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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. I

Am one of your hosts max roberts and I'm joined as always by Logan Moore. Hi Logan. Hi

I didn't mention this before we went live but I think somebody's practicing a recorder near me today

So if you hear any recording any recorder sounds being played, I'm sorry

I live in between schoolchildren so that should be fun.

All right well maybe they can play some God of War music and it'll just

seamlessly blend into the background. The recorder, a classic Greek instrument. Yes

Kratos' favorite instrument actually, famously. And we're not alone this week

joining us for this special episode on God of War 2 is Grant Hough. Grant, welcome

to show. What's up fellas? Kind of a fun fact I only got through two songs on the

recorder in elementary school. Was one of them hot cross buns? I would

assume. Yes it was. That was the first one and then I got like the second belt and then I never

practiced again and I couldn't pass the third test. I think I just took the

recorder and like used it as a wand or a weapon like I don't even think I played

the recorder properly. I think I just like swundered at people like as a weapon.

It's very strange that teaching the recorder to elementary school kids is like so common

across the country. That seems like a very strange thing to be like part of the standard

grade school curriculum. Like, "Oh, let's teach these kids about music. Oh, what instrument? Oh,

I'll use this recorder." I guess it's easy to use, but anyway.

It's got like five buttons. That's all you need.

And it's plastic. It's very cheap.

You can probably make them for 85 cents a pop or something.

Yeah. And you know what? Maybe they grow up and they become like insane in the rain.

And maybe they have covers of songs from God of War 2, which is the topic of today's episode.

Season 2 is all about God of War, and we just- last episode was all about Ascension, and so now we are back over on the front end of the release order of this series with God of War II originally came out for the PS2, March 13th, 2007.

It'd later be released, remastered, for the PlayStation 3 and the Vita, paired actually with God of War I, so that was November 17th, 2009 for the PS3, and then May 6th, 2014 for the Vita.

It was developed, of course, by Santa Monica Studio, and it was directed by one Cory Barlock, would, I learned a lot about Corey this week. We'll talk about that more later, but this was Corey's directorial debut. It was produced by Steve Katerson. Combat, Eric Williams, who we've mentioned in the past is now directing God of War, Ragnarok. There's Derek Daniels, who I just found out was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, which is both where Logan and myself are from.

And there's Jason McDonald, who's still there.

Derek is still there.

Eric obviously is still there.

And then there's Adam Poole.

I don't know, I didn't look up

if Adam was still there or not.

Maybe he is.

And then the music, all God of War alum.

I was talking to Grant before the show,

I'm not gonna screw this one up.

Gerard Mariano.

(laughing)

- There you go.

- I was very nervous about this one.

Ron Fish, Mike Reagan, and Chris Velasco.

So not as long, like an extensive cast of composers,

but these are all God of War alum.

And then it got a Metacritic score of 93 out of 100,

which I don't know if that's the second highest.

It's definitely one of the highest God of War scores.

- I think it's the second highest only behind the reboot.

The reboot sits at, I mean,

Well, I don't know if we need to break this all down because we can do it episode by episode.

But it's definitely one of the highest God of War.

And if that is the case, both Cory Barlog games sit at the top.

I guess I should jump in.

The original has a 94, so we're already wrong on that front.

Two episodes ago we had one that was higher.

I have eyes so hard to keep it off track.

I know.

I wanted to kind of see what all of our experiences

with this one were in particular,

and I wanna kick it off to you, Grant, first.

Did you play God of War II before the show?

- I did.

Played it on PS2 a long time ago,

and I remember little tidbits of it,

but honestly forgot most of the game.

I mean, I was a kid, probably shouldn't have been playing it

first place because you see plenty of boobs in this game apparently that I forgot about but um

yeah I played it back as as a kid thought it was awesome back then I mean what like I had to be

like 11 year old every 11 year old play this game probably thought it was awesome you know never

thought about it too much but uh revisiting now yeah I'll talk about it more later I guess

We will, we will. Logan, what about you?

Um, same thing that I talked about with the first one, how I hadn't played the first or second one until the remastered PS3 collection came out.

I'm pretty sure I played both one and two, like, back to back pretty quickly.

Um, again, we could look this up with my trophies again if we wanted to, really, we don't need to.

But I'm pretty sure, like, when I got that collection I played them both back to back pretty quickly.

So I had played this before but it again has been probably 7, 8, 9, 10 years at this point.

So yeah, it was interesting going back to this one especially since, like we said, this

is like Cory Barlogs become practically a household name if you pay any sort of close

attention to the video game industry over the past 5 years, or I guess more specifically

the past 3.

So it was interesting going back and seeing the one that he was synonymous with before

the reboot came out a couple of years ago.

One quick thing I wanted to bring up, kind of backpedaling just a little bit because

we mentioned the release date and how this game came out in March 2007 and then in 2009 they came out with that PS3 remaster.

How quickly do you think they greenlit a PS3 version of this game?

And I'm sure that's something we could look into and maybe find out.

But to my knowledge, also, I mean, the bigger thing here, and you can tell me if I'm...

You can both tell me if I'm wrong.

I really remember that God of War 1 and 2 HD remaster being like one of the first real remasters that ever came out, to my knowledge.

Like I don't remember that being a thing before that released.

And obviously this came out in 2007 so the PS3 was already out and this game came out five to six months after it launched.

So that was kind of a weird thing that it was on old hardware even though the PS3 was already available.

But then it obviously came to the system two years later.

Anyway, yeah.

I guess my question is I just wonder how quickly Sony was like crap this game is one of the best games of the year and it's on our old hardware.

We need to get this on our new hardware stat.

Let's do that.

I think they greenlit it pretty quick because clearly by the end of this game, this was set up to lead into God of War 3.

This was famously one of the PS2 swan songs.

They've openly talked about how they wanted to put it on PS3 at first, but Shuhei Yoshida made the call to make sure it was a PS2 game.

They didn't want to ignore their massive install base.

And so I think greenlighting a sequel, or I'm sorry, the remaster to help lead into the sequel was a very quick and obvious thing for them.

And it was done by Bluepoint, which to slightly date the podcast, was recently acquired by Sony as now a first party studio.

