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FIRST REVIEW

# Revenge is a