Because the version

that we played is definitely,

It's a PSP game upscaled and with some new assets and stuff for the PS3.

So we're getting this kind of scaled up version and I want to talk about that in a bit.

But it reminds me of the recently, to date this episode more so than we already have,

recently announced Grand Theft Auto remakes.

Where it has this cartoony style but looks like what it came from on the PS2 in that particular case.

This looks like a PSP game to that certain level just based off the direction, but it's brought up and it's running at 1080, 60, and it just looks so good and I love the environments. And I think again, part of that is because they're tighter spaces so they can pour a lot of detail into them and not have to worry about the budget, you know, spectacle beyond what you would see on the horizon or in the sky or what have you.

Yeah, I think the thing that stood out to me the most, the new characters and stuff like that, that really added a lot of flair to it and made it feel much more unique.

The thing that I noticed the most though is that the backgrounds and the set pieces and the skyboxes and stuff like that looked way better than what I've become accustomed to seeing in these games.

where it just... I feel like the backgrounds of a lot of these games and the things you're... Kratos himself is pretty stylized, but everything around him is pretty drab, it seems like a lot of the times. And while a lot of the game is still just him running around Greek corridors and things like that, I just think there was so much more color and a deeper palette in this game and each of the areas felt way more distinct that you're going into, whether it be the realm of death or the area with the ice mountain or the volcano or Atlantis, like all these areas have distinct tones and vibes to them that I think are really brought to the forefront because of the visuals and because of the art style.

That's not something I really can recall too much from the other games, even with God of War 2 which we just played which goes to a lot of different areas. I feel like there's a lot of similarities between the different locations in that game even though they're completely different from one another. And that's not to say they're all one to one exactly the same but I think a lot of those areas of that game kind of bleed together in my head whereas this one each area feels more distinct and I think that's because of the art basically.

Yeah, I totally agree and I think another element of it is they wanted to fit as I would think they wanted to fit as much as possible as they could into the game.

They didn't want it to just all take place in Atlantis or in a volcano or in the mountains or whatever.

So each environment you go through it pretty quick.

It's pretty snappy like you're moving from here to here to here and I think that also helps keep it fresh.

Even when you come back to Atlantis, which you've already been there, like how can they make that new?

Well, you sunk it.

So it's underwater.

And so there's underwater navigation now, which fits obviously the world and the environment.

But they keep it fresh by bringing in a lot of the electricity stuff from Poseidon and underwater and all that and destruction because you sunk it already.

So everything's very fresh.

Everything's vibrant.

Like God of War 2 and Ghost of Sparta both have icy environments.

The one in God of War 2 feels like just something thrown in because we wanted to mix up the environment level layouts here.

You're not on the mountain very long.

It's cool that there's a titan in there and you get the bow and arrow from him, but it's pretty forgettable.

I didn't even remember it was in the game until we had just replayed it.

This, I like the icy environment, it mirrors kind of where you are narratively, it's a complete contrast to the volcano, and then by the time you get to the top, that's when you fight the Death's Daughter before you get the Scourge and stuff.

So it's, and then that moves you into Sparta because you fly.

You fly a lot in this game.

You get thrown, Kratos gets shot out of a volcano, lands in a city, flies off a snowy mountain into the forest and lands in Sparta and then from Sparta he goes to it's all he goes all over the place all that I've done to the ocean again yeah it's I think they since they pack so much in but kept the pace up it really helped this game stand out in its design the other thing that I know I did that you did not do because am crazy and be I have all of this stuff yeah for

- For some reason. - I already know what you're gonna say here, yeah.

- So this game is one of two, Chains of Olympus is the other.

God of War games that support 3D, like 3D glasses 3D.

Tried that out today for a bit.

Actually really cool and immersive.

It's the kind of 3D that you would have seen on a 3DS where it just adds depth to the environment.

It's not, oh look at me, I'm throwing stuff out at your face like Sharkboy and Lavagirl or something.

It really, I just kind of played the opening level through the first phase with the Skilla, Silla, giant lizard.

But it just was cool to see the boat and the rain falling and all that stuff.

That was actually a nice touch.

And it didn't impact the frame rate to my eye to a level that was so severe that it just chopped it down

and was miserable.

It actually, I thought actually enhanced my experience.

So I was pretty happy to see that and play it.

I don't think I will play,

actually I know I won't play Chains of Olympus like that

because I can't capture the 3D footage.

So I need to play it in 2D.

But it was a nice touch.

