

= The Last of Us : Left Behind =

The Last of Us : Left Behind is an action @-@ adventure survival horror video game developed by Naughty Dog and published by Sony Computer Entertainment . It was released for the PlayStation 3 on February 14 , 2014 , as a downloadable expansion pack to The Last of Us ; it was later bundled with The Last of Us Remastered , an updated version of the game released for the PlayStation 4 on July 29 , 2014 , and was released as a standalone expansion pack for both consoles on May 12 , 2015 . Players control Ellie , a young girl who spends time with her friend Riley after her unexpected return , within a post @-@ apocalyptic world .

The Last of Us : Left Behind is played from a third @-@ person perspective ; players use firearms , improvised weapons and stealth to defend against hostile humans and zombie @-@ like creatures infected by a mutated strain of the Cordyceps fungus . Stealth combat utilizes a gameplay mechanic called " Listen Mode " that allows players to effectively locate enemies through a heightened sense of hearing and spatial awareness . The game also features a crafting system , allowing players to customize weapons through the use of upgrades .

Following its announcement , The Last of Us : Left Behind was highly anticipated due to the critical success of The Last of Us . It was acclaimed by many reviewers , with praise particularly directed at its story , characterization , and depiction of female and LGBT characters . It won several year @-@ end accolades from multiple gaming publications .

= = Gameplay = =

The Last of Us : Left Behind is similar to the basic gameplay of The Last of Us . As such , it is an action @-@ adventure survival horror game that uses a third @-@ person perspective . The game involves gunfights , melee combat and a cover system . Throughout the game , players control Ellie . An added feature in combat is the ability to focus the attention of the Infected towards human enemies , by throwing objects to distract them . This results in a lower number of enemies to encounter , giving players a tactical advantage . Throughout the game , players encounter locations and activities around the mall , such as a carousel , photo booth , video arcade , mask store and water guns . All of these locations and activities have some level of interactivity , allowing players to use them in different ways ; for example , the photo booth allows players to select different mannerisms in which to pose for a picture , while using the water guns prompts players to soak Riley .

= = Plot = =

In the aftermath of a fight that leaves Joel (Troy Baker) severely injured , Ellie (Ashley Johnson) searches in an abandoned mall for supplies to heal him . She discovers a medical kit inside a ruined military helicopter . While making her way back to Joel , Ellie is impeded by the Infected and members of a human group ; she fights them , and eventually meets with an unconscious Joel . Ellie treats Joel 's open wound , and takes him away from the mall to find a hideout for the coming Winter .

Months earlier (before Ellie meets Joel) , Ellie 's friend Riley (Yaani King) surprises Ellie at their boarding school , returning unannounced after many weeks . After revealing that she has become a member of the Fireflies ? a revolutionary militia group ? Riley takes Ellie to a nearby abandoned shopping mall , discovering that the electricity is functioning . As the two girls play around in the mall , Ellie frequently seeks the reason behind Riley bringing her there . Though initially hesitant to answer , Riley reveals that she has been assigned to another group of Fireflies in a different city , and wished to see Ellie again despite being forbidden to . After fighting over this revelation , Ellie eventually tells her that she supports her decision , because it is something that she has wanted for a long time . Before parting , Riley takes Ellie 's walkman and plugs it into the sound system , encouraging her to dance with her one last time . Although she initially gets into it , Ellie is unable to maintain her pretence , and tearfully begs Riley not to leave . Without hesitation , Riley rips her dog

tags off , deciding to choose Ellie instead of the Fireflies . In response , Ellie impulsively kisses her , which Riley returns . Drawn by the noise of their activities , the Infected pursue Ellie and Riley ; the two attempt to escape , but are bitten . They consider suicide , but choose to spend their final hours together .