So even though it was second party then, now it's kind of come full circle now with them being a first party team now.

Am I right that that was one of the first HD remasters of the time?

Because HD gaming wasn't a thing until 360 and PS3.

Yeah.

I can't think of any other ones other than the Metal Gear Solid HD collection, but I think that was even after God of War remasters.

It was definitely one of the first proper HD.

There was Resident Evil on the GameCube, which was a remake of the first one from PlayStation.

But that wasn't HD.

But yeah, yeah.

It wasn't really a re- it was kind of a full blown remake in some ways that Resident Evil 1 could-

Yes.

-compare to the first one.

Yeah, 'cause this one was just kinda up-res, looked prettier, you know, it wasn't a remake at all.

Running at 60, I mean it was there.

This really started the trend of the remasters.

Yeah, they did that a lot on the PS3.

Before I talk about my own little story with God of War 2, I decided to pull up your trophies again Logan.

I thought you did do it.

You played God of War on the PS3 for the first time in June of 2014 and it looks like you played God of War 2 in April of 2015.

So you waited almost a year to play the sequel.

That's interesting.

At least according to when these trophies were synced.

When did God of War 3 would have been out already for sure?

Yes, God of War 3 was definitely out by then.

That's interesting. I don't remember. See, I thought for sure I played these in high

school. Not college. That's kind of... You may have, just on the PS2. No, I never did.

I know that for certain. Well, I definitely played it on PS2. Actually, God of War 2 was like one of the first rated M games I bought when I turned 17. I actually I

turned 17 went into GameStop and bought God of War 2 Chains of Olympus and Ghost of Sparta like that was my 17th birthday was just a God of and I also bought

Animal Crossing city folk the same day so you know I really had a diverse range

there for say that's a weird collection of games to buy mm-hmm it was it was

quite the shopping trip. And then I actually came back the next day because the disc was scratched for God of War 2 and it wasn't working. So they replaced it and they included, they

had a copy of the special features DVD that was included with the game, they threw that

in for me. So that was when I played God of War 2 for the first time and then I replayed

it back in 2018 right before the reboot, you know, the sequel reboot, reimagining, however

you want to call it, came out. I played through the first core three games then. So, but yeah,

I've played it on PS2 and PS3 now for the first time and I know Logan, you continued

to play on PS now through the power of the cloud.

Yes.

However that works.

It still continues to, I mean, I'll continue to update every time I, it continues to work

very well for me. Like I continue to be very impressed in a general sense. Like it's better

than I thought it would be, to be totally honest.

That's good. I'm surprised, because every time I've tried it, it's been bad.

And the only time I've tried it was in the beta at the beginning, so I'm not a very good... I mean, don't get me wrong, it has moments where it slows down, but it's never super terrible. It's just like it gets really framey for a little bit. And considering most games now, I can't even play Breath of the Wild on my Switch without it dipping to 15 frames every now and then. So like that's just something I'm used to in general in a general sense seeing frame dips. So like it's not that huge of a deal.

How did you play it this time around Grant? I got the remastered collection on PS3. If I knew before I purchased it, it was on Vita, I would have bought it on Vita because I haven't played a Vita game in years and that sounds fun to me.

- Our other friend ironically also named Grant, he recently played God of War one on the Vita and it sounded like it was a bit of a rough ride.

So maybe you should--

- Maybe it was good I avoided that.

- He did not enjoy that at all.

- So maybe you dodged a bullet there.

- Yeah maybe.

So before we dive into kind of the general structure and just our usual talking points in the game, I wanted to hit on Cory Barlog first because he is synonymous with not just the new God of War and the direction it's going, but you know, God of War 2 as well. And it was his directorial debut, which, you know, coming from lead animator to director was kind of an interesting jump.

That actually also happens with Stig from God of War II to God of War III, which is interesting in and of itself.

But I was looking around online this week kind of getting ready for the show

and just learning and reading about Kory and stuff.

And he was way more involved with God of War than normal.

Actually quite surprisingly so.

While he left shortly,

a few months into God of War 3's development to go off and work on a Mad Max game and different

things like that and consulting.

I mean, he helped write the story for Chains of Olympus and he wrote the story for Ghost of Sparta and he outlined the story of God of War 3.

I mean, he's essentially actually been the narrative guide for Kratos, not just in 2 and 2018.

So I thought that was interesting, but I was curious what you two thought of, I guess, the direction of this game coming from David Jaffe and the series creator to handing off to a new person.

I mean, really, God of War has a different director every time in the rare exception of God of War 2 in 2018.

So what did you think of Corey's debut here and I guess his Kratos's sequel outing?

So I was very vocal on our God of War episode that I didn't like that game really that much going back to it.

And the one thing I really didn't like more than anything was the story.

I thought the story was really flat and I thought that the characters were not great as well.

That's totally...

My feelings are totally different with God of War 2.

I think the brunt of who Kratos is is like a character is more fully explored in this game compared to the first one.

The first one he's just Yelly revenge man and he's basically still that in this game.

But they get into it a little bit deeper with him this time and they start to more fully explain a lot of things that are going on in this world to the point that you care a little bit more because last time, in the first game, that was the thing that I never really clicked with with that game when we went back to it, is that it was very much a story with Kratos at the center, but he was kind of, he kind of influenced everything around him.

And this game, I feel like, shows that there is a lot more larger things going on in this world outside of just him.

So the game is very much more about things that are happening in the Greek world and how he slots into that rather than the reverse with the first game which felt more like "here's Kratos and he's playing in this sandbox that is the Greek world if that makes any sense."

And I like that a lot more.