And for something that's not done now,

no one makes 3D games.

It's interesting to see.

And then I also booted up the PSP version

on my Vita TV, both at 2x scale like the Vita does,

and then just at 1x.

And I think this emphasized a note

that I wrote earlier on in my playthrough on the PS3,

like how did this run on the PSP?

And I was like, well, this is the PS3 version,

how much of this is actually polished up?

The PSP version definitely is more pixelated

and like kind of chunky, blocky-ish,

But it's that art direction that you and I were talking about

that really helps elevate it.

And it looks great considering the hardware and the time

and what you would have been seeing and playing it on.

This is awesome.

And it holds up well to this day because of art direction.

And that's why something like Ascension,
which had this very pale and washed out
and tried to be realistic but wasn't quite realistic look,
Ascension has aged worse and it's a younger game.
And Ghost of Sparta still stands out
because it has that art direction and looks so good.
And was designed for a very, very tiny screen.
And even when you blow it up and throw it on a PS3,
it still looks good.

- So I'm gonna do something here
that I wasn't planning on doing, but--

- A twist.

- But this is interesting and I feel like

I have to throw this in there

just because we're recording this episode and it's very strange that this was mentioned
at this exact moment, but as we've been recording this podcast, Querrey Barlog actually
tweeted

about this game quite extensively.

Like he had like a deep thread about this game.

Basically there's nothing super, there's nothing about the game very much said, but basically
he said, he talks about how when he wrote the, when he was writing this game he had
had it all written and it was basically done and his house got broken into and all of his
electronics in his house were stolen. And this game was being made before the cloud
or before anything like that. And he basically had to rewrite the entire game from memory
based on some note cards that he had in about a week. He goes on to say that he ended up
getting everything back but he later on, but it still didn't keep him from having to write
whole game basically again and he says he did it all in about two sessions.

No.

So that's very interesting and I feel like I just needed to throw that in there because I had Twitter pulled up on the side and I saw that he tweeted out of curiosity and as you would just by pure happenstance he was talking about this game.

I thought that would be fun to throw in there as a little nugget at the end of this episode just for fun.

Wow.

the the link to the start of this thread will be in the show notes I'm like reading this as you describing it wow this is awesome and he says that it was a better draft than the one that got stolen so thank you burglars somewhere thank you burglars whoever did that kind of cool that he would tweet that out at the very end of the day of the anniversary but it's nice yeah to see

Cool, thanks Logan. For sure. On that note from Cory, I think that's it for this episode though. Did you have anything else you wanted to chime in about related to Ghost of--God of War--Ghost of Sparta? I--the kind of the only real thing I had left that I wanted to touch on was a little legacy focused and I feel like Like people do look back on this fondly, the online discussion around this game is generally very positive, it's one of the favorite God of War games, I feel pretty confident in saying that.

But in this new era of God of War, it's easy to forget about the PSP spinoff games.

I even saw a tweet the other day, or not the other day, maybe it was a few months or so ago, someone was like, "Bring Demos back in the new games."

And I think Cory responded and said, "I feel like the end of Ghost of Sparta made it pretty clear what happened to Deimos."

So you know, whatever.

Where was he buried?

Was he buried in the realm of death specifically there at the end?

They just walk up the stairs.

Because he just walks up the stairs and then just, "Oh hey!"

And then there's a portal to Olympus, like the end of God of War 1.

But I think the interesting thing to take away besides Cory writing this story in two days due to burglary, is that Corey did write the story for this one, which was one of the last games before 2018, and that Eric Williams, the director on Ragnarok, was a consultant.

And I'm not saying that this, like, goes as far as it's going to lead into Ragnarok in any way, I just... the hands that touch and shape this stuff from Sony Santa Monica and Ready at Dawn, I do think is interesting to consider looking forward. And it's nice to know that there's like a little lineage of through, you can connect each game, not just narratively or gameplay wise, but from the people that actually made these games. And even when it was put to a new studio for different hardware, the people behind the original stuff were still there in some capacity and it could maintain the spirit while providing something new for the franchise and players.

Good note to end on.

Yeah, I don't have anything else to say about that.

I don't believe Demos will be showing up in Ragnarok.

The only thing I would like, again, kind of fan service, if he maybe just mentioned it.

Like, "I had a brother."

That'd be fun. Something happened.

He also never mentioned he had a wiper child previously though, did he?

Not to Atreus.

