

# GOD OF WAR III, THE REVIEW

Platform: PS3  
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment  
Developer: Sony Santa Monica Studios  
Genre: Action-Adventure  
Player(s): 1  
Year of publishing: 2010

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*The hands of death could not defeat him.  
The sisters of fate could not control him.  
Now on this day, the man, the legend, Kratos, will have his revenge.*

Picking up at the end of God of War II, this title opens with anti-hero Kratos leading a siege on Mount Olympus. With an army of Titans in tow, Kratos seeks to destroy the king of the Gods, Zeus, and bring the mighty Olympians to their knees while obliterating anyone foolish enough to stand in his path. God of War III completes one of the most celebrated trilogies in recent memory and brings the rage of Kratos to the PS3.

## STORY

The narrative of the God of War series uses Greek mythology as its backdrop yet manages to tell its own tale within this sphere. God of War III follows the series resident anti-hero, Kratos, who, in previous games, sold his soul to the gods and became a weapon used for doing their bidding. During his service he does many terrible things in the name of his patron, the God of War, Ares. He tricked by Ares into murdering his own family and has their ashes permanently fused with his skin, earning him the nickname the Ghost of Sparta. This iteration of the series sees Kratos seeking vengeance on the gods who have destroyed his life and turned him into their own personal monster. God of War III weaves an interesting tale of vengeance, hope, redemption and tragedy as Kratos attempts to repay the gods for their wrong-doings. One does not need to have played the other God of War games but familiarity with the series is encouraged.

## DESIGN

The main mode of God of War III is the single player campaign which can be completed in 8 – 11 hours. However, the game does give players reasons to linger once the quest has been completed. Players can find certain extra items in the campaign which only become unlocked during a second play through or in the additional modes. Challenge and Arena modes, which also become unlocked after the game is completed, allow players to truly test their combat skills. The game features

multiple difficulty levels to play on such as Easy, Normal, Hard and Extremely Hard.

When stripped down into its rawest form, God of War III is a linear hack-and-slash with puzzles and platforming accenting the combat. The game places the most emphasis on its brutal and often gratuitous battle system which, in truth, is where it truly shines.

Kratos has multiple weapons to choose from, each with their own fighting style. On top of that he can use different magical and special attacks. He has a meter governing his health, magic and special attacks, all of which are increased by finding items scattered throughout the world. Kratos also has an additional berserker type mode called Rage of Sparta which can be accessed by clicking both analogue sticks. Presided over by a meter in the bottom right corner of the screen, it allows him to fly into an infuriated state in which he does more damage. Players can collect multiple kinds of orbs: red orbs provide experience which can be spent levelling up their weapons, blue orbs recharge his magic meter, green orbs replenish his health and golden orbs fuel his rage meter. Orbs are collected either by finding them in crates or by defeating enemies.

When taken as a whole the controls of the game seem to overwhelm - every button on the controller is used with some buttons acting as modifiers - but God of War III does a very good job of introducing the attacks, combos and buttons to the player such that when the player is allowed to engage with the full battle system, they are able to do so adequately and not feel as if the controls are fighting against them.

Another thing God of War III does well is reuse its environments; Kratos will find himself entering specific areas, only to return later with a new item or new knowledge to explore a different portion of that area. It doesn't feel like backtracking, even though it is, and it's implemented so well that players won't mind that they are revisiting locales from earlier in the game. Kratos obtains key items from other characters in the game which aid him in traversal, for example one item acts as a torch/magic-detector, and another allows him to run up, down and across walls. These items, numbering four in total, are restricted to context sensitive cases within the traversal suite but are freely available for use in the battle system as Kratos' special items.

## GAMEPLAY

The combat of God of War III has a distinct focus on an offensive style of play. Kratos comes armed with multiple weapons including the Blades of Exile, the Nemesis Whip, the Claws of Hades and the Nemean Cestus. There are special items which are regulated by a meter which recharges over time. Regardless of which weapon is his current favourite he can activate several offensive manoeuvres including light and heavy attacks, grapple attacks, special attacks and magical attacks as well as the Rage of Sparta.

Kratos' defensive moves include: dodging by using the right analogue stick and block incoming attacks using the L1 button. Once damage is done to certain enemies players will be able to press a button prompting a quick time event (QTE) finisher. In these they will have input the specific command that the game asks for within a given time frame. Success will see Kratos ending his opponent's life, often in brutal fashion. These sequences are typically used for tougher enemies and are used in abundance when taking on one of the game's many bosses. As the toughest enemies in the game, the bosses, or level gate keepers, have specific attack patterns which change during the course of the fight. Typically boss battles feature multiple layers and end with QTEs while destructive animations play out.

Players begin the game with one weapon and will quickly acquire more as the game continues. Normally these are given by, or taken from, non-playable characters throughout the world. Each weapon comes equipped with its own magical abilities and combos, even though the inputs for the combos stay the same. Some of the weapons do look and feel fundamentally the same, though, even if it feels as though they play slightly differently. The gauntlets known as Neamean Cestus being the only one of the four main weapons that feels truly distinct.

All in all the battle system of God of War provides players with sufficient depth such that most players will be able to play it differently.

The platforming, which entails jumping, running and climbing from one place to the next, isn't particularly difficult but can be made irritating by the game's use of fixed camera angles. It's clear that this system exists as a means of getting from point A to point B. Context sensitive items that aid in traversal by allowing players to run across the side of walls and such serve to enhance the Kratos' suite of movement.

The puzzles are generally easy and while players may scratch their heads for a short time, they won't be spends hours solving them. Most of the puzzles present in the game are rather interesting and fun to solve. If there is one complaint with the puzzles it is the inclusion of a rhythm-based mini-game. This is so removed from the normal interaction type that it feels as though it has no place in this game.

## **PRESENTATION**

The presentation in God of War III is absolutely stunning and stands as one of the best looking on the PS3 hardware. Lighting, character models are some of the best ever put on a console. Its beauty is only matched by the almost disturbing attention to detail put into the combat. Blood rockets out of the wounds inflicted upon a cyclops like a crimson mess shot out of a fire hydrant, a centaur has its entrails exposed as Kratos attacks and another creature, the chimera, is impaled using its own horn. Players fazed by sights like these may be better off staying away from the game.

However gory the game can be, the level of violence just it goes further to sell Kratos' descent into darkness and shows just what the gods have done to him. After all his time in their service he is just so angry that he will decimate any one and anything standing in the way of killing them.

The camera angles present in God of War III give it a cinematic flair and contribute to a game which feels as though it has grand scale, especially when the titans are involved. This is best illustrated when all one can see of Kratos is the distant flash of his blades as he battles hordes of enemies on the skin of a colossal beast the size of a skyscraper. The caveat to the fixed camera angles is it highlights the linearity of the title. With no branching paths one can't even stand still and rotate the camera to gaze at all of the beautiful environments, it's just onwards with the story.

# SUMMARY

While on the exterior God of War III may stand as merely a bloody and excessively violent romp through Greek Mythology, all-the-while oozing machismo, a look below the surface reveals a very well paced adventure with an interesting story about the tragedy of a man who seeks revenge on the gods who have turned him into what he is. The gameplay is excellent and although the fixed camera angles do annoy in platforming, it is mitigated by the fact that the campaign and all the systems are just incredibly good and well integrated into each other. Players who can make peace with the over-the-top brutality of the game will find it to be one worth experiencing.

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*The Score*

7/8 bits (87.5%)

*Reviewer*

Paul Cupido

*This review was conducted on the PS3*