I like that he feels less like the person and he just feels like a player within this world and he's kind of uprooting these structures and the hierarchy of power and stuff like the hierarchy of power that's a that's a rock phrase um oh my goodness from his black atom trailers anyway um yeah i don't know i think this i think the story is really good in this game i think this game does a better job of like fleshing out this world fleshing out kratos in some more

interesting ways probably i mean again we'll see as we move forward with the series which is why

we're playing through all of these but i really think that he gets more time to shine in this game

Probably compared to any other game other than the 2018 reboot

So yeah, and I didn't hate him in this game necessarily because he doesn't come off as

Well, he definitely comes off as a huge d-bag a lot of times still. I mean the opening sequence of the game

He's just like I'm gonna jump out of the sky and go destroy this town cuz I'm off

So he's not a great dude, but better than the last time around I thought

Grant what about you? I kind of agree. I mean, I think

The first game from what I can remember. I don't remember Kratos having any redeeming qualities at all

Whereas this one they flesh out his story a little bit bigger. He had a good point. He kind of gets put into like the Greek mythology and he kind of has his place in time and that and

With all that all that stuff is pretty cool and fleshed out and that's neat but I I still kind of feel like

Everyone in this game doesn't have many redeeming qualities. I'm not I didn't leave the game thinking like oh man like that was

Thought not thought-provoking these is a game from

2007 games back then weren't very thought-provoking but it was just one of those experiences where I was like

I'm gonna kind of forget about a lot of these characters whereas in the 2018 reboot

I feel like that narrative hit me a lot more strongly and it's something I remember as one of the best stories told in a video game whereas

This one I just remember like

Kratos and the gods are all selfish for a lot of the needs that they think they need to have justified, you know

But maybe it's I'm just reading a little too deep to a game released on ps2, you know

Yeah, I get the world just felt richer, you know, it just the first game really was Ares.

Like we, yes, Ares did me wrong. I have to, and so everything just fits under that umbrella of

Ares and this just felt like the whole Greek pantheon opened up and it, it felt like a world

instead of just go kill Ares. It left a single-minded focus and while Kratos

has a single drive pushing him forward just everything happening around him and

what he goes through just was more dynamic and richer for him to actually

move and push his own narrative through. I think the thing that makes this story

a lot more satisfying to me is Zeus as the bad guy because Zeus grooves Kratos

Kratos over and you can kind of see that Kratos gets screwed over and you can not necessarily

like empathize with him but you can you have a stronger desire to go fight Zeus because

of what he does you in the opening hours of the game.

Ares is a bad guy in the first game never worked for me because yeah he does betray

Kratos and screw him over and make it lead in killing his family and stuff but it's totally story where Kratos makes a deal with the devil and then later on he doesn't like the deal that he made.

And it's like, well, he made a deal with a blood hungry, the god of war.

Like of course this wasn't going to turn out in your favor.

So I never really liked the conflict of the first game because I don't feel like Ares is a super bad, I feel like Kratos' plight in that game is self-inflicted.

This game, it's somewhat self-inflicted because he's still a huge d-bag, like I said, and he's running around and messing up the Greek world. But at the same time, Zeus is doing what he's doing to him because he's trying to keep his power. He's trying to put Kratos' power in check and he's trying to make sure that he's the one staying on top.

And so he's more compelling as a villain because of that, I think.

- Yeah, it's not just Zeus either.

This game actually has something called boss fights, which I think we'll talk about mechanically

I think a bit more with gameplay,

but narratively focused,

Kratos is going to the edge of the world,

is kind of like this narrative pitch

to find the sisters of fate,

and it does feel like you go back to the past

feel like you go a great distance and you're trudging forward and pushing through obstacle after obstacle, not only, you know, Theseus or Perseus or even Icarus, like other just kind of Greek icons, even tie in this God of War lore with like bringing the barbarian back kind of almost halfway through, which is this reminder of the deal you made with areas and they build and tie and just kind of weave God of War and Greek lore together to make this world feel even better.

I like that push of always going forward.

It wasn't like the first game where you're going back and forth between environments, like you're in Athens and then you go to the desert and then you leave the desert and come back.

This was always forward.

There was never backtracking, and it kept pushing Kratos further and further down this path of taking down the god of Olympus.

I like that.

I like that push.

I will say some of the characters they throw in show up kind of out of nowhere.

That's the one thing about this game where it's just like, "Wait, why the heck are you here?"

Like who?

Icarus just crawls out from under a bridge and he's like, "Ghost of Sparta!"

It's like what are you hanging out on this bridge for bro? Like I know I know he's trying to go to the see the fates

or whatever

But a lot of people just show up places. It's like, okay, I guess this person's here

Even the his soldier he finds at the end. How does he get all the way there?

like I know they kind of try to explain it, but

Well, he was ahead of Kratos in the bog

But how does he Kratos had to get wings of Icarus to like fly across?

How does he get there like what?

Like there's a lot of things like that where people just show up in your like, okay. Well, I guess this is happening

Which is fine. It's a video game. Like I'm not I don't need it to make total continuity sense like that all the time

But yeah, I thought that was funny

yeah, the you know kind of speaking of the

net soldier I

I was...

One of the things I love when a video game does is when they do tie that gameplay and narrative together and they put the story in your hands on the controller and

There are a couple points in this game

where they specifically do that not only just the push to get to the edge of the world and you're going through

the island iron that's kind of the whole game, but you know, there's that fight with the soldier and it's this great

silhouette 2D slash fight and then you burst out and Kratos realizes that it's

one of his Spartans and you know why as Sparta to undefended and all this stuff

and that that leads to a good reveal but then also in the beginning of the game

where the game opens just killer it's this killer sweet set piece opening of

fighting this giant Colossus statue thing but then the sword of Olympus

comes down and you mechanically, I mean you're holding the circle button or

whatever, but you're pouring all of your godly power into the sword and it that

felt really smart to me as a way to make a player give up all of the power that

they got from the previous game instead of Samus getting zapped by electricity

and she loses all her powers or you know just a character starting over like my

stuff's over there, or I left it at home,

so I gotta start over.

It just, it feels, it felt cool to sacrifice that

and then have Zeus come down and betray you

and stab you in the gut and all that kind of stuff.

- I will say, I thought that

a lot of the concepts they had in this game

were super cool to me.