= = Development = =

Naughty Dog began developing The Last of Us : Left Behind following the release of The Last of Us in June 2013 , with a team about half the size . Following the decision to create single @-@ player downloadable content for the game , the development team immediately decided that the story would focus on the character of Ellie ; they found that players of The Last of Us were interested to learn about events in Ellie 's life prior to the events of the main game , particularly the events involving Riley Abel , whom Ellie mentioned in The Last of Us . In addition , they found that some players were interested in the events that occurred between the Fall and Winter segments of the main game , in which Ellie cares for an injured Joel . This led to the team deciding to contrast these two events against each other , feeling as though it helps the story 's pacing . Game director Bruce Straley said that the team felt the story justified the development of Left Behind .

Left Behind was written to focus on the relationship between Ellie and Riley , and to recount the events that defined their later personalities . Riley was chronologically introduced to Ellie in The Last of Us : American Dreams , a comic book written by creative director Neil Druckmann and artist Faith Erin Hicks . The team used the comic as a reference point when developing the relationship between Ellie and Riley , becoming particularly interested in having the chance to see more of their relationship ; Druckmann felt that they would not have developed Left Behind if American Dreams hadn 't been written . Druckmann felt that the story of Joel and Ellie 's relationship in The Last of Us dealt with survival , loyalty and love , and that Ellie and Riley 's relationship in Left Behind deals with similar themes . Straley felt that the themes involve love , loss and devotion , pondering the extent that one goes to protect those they care about . Ashley Johnson portrayed Ellie in Left Behind , reprising her role from The Last of Us . To portray Riley , the team cast Yaani King ; Johnson has noted that it was interesting to act against someone different , and that King fit the role immediately . King felt intimidated to become part of a large project , and was worried about " fit [ting] in " . The team found it interesting to tell the story of Riley , as players of The Last of Us were already aware of the effect that she had on Ellie ; Left Behind sees Riley 's behavior change Ellie , resulting in the latter 's focus to fight in order to save those close to her . The team were also interested in Ellie 's behavior around Riley ; she is perceived as being more playful . In Left Behind , Ellie and Riley share a kiss ; the team explored omitting the kiss from the game , but felt that it was imperative to the story , and that it strengthened the relationship . Though initially he only felt that Ellie viewed Riley as an influence , Druckmann later considered her romantic appeal , and decided to explore the concept .

While writing The Last of Us , Druckmann had a general idea of the events that would shape Ellie 's identity ; when conceiving the story direction for Left Behind , he found that these events were suitable . Druckmann felt that omitting the nature of the argument between Ellie and Riley , which took place prior to the events of the game , allowed players to draw their own conclusions . The team found various sections of the game interesting , such as the references to Facebook and Halloween , as the characters are unaware of their meaning .

The smaller time frame of development for Left Behind gave the team an opportunity to trial mechanics and ideas that they were unable to test on the main game . With the game 's combat , an added feature was to allow players to focus the attention of the Infected towards human enemies , allowing an easier escape . The gameplay was also more focused on the characters , as opposed to the combat , to allow players to relate to them more . The gameplay sequences were designed to contrast with other moments of Ellie 's life ; for example , the water gun fight with Riley is contrasted to the gunfights with enemies . The team found that creating some gameplay mechanics was a challenge , with even fewer combat scenarios in Left Behind than in The Last of Us . The animation of the masks also presented a challenge , due to the number of joints ; it took various iterations

before the final design was implemented .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

The Last of Us : Left Behind was released to critical acclaim . Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating in the 0 ? 100 range , calculated an average score of 88 out of 100 , indicating " generally favorable reviews " , based on 69 reviews . GameRankings assigned it an average review score of 90 % based on 40 reviews . Reviewers praised the character development , story and subtext , gameplay and combat , and depiction of female and LGBT characters .

Tom Mc Shea of GameSpot found the story insightful , and IGN 's Colin Moriarty named it one of the game 's standout features . Matt Helgeson of Game Informer wrote that the writing " shines " , and that it significantly assisted with the development of the characters . Henry Gilbert of GamesRadar felt that the story was " intermittently intense , tragic , humorous , and even poignant " . Polygon 's Samit Sarkar wrote that Left Behind " serves as a terrific side story " to the main game , but is " even more impressive " when taken on its own merits . Nick Cowen of Computer and Video Games found the story " less satisfying " than The Last of Us due to its lack of new details about Ellie , but declared it " action @-@ packed and enjoyable " nonetheless .