It's one of those things that feels forced, almost like when Naughty Dog mentioned that they tried to

maybe get Ellie to go to Bill's town or have Bill meet them and last was part two and it was just like,

this feels incredibly forced. Like this doesn't...

Or maybe it was like have a note from Ish somewhere out west. That was another thing.

Yeah, I was like, "Nah, this just doesn't make sense."

So I don't really know how they could bring that stuff into the new era, but I wouldn't mind finding like a note or something that mentioned Deimos.

That would be kind of cool.

So you've mentioned this before, but Cory had his hands on every entry in this series in some capacity, and that's going to be true on Ragnarok as well, right?

Did he have his hands on every other game, including Chains of Olympus and things like that as well?

He helped write the story for Chains, he helped with that.

He worked on God of War 3 for nine months.

The only one I do not believe he had any hands in is Ascension.

Well...

So I know this is a larger discussion in the future and maybe this is something we can talk about when we get to the 2018 game, but as it stands it sounds like, sounds like God of War of Ragnarok might be the entry he's the most hands off with, which is strange because he still actively works at that studio and he's still actively promoting that game and working with that team, sort of.

But it's very clear if you listen to him interviewed about that game right now, he's not really made any key decisions involved with Ragnarok.

He has shepherded it in a direction and he has provided some context and insight into what he thinks should happen and where it should go and he has been a...

I feel like, I'm curious how much, because clearly the story for this game was already written.

I feel like that's the most...

No, actually, it was not.

But everything they set up in the first one.

So this is a whole larger discussion and we can either have this off air or on this podcast

but I can send you interviews where he actually talks about this stuff.

Okay, that'll be fascinating.

But he basically talks about how when Ragnarok started, he told Erik, "Here's what we set up, here's what I think we should do, here are three or four things I think we absolutely 100% need to do, these are the things that you need to build towards.

Everything else though, here's what I would do, but you don't have to do any of this."

And so basically, that's, that's in tradition with the rest of the God of War series.

It's each game has had a different director, with the exception of 2018 bringing back Corey. But from God of War one to God of War two, Jaffe passed the reins on and there were some ties, you know, Jaffe was helping guide it, but it was Corey's vision at game. And the same thing, Corey started God of War three, but then they handed it off to Stig, and then so on and so forth.

So, even with Chains of Olympus being, Ru was the director there, and then he came in as creative director for Ghost of Sparta and let Dana be the game director.

So it's, even at Ready at Dawn, there's this lineage of having someone new at the helm.

And so I do like that for Ragnarok, and definitely the game and the design and stuff is new and wasn't established.

The only thing that I could see any continuity is, at the very least it sounds like Story Beats.

So, you know, I like that.

And then Ascension, he definitely wasn't involved

when he came back to Sony Santa Monica in August of 2013.

So Ascension had already come out that year.

So the only one he wasn't involved with was Ascension.

- Okay, interesting.

We'll talk about a lot of this, I'm sure, more in the future
and the rest of our season here.

But we are past the halfway point.

So for the remainder of this season, if you're not already seeing it in your podcast feed,
from this point on we will be doing Chains of Olympus will be our next episode, episode
5, then we will be doing God of War 3, and then we will wrap up on God of War 2018 to
end this season.

So halfway done, feeling good.

I'm glad we knocked this one out quickly, on our end at least.

I know people don't see how this stuff is made behind the scenes, but we've recorded
our last episode less than a week ago I think and then now we've done this? We recorded
it a week ago tonight. We're just, we're week week. So we're in the zone now with
this. That's fun. Anyway, as always with the show if you want to keep following us
along, subscribe in your podcast feed and all that good stuff that helps us out a whole
bunch. You can also follow us over on Twitter @ChapterSelect. You can follow Max and myself
on Twitter as well. Max is @MaxRoberts143 and I am @Mormon12. The website, do we have a
website

URL? Is it just chapterselect.com? It is sir. chapterselect.com. If you want more on God
of War specifically, you can go to chapterselect.com/season2. There you go. I knew we had a
website but I

know what the domain was necessarily so. Thankfully it's the one that makes sense.

That's just like the twitter handle. That's probably a good thing. Anyway that's it for
Ghost of Sparta. We will see you back here next time to finish up talking about the
portable adventures of Kratos with Chains of Olympus. But until then have a good day,

evening, morning, whatever time it might be where you're at and we will see you back here next time.

Bye! Rest in peace, God of War betrayal.

Chapter Select is a max frequency production. This episode was research produced and edited by me,

Max Roberts. Season 2 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.

Yam.