I mean, I was gonna bring up that too,

about him literally getting his powers drained

into the sword from Zeus, you know, that was something cool to me. But, um, I don't know, I had for some reason with me with a lot of these older games at times, I feel like the execution's just not there. Maybe they didn't age as well, just from a narrative standpoint, you know? Um, I don't know. I don't know why this, maybe it's just, I told myself for so long that,

like man Kratos is kind of a boring character going back to this game it's hard to look past some of the stuff but I will say that like the whole concept of the original God of War series was so cool to me but going back to it now I don't know I don't know why I just feel like the execution of it wasn't there maybe I'm just comparing it to the 2018 reboot too much because that's one game I feel like is it's close enough to a perfect game that I can say it's a perfect game you know but uh- Mm-hmm. Yeah I don't know why I feel that way. I think it's just I mean I think Logan and I will get into this when we do do the the 2018 God of War focused episode but I think it it's a testament a to just how far they pushed that particular game like reimagining it for PS4 and keeping everything else like they easily could have just said scratch all of this it's done here's a new God of War but they kept it all and it's relevant and I think that this game I think is one of those games in particular out of you know the whole series leading into the reboot like this stuff I don't know I really like being reminding myself that this stuff happens to the Kratos we play as in the Norse realm like this you know when he stabs that soldier for example and like you see the shock and sadness on his face for as much as Kratos on a PS2 was giving at the time. And I like my brain goes to he named Atreus after a fellow Spartan, not that particular one, but they use this stuff to make Kratos better in the future. And I like, I don't know, I just like being reminded of that and thinking it puts a lot of the stuff, his fears and frustrations and rules into context. And I think this game

in particular is one of those stronger examples. I mean by the end of the game he finds out, for sure, that Zeus is his father. And it's like, well, no wonder he's really not into this whole god thing. I do have to say that reveal this time around felt way more weak than I remember it. It just kind of comes out of left field. It's just Athena on her deathbed. Yeah, they don't really hint at it or... there's no foreshadowing to it whatsoever other than Zeus really saying "my son!" He says that a couple times. But like, you figured he's just saying that just because he's like an old man. So they don't really foreshadow it and then she gets

stabbed, she's like "Oh, Kratos! Zeus is your dad!" It's like, well, okay, but that's kind of a random thing. I feel like they could have done more with that if they would have maybe... Actually, I don't know that because I can't remember how God of War 3 plays out exactly, and we will get to that point where I do remember how it plays out exactly once we play it. But yeah, as far as this game goes, I feel like if they would have maybe done a little bit more with it earlier, then that would have been cool. Speaking of what you said though before about how

certain things affect Kratos and that stuff is like taken with him moving forward. One of my favorite things about this game and maybe it's just a very it's it's I don't want to say it's a subtle thing but it's a defining feature of his character is him getting stabbed in the gut. I love that he always has that giant scar and it never goes away even in the new ones like I always see that I'm like oh God of War 2 Zeus stab this man right there I love that that's so prominent and it's such a part of his character moving forward that moment and just the entire arc of this game like what he has to do in the wake of that to get back to to get back to that moment and turn the tables on Zeus like this whole game centers around that moment and then him getting back to that moment via time travel which is a wacky thing. The very strange thing.

Forgot about the time travel. Yeah, they might do it... when we were talking about Ragnarok, I mean, I don't... we don't need to get too much... too deep into the

Ragnarok stuff, but basically there are theories that Ragnarok is gonna involve time travel, and I know some people have been like, "That's really weird." It's like, "Well, it's also kind of normal because this has happened before!"

Yeah, it happens. Yeah.

It's quite common for Kratos, actually.

So if they do time travel in Ragnarok, it's gonna all kind of come full circle in a funny sort of way, although it'll be very...

I don't know how they'll do it.

I don't know if he's just gonna pull a thread out of his back pocket and be like, "Don't worry, son. I got this thread here. We can go into..."

"Hold on to this one."

The end of this game though is really super well paced. I love it. I think it has this great narrative build up of you finally meet the sisters and fight them and then you fight the bigger sister and then it's now you have the threat and you time travel back and you fight Zeus which is

his own kind of fight here and then instead of the game ending there which it totally could have, totally could have just stopped like with Zeus flying away and Athena dying and like ah we'll get revenge. Instead they're like nope go back to the temple, time travel all the way back to the titan war and bring them all forward however that works. I was I was gonna say, I don't really know how he does that.

He just says, "Come Gaia with me!"

And then, "Brrr!"

It's like, "What?!"

- Super powers.

- So mechanically, time travel logic or whatever,

let's just scratch that, but he brings them back

and then that famous climbing up Mount Olympus,

I bring the destruction of Olympus, like Zeus, oh my gosh.

And then it just says the end, the beginning of the end.

And it's--

- The end begins.

The end begins, thank you.

How cool of an ending.

I feel like that is a dope ending

that just definitely leaves the player wanting more.

But Grant, what did you think of the end of this?

How does it make you feel?

- I totally forgot that it, I mean, going back,

I think it's even cooler knowing the beginning

of God of War 3 that it's, like, if you go back to,

I just watched a walkthrough of God of War 3.

It literally starts with him saying that,

Like I bring the destruction to whatever like it literally starts from that second. I just thought that was so cool that they did that

Before before we move on there. I just had to say this two things

I thought it was hilarious that Athena was just like Kratos. He's your dad

Don't kill him all the gods killed her dad and he's like no and then he's just like I'm gonna kill him anyway

Yeah, and then when he he he moves back in time or he goes for back in time and then like zoo sees him and

He's just like oh, I guess that's what happened. Like he just knows immediately. I just thought that was funny

The thing is like how the other part about the time travel mechanic that I would like to bring up is that

He can only use his own thread right to go throughout his own life

Yes, and then he shows up like back with a long long long time ago and he's like, I'm here now

What's up, and then guy is like, oh we've been waiting for you, huh? Like how did

She should have turned around and been like what the heck is this guy doing here smack

Yeah, I don't know a lot of strange things that don't really make a whole lot of sense but sure just shrug your shoulders and

move on

But it's very fun

Yeah, Athena getting stabs also pretty dumb if I'm being honest or her getting stabbed the way that she does

I guess I should say

Like trying to push the sword out of the way. Yeah, she just kind of like I

Don't know. It doesn't even look like he's that he's about to stab Zeus exactly and she just kind of jumps in and take I

don't know it just looks funny in the cutscene, but

Anywho?

Speaking of getting stabbed, let's talk about the gameplay.

The real, again, core of these games is how the combat feels.