The characters ? particularly the relationship between Ellie and Riley ? received acclaim . Polygon 's Philip Kollar appreciated the game 's ability to portray realistic female characters , noting that they " aren 't easy stereotypes " , while GameSpot 's Mc Shea felt new appreciation for Ellie by seeing her actions around Riley . Helgeson of Game Informer welcomed the addition of Riley , noting that she is " played with the same level of emotional depth and subtlety " as other characters . The Daily Telegraph 's Tim Martin praised the " interplay " between the Ellie and Riley , and Eurogamer 's Stace Harman felt that the game improves the understanding of Joel and Ellie 's relationship . The character performances also received praise , with IGN 's Moriarty and Kotaku 's Kirk Hamilton noting that the game improved as a result .

The game received positive reactions in relation to its depiction of LGBT characters . The kiss shared by Ellie and Riley was described by Kotaku 's Hamilton as " video gaming 's latest breakthrough moment " , declaring it " a big deal " . Keza MacDonald of IGN wrote that the kiss was " so beautiful and natural and funny that [she] was left dumbstruck " . Edward Smith of International Business Times felt that the kiss was " the first example of intimacy in a videogame that 's meant anything " , recognizing it as " an expression of both burgeoning teen sexuality and of ... friendship " . Amplify , a project of the non @-@ profit advocacy group Advocates for Youth , reported that the kiss had attracted criticism from some players .

Many reviewers found the gameplay and combat a refreshing difference from other games . Eurogamer 's Harman commended the game 's ability to link the gameplay to the story , noting that it adds " diversity and dynamism " . Helgeson of Game Informer praised the additional gameplay feature allowing players to force fights among the Infected and human enemies , naming such sequences " engaging " , while Martin of The Daily Telegraph appreciated the game 's ability to contextualize the combat sequences . However , some critics felt negatively about a gameplay sequence occurring late in the game , which requires players to kill a large number of enemies ; GameSpot 's Mc Shea noted that it felt " unnatural " , and IGN 's Moriarty called it " forced " . Electronic Gaming Monthly 's Eric L. Patterson wrote that players will feel " disappointed " if they play the game " more for the gameplay than the story " .

The world and environments of the game drew acclaim from many reviewers . Polygon 's Kollar called the game 's locations " beautiful " , while Eurogamer 's Harman wrote that the level design significantly improved the environments . Moriarty of IGN praised the setting within the mall , due to its regularity in " the real , pre @-@ apocalyptic world " . Mc Shea of GameSpot also felt that the game 's focus on exploration allowed the " well @-@ realized environments [to] breathe " , and Martin of The Daily Telegraph noted that Ellie 's body size allowed for " quieter and faster " .

movement throughout the environments .

== Awards ==

The Last of Us : Left Behind received multiple nominations and awards from gaming publications . Following its release , GameSpot awarded Left Behind Game of the Month for February 2014 . For the year 2014 , the game was review aggregator GameRankings ' highest @-@ rated PlayStation 3 game , and Metacritic 's third highest @-@ rated PlayStation 3 game . GameSpot nominated the game for Game of the Year , and awarded it PS3 Game of the Year . It also received Most Valuable Add @-@ On Content at the SXSW Gaming Awards , and Best DLC from Hardcore Gamer . The game 's story received awards at the 11th British Academy Video Games Awards , IGN AU Black Beta Select Awards 2014 , and the 67th Writers Guild of America Awards ; the game 's ending also won Best Memorable Moment from IGN Australia . The character of Ellie received Most Valuable Character at the SXSW Gaming Awards , while Ashley Johnson 's performance as the character won an award at the British Academy Video Games Awards . The game was also recognized as being innovative ; it was nominated for the Games for Change award at The Game Awards 2014 , as well as the Matthew Crump Cultural Innovation Award at the SXSW Gaming Awards .