It's, you know, you're following this up, it's a sequel to a big new IP, it's the end of the PS2.

The PS3 is already out at this point, like announced and out.

actually not too dissimilar to other stuff,

other big games that happened between the PS3 and the PS4.

God of War Ascension was a PS3 swan song,

probably could have been on PS4.

What did you think of the follow up here?

Like is this a true,

does it elevate the God of War gameplay to you Logan,

or does it just more of the same

and the same is good enough?

I think it's a lot better. I think it's a lot better even than Ascension, which we played previously. Coming off from Ascension to this, it felt vastly better to play this game.

Mainly because I like a lot of the magic powers they give you way more. I think the chains feel

very fluid and responsive in this game. The combos that you do within, throughout the three games we've played, are never very different. But there's a certain heft to them in this one that I felt more so than, especially last time around with Ascension. It's very similar Similar to God of War, obviously.

But yeah, I think this is the most refined and polished.

Like last time around, on our last two episodes I remember I was having some little niggles here and there and talking about some things that bothered me about the combat with each.

I really didn't have any sort of strange problems in this one, other than really, really nitty-gritty stuff that's even hard for me to like explain like uh i don't know uh just like timing and how things

work sometimes didn't make much sense like i would die in strange instances where like my character

was clearly not dead um like uh like oh medusa froze me and then somebody blew me up but like i

also shook out of it at the exact same second that somebody attacked me oh yeah and my character

model didn't blow up but it still gave me a you're dead screen it's like that's kind of weird um

But that's like some very very nitty-gritty stuff that I don't even know how to

Yeah, like that's not super common in a general sense. Yeah, I think it feels way better

I like like I said, I like them new match the different magic attacks quite a bit as well

the bow feels way better than the lightning did the

the change to the

Lightning attack. I know last time it was like the was it the Poseidon attack in the first game and I know you know

and they replaced that sort of with the

Atlas smash the ground thing. So

It's all pretty basic, but I think it feels better in larger combat situations

Grant how did this game feel so many years later, you know from 11 year old grant playing a game

He probably shouldn't have been playing to

now

I forgot how fun like these ps2 era like hack and slash games are I mean I had some of the same instances

where I think it was just like timing of when you need to block something I know there's just some

attacks when I think when like you do a heavy attack you're not able to roll out of it and

there's just some weird timing instances where I'm like I pressed evade but he didn't evade you know

but for the most part like I just had a blast every time I had a combat encounter except for like the

the Medusa heads, I hated those things

'cause they're an instant kill, which sucked.

But for the most part, even, I mean like,

I feel like quick time events get a bad rap,

but I, even with the quick time events,

I had a blast with all of them.

All the different moves you get were fun to use.

I know a lot of times in these games,

you'll find one move that you're like, oh, this is it.

This is all I'm gonna use the rest of the game.

I found myself really using everything I had.

Other than the two other weapons,

like the, I forgot what it was called,

like the giant hammer and then the spear,

the Chaos Blades were just too fun to use.

That's all I wanted to use the entire game.

So for the most part, combat holds up in a PS2 game.

- Yeah, it's a continuing testament

to just how Roxas, the idea and design

of the Blades of Chaos are.

They are some of the best weapons in video games.

And the fact that 2017 was 14 years ago,

I mean, we're almost at next year, I guess.

Actually, just in a few months will be

the 15 year anniversary of this game.

And it's awesome just how that stuff holds up.

I really enjoyed the focus on

trying to expand that arsenal though,

with the spear and the hammer.

And I thought it was interesting that the first bit of magic

was essentially an alternate weapon, the bow, you know,

instead of being actual magic like you get later.

So I liked that they tried to expand upon it

beyond just giving you a sword

in like the back quarter of the first game,

but also didn't try to force you

to use those alternate weapons like they do in Ascension,

where Ascension puts those five different classes

weapons on you and typically forces you to use them in certain scenarios. So I

like that and the the new L1 circle attack where you like Kratos goes

sideways and like stabs the blades yeah back and forth that that was a good move

that's just really good. How often did you guys switch from from the blades to

other weapons? Pretty rarely. I'd say it was like 95% me sticking to

I did switch to the hammer in the push toward the loom but that's because the guide I was using for the platinum

Recommended it to get to the bottom in ten minutes to like really hit hard, but for the most part. Oh, yeah

Yeah, I was using just the blades just cuz they

They're so good

Mm-hmm. It's awesome. I think I switched to the hammer a cut. Is it a hammer?

There's the barbarian hammer, which is that's what it pretty cool that you take the guy

Arguably kick-started this whole thing. You take his weapon from him

and then there's the purple spear that you get from the

It's not a fawn. I mean, I guess it technically is but the guy that was riding the

Bird creature at the beginning and he crashes. Oh, yeah, and you take his spear from him.
Yeah, I know there's

during the game I'd use like the Medusa head and turn them to stone and then the

hammer would basically break them but that's really the only time I'd use it.

They just I appreciated the effort here. This felt like a good balance of

offering options but knowing you know knowing what they've got and not

ignoring it like they eventually would end up doing in Ascension. What about the

puzzles. So obviously it's not just combat there are also some puzzle-y

elements. It's a character action game from the mid-2000s that you just don't

have it without puzzles. I kind of had two notes in particular but the first

one was just how puzzles impact the physical world instead of just pushing

boxes around or shifting weights or whatever there was some sort of

consequence to the real world whether that was pushing shields to block the

eyes to lower the force field which when were their force fields in Greek myth or

you know using the trees or slowing down the time I mean even when you get the

amulet for the first time you have to like destroy the statue of the Sisters

of fate and that breaks the glass and then she taunts you from so there's just I thought that

was interesting how puzzles were more tied into the world itself instead of just being

almost feeling out of place being a puzzle but what did you think about um in this game grant

um so for the most part I enjoyed most of puzzles I forgot how many there were in the game
there was

Most of them I was like, I thought that they were pretty clever, I guess. I know the one where you're in the chamber where the water is rotating around the chamber after you break through a couple walls.

And it took me a little while to realize you have to put the body on the water and then it rotates all the way around and then you put it on the other weight.

took me a little bit to understand that and for the most part most of the puzzles just kind of clicked after a while there were a couple that kind of missed me a little bit that uh i'm not ashamed to say i looked up a walkthrough i know the one i'm thinking of is when you had to uh you had to grab one of the statues that holds the puzzle or uh the shield and you had to put it on a

raised platform and apparently kick it off. It's the only time you do that in the game that I had no idea you're able to do that. So I was like, oh, I wish they told me that.

So that was the only one I really was like, all right, I'm, I'm just looking this up.

But for the most part, all the puzzles were pretty good.

I the bell puzzle at the end, I don't know what it was. I clearly didn't have too much trouble the last two times I played this game but I was like how does this puzzle work my brain could not understand comprehend I thought I had to ring the bell slow time and then move it to ring the other bell no I just I did I have to slow down time and then walk over and just hit it myself I feel like couldn't get out of my head I had to couldn't use the battering ram it was that felt way too unclear to me. What about you Logan? There were a couple that were pretty obtuse to me. Some of the ones that are coming to mind right now. The one force field where you have one with the shield and you have to reflect the other one. I was like I got the first shield and then I just assumed there was another one that you needed to find and I was like where is the second one? Nope you just got a block. Golden fleece it. Which I guess makes sense but also I Just totally didn't think about it and then in that same area For some reason it took me forever to realize that the thing where you

We have the two pillars and you put you have to put one of the pillars on like an elevator thing and then roll the elevator

Up and then quickly go push the other pillar underneath the elevator thing so that it stops it

That like tripped me up for like 20 minutes last night

Cannot I could not I was like what am I what am I missing here?

Well, like what am I there's something larger in this room that I'm not seeing that one tripped me up for a while

Yeah, there was a couple

Strange ones in this game more so than I remember from God of War Warner ascension that we've done so far but uh

In general, yeah, I mean they were mostly pretty straightforward

but again, like some of the ones you guys mentioned I had no issues with whatsoever, so

Yeah. It's interesting. What about kind of related to puzzles here that this slow down

time mechanic. I thought it was interesting. This is kind of what I meant Logan in the

Ascension episode where I said that Ascension felt like the cutting room floor of God of War

2 and God of War 3 and stuff because that game also features a time mechanic except

its reversing time, but quite often the time slowdown mechanic here in God of War 2 was

the solution to a puzzle or a way to find a secret.

What did you guys think about that?

Yeah, I felt like most of the time I was like, "Alright, there's a puzzle I need to do that

involves time at some point.

I know that towards the end of the game where you're in the room with the spikes that shoot

up and you need to slow down time or you need to rotate the thing slow down time then run

over to the gate that I guess opened up. I had no idea that gate was there for some reason

I spent like 10 minutes just rotating this thing and I'm like what am I doing where am

I supposed to go and then I look in the corner of my eye that I'm like oh there's a gate

here I guess I need to go over there but for the most part I thought it was cool how they

included or how they was uh put into puzzles but uh i didn't think it was a game changer or anything

logan is this a better time puzzle mechanic than ascension um yeah i guess so um
i don't know i don't care for either of them if i'm being totally honest i didn't think it was too
bad here for the most part. The puzzle that Grant specifically mentioned about the spikes
at the end, that kind of tripped me up for a second as well. But yeah, I don't know,
it was fine. It wasn't my favorite part of the game by any means. I know it was one of
the big mechanics they looked to use when it does come to the puzzles, but I didn't
I think it was too bad.

It was probably better than Ascension, honestly.

- Yeah, it definitely was.

- I kinda wish it was in combat more.

- Yeah, that would've been fun.

- You can play some of the trials,
they'll make you use it there.

- They do.

- If you haven't done that yet.

- The, my one kinda real complaint about it,

I agree with what you both have said
about solving puzzles with it and stuff,
it usually was the solution,
which then kinda makes it a little easier.

My one qualm with it was it was mapped to L1 and R1, but L1's also block.

Or was it R1?

I think it was L1.

And so sometimes creators would just block.

Like it had missed the double press and you wouldn't do...

Sometimes you have to freeze time rather quickly so that you can...

Before say a character jumps off a ledge or some timer is counting down, you want as much

time as possible.

And so I was a little frustrated that it wasn't an alternate.

they didn't figure out some other button combination for slowing down time, especially for a command

that you do use frequently with the blocking.

So I was a little bummed about that in particular.

I learned that if you hold down block, you can still press R1, you don't have to double tap at the same time.

So I started just because I ran into the same issue because I would just press both and then it wouldn't register.

If you like held down L1 before and then you went R1, it usually worked.

- Okay.

I will remember that for my fourth playthrough eventually someday,

'cause I definitely will come back to this at some point.

The last kind of main bit of gameplay, I suppose,

I think is the best part.

This game actually has boss fights, which we mentioned earlier.

The first game has two, well, technically three, if you count the Hydra early on.

But this game has so many boss fights and they're with people that, if you're familiar with just basic Greek mythology, you know Theseus or Perseus, Icarus especially, not that he's really a boss fight, you just kind of punch him as you fall.

But obviously there's Zeus
and then there's the Sisters of Fate,
all three of them, a Kraken for whatever reason
at the edge of the world. - Yeah, where the heck
does that come from?

It just shows up?

- Yeah, I don't know.

But it's a boss fight and it's there, it's cool.

Logan, I mean this is definitely the most boss fights
we've seen so far in God of War.

How do you feel about the increase here?

- It's very good.

It's probably one of my favorite aspects of the game,
honestly, 'cause most of the fights are
pretty different from one another as well.

I think that's what,

I think that's why it's successful with this many boss fights
because each of them feels like they're doing at least a little bit something different.

And they're not all the best. I forgot that the opening fight with the Colossus or the statue,
I forgot that I hate how that ends, where you have to go inside of the thing for a good five to
ten

minutes. That's not my favorite. In general, since though, yeah, I think the boss fights are
one of the standout aspects of the game. And I think it really helps with the pacing,
honestly because one felt like pretty bogged down.

There was nothing in between certain sections of God of War 1 that I really was...

I don't know, it just felt too long.

This game I feel like is segmented by the boss fights, if that makes much sense, which

leads to better pacing.

I think he got over one that their bosses or breakups were just standard enemies, but when you they'd introduce them for the first time, like when they show Cerberus or the satyrs or the sirens like those are their boss fights. Yeah, but it's just standard enemies that you later encounter at a pretty regular pace. This.

This was just cool. They really all were different in some way.

Memorable. There was, you know, Theseus with his magic and so many Minotaurs.

There was Perseus being invisible. Icarus, the falling and punching,

which is just, you know, its own thing. Obviously Zeus, Kraken.

The sisters going back in time to the Ares fight, which just kind of,

I've always liked that as just a cool, neat moment.

and then obviously the big sister with it being a puzzle and solving how to take her down.
Grant,

what did you think about the bosses in this game? Do they hold up this many years later?

>> Grant Yeah, for the most part, all the bosses were spectacular in my opinion. I mean, the

sisters might be one of my favorite boss fights I've had. I mean, it just kind of like, you kind

of use your entire arsenal you've been building up to and I don't know why I just I like swinging

around so I thought it was an interesting boss fight and I did feel like the end of the game

I don't know if y'all kind of ran in this too but I just felt like it was like this long extended

boss fight that took like an hour you just move on from like boss fight to boss fight to boss fight

I just thought it was awesome. I mean, going into it, I didn't remember the game being

about 11 hours it took me. But yeah, I mean, I played this game over a span of a couple

weeks and there's some boss fights I remember. I'm like, oh yeah, I forgot that happened.

That was an awesome boss fight. Yeah, for the most part, even the Kraken one, that came

out of nowhere and I had a blast with that. It took me a little bit to realize I had to

pick up the dead body and put it on the weight but it was still cool as heck.

Yeah I just that that really that final run of Kraken, Sister, Sister, both sisters at the same

time, big sister and then obviously Zeus. I just that's just-

And even like in between you have to run through that little gauntlet of like basically every

enemy you've played against the entire game. That was awesome.

Yeah, they just really nailed that final stretch of bosses. I loved it. It's so cool. It makes me really excited to play God of War 3 because what is God of War 3 if not just a boss gauntlet of the biggest and baddest Greek gods? I mean it opens with the Poseidon fight. I mean it's just, they really stepped up their boss pacing here and I think that goes to great effect later on and not just in God of War 3 but also 2018 and whatnot.

How do you guys feel about how it looks?

Again it's dawned on me in this recording since Grant kind of pointed it out.

I mean this game is almost 15 years old.

It kind of makes me feel old but how do you guys think this looks, holds up so many years later. I mean we all played the ps3 version essentially. Is it better than the first one?

Does this hold up or do we need to remake God of War 2 for it to be considered decent to look at?

I wish there wasn't a swamp level.

That's what you got against the swamp.

Uh I've played all the Dark Souls games. That's what I have against swamps.

Anytime a swamp shows up. I'm like, oh no, I've been here too many times.

I think each area of the game

It just depends on the area.

Like the opening stuff when you're in the city and fighting the Colossus that all looks awesome

I think that it looks very good, but then there are

some areas where it just feels like

too many corridors or

Just bland

buildings and stuff like that and structures, but then there are very cool ones like the approach to

The fates area I think is very cool. The whole fates area is actually really

Cool-looking I think as a whole

Yeah, I don't know it. There are some hits and misses depending on

Where you're at in the game, I think

Yeah

Grant what'd you think about it? Oh

For the most part it looks

I'd say

Sharp and probably be the best term to use. I mean it is a

ps2 game there were some cutscenes where I'm like this guy's face is really blurry, but

For the most part looks pretty good

what I what the God of War games do really well is just like these giant set pieces where it's just a

giant monster or

When you're like climbing Atlas and you're right by his ginormous face some of that stuff just kind of takes you back

but there there's still gonna be some instances you run into where you're like, oh, this is blurry or I mean, it's a

15 year old game you're gonna run into some stuff that doesn't hold up as well

but for the most part God of War kind of shines when those

Super cool set pieces that you really don't find in a lot of other games

Yeah, I I do I kind of marveled by the scale that it maintains this still feels

big Alice or

Gosh, what's the first Titan in the icy cave?

I'm blanking on his name, but that scale they're fighting the fingers to free the Pegasus flying around

Even Zeus the final boss has a phase where he becomes a giant that

They've they continue to keep this great sense of scale

Going in for Kratos and stuff. I think that's good and maintains it pretty well

But it looks good. I mean, it's good on ps3 at 60 frames. It's it's the same old same old

It's the same treatment previously. I did think that CG cutscenes aged a little bit better

Yes, then the ps1 or I'm sorry the God of War one

Yeah cutscenes for sure so big step up in that tech between those few years of development there, which is I

Don't think we see that big of a jump in this stuff anymore

so much

in games, so it was interesting to see such a substantial leap and

Just a two-year gap essentially. I mean

Good on them. They've definitely aged a lot better

I'm not sure I

Feel like this has been a problem. I mean a problem movies too harsh

But I feel like this has been a thing so far for us with God of War here Logan

the music

Yep, it's got a war. It's more God of War, but it's still it's better than ascension

so

Good. Yeah, probably I liked it. It's more memorable. I'm yeah, it's more bum. I wrote it's more like bombastic and I think plays

Better to the set pieces, but also there are just better set pieces in this game than ascension. So feel like there's more

Room for it to shine. Yeah, I don't know again

And we talked in the line like the first season about

Like all the paper Mario music and how there were certain tracks that always

Stood out to us a lot and I felt like that was because music was far more of a core

Element of those games in more ways than just the background music in here. It's just a

lot of background music primarily

For the cutscene with the cutscenes and the gameplay and all that and not much else outside of that. So it's hard to really

Yeah, I don't know it's it's there it's it's and that's not to diminish the work of anybody who's who worked on it

And it's not bad, but it's not a game where I'm gonna go, you know pop on the soundtrack on Spotify

or something like that and listen to it while I work. What do you think about the music, Grant?

Yeah, it's funny. I tried to do that exact thing where I put it on where I work today and I was just it's not a I can work to music I guess but yeah I don't know if you if you told me a lot of it was just kind of like and not to sound harsh but like stock Greek mythology music I'd be like okay yeah I mean like none of this I wouldn't be able to pinpoint like oh yeah that's a banger from God of War 2 you know where a lot of other games I can pinpoint oh this is from this exact game I don't know it's like you said it's God of War music it sounds like God of War music but I wouldn't be able to listen to it and be like God of War 2 I know that yeah I just it's so strange because it is when it's on I know it and I I will hum along while I'm playing especially you know the dun dun dun dun dun dun dun dun like that just that comes to me but I just I wrote notes like when I heard a song I liked I wrote what was happening so I could remember to go look it up later when I'm editing the show but I I don't know the name of the song and I can't recall it in my head right now where when we did Paper Mario and I think The Last of Us is even easier just because the that music and the composer there but I just I couldn't hum you like I wrote down Phoenix Firewall song so that that puzzle where the fire is being blown at you and you got to push the statue apparently I like the music then I couldn't hum or sing for you right now of that sounded like then I'd have to go back and listen to it and I I don't know if that like if every soundtrack needs to have that but it's good you know that's fine I think yeah not every soundtrack needs to be something like that I think the music here fits very well with what you're doing and what this game is I don't think it needs to be anything more I don't think it needs to be a soundtrack that you're dying to throw your headphones on and listen to necessarily. And then yeah, that's totally fine. Was there a song that sounded really familiar, or not familiar, but sounded a lot like Duel of the Fates from the prequels? There was one song, I forgot what part of the

game, but I was like, "This sounds exactly like the Duel of the Fates from the prequels, I don't I don't know why.

I'll send it to y'all after the podcast,

but it was really weird.

- I can't recall it, but if you can find it, let me know.

'Cause I mean, everyone loves "Duel of the Fates."

It's one of the best parts of the prequels.

- Oh, it's a banger.

- So to wrap up here, I mean, what is,

what's the legacy of this game?

It's kind of multifaceted, I think.

It's a very interesting point in the franchise.

Logan, like what, what do we got here?

- The legacy of this game is that it's the game

that Cory Barlog directed before the other one he directed.

No, I still think front to back this one

is just upper echelon of the series based on my memories.

I think this is the best one we have played so far.

I'm gonna guess the handheld ones I'm not gonna think are better.

Nothing against those and I haven't played those but I know they're smaller in scope and nature.

But yeah, I do think this is a very solid game and I think this game justifies why we're doing this season sort of in the first place and it better helps remind me of why people like this franchise because yeah coming out of the first one I was pretty down on it I really did not care for that game going back to it and then Ascension was obviously Ascension not that great as well so this was the first one that has really sort of made clear to me yeah just why people like these games why

this series is so critically acclaimed and stuff like that. Grant how what do

think God of War 2's legacy is? I mean it does an excellent job leading up to God of War 3. I mean in

the scope of these games it's I try to segment off 2018 one but with this one it's I mean it's hard

to beat God of War 3 when it's the entire games like a boss run of killing off all of the Olympic gods that's such a cool concept it's it's hard to mess that up and it's it's such a the scope of that game is so big i mean you start the game climbing a titan um but for what this game is as much as some of the narrative stuff didn't resonate with me at all it's the game is so fun to play and i mean like when there are a couple instances where i looked up a walkthrough or or something where I needed to beat the game,

so I need to find out how to do a puzzle or whatever.

I mean, the game, there might be a day where I'm like,

I can get through this game in four and a half hours,

let's just run through it real quick, you know?

The game, I think for the most part,

the combat and puzzles shine so well that,

I mean, this game is on the upper echelon of PS2 games

and also God of War games, you know, it's definitely,

I don't know if it beats three or the reboot,

but it's up there.

- Yeah.

I always just remember this being one of my favorites

on the series before 2018 came out.

It would be between this and Ghost of Sparta,

which I'm actually really excited to replay it myself

'cause I haven't, I've only played it once

and I'm excited to see what you think of it, Logan.

But this game always just felt,
like it stood out more than the core other games,
God of War I and God of War III.

On some level, God of War I and III feel like
the same game in the sense that your goal
is to kill one particular person.

God of War III expands that to kill a set of people,
but two feels the most like vengeance, truly.

It is, you are betrayed in the opening minutes of the game
and you actually have a real drive to extract your vengeance
and three is just a continuation of that same story
and it pulls it off well.

But Logan, like you said, God of War One is really
kind of writing your own mistake.

he kinda dug his, he made his bed
and didn't wanna lie in it anymore,
so he was getting up to make a new bed.

And I just, and maybe it's 'cause I was so into
God of War at the time, like I said at the top of the show,
I bought three of these games on one day.

Like I clearly was and still am the target
sort of audience for these games,
and I think this holds up quite well for
Even in the hindsight of the re-imagining,
this game is a titan within its own series.

And for the PS2 itself, I mean the power
that they were able to pull out of that PS2

at the end of its own life, I think's astounding.

Santa Monica really knows their stuff

and can get the most out of PlayStation's own hardware.

Maybe they didn't do that so much with God of War 3,

but they certainly have did that with the PS2.

And obviously, like you said, Logan,

really this game is remembered as Cory Barlog's

first God of War game.

And I think it's pretty cool that this is,

this is how he started.

And it's kind of like it only can, you know,

you can go up or you can go down from here.

And thankfully he goes up.

So I'm excited to see where that goes here

in the future of our season.

But as for this episode,

I'm gonna call it wraps there on God of War II.

Thank you for listening to this episode of Chapter Select.

Grant, why don't you tell the people

where they can find you online?

- I'm sometimes on Twitter.

I don't tweet much, but I'm @_granchola21

if anyone wants to see me not tweet.

You can find Logan over on Twitter at mormon12 and his writing at comicbook.com.

And then you can find myself over on Twitter at maxroberts143 and my writing over at maxfrequency.net.

You can also follow the show on Twitter at ChapterSelect,

where we just basically tweet out the show notes and stuff.

And you can check out the show at chapterselect.com.

Join us next time in two weeks here for God of War, Ghost of Sparta.

That's our next game and I'm so excited to dig into it.

So thank you all for listening. I hope you all have a wonderful rest of your day. Adios.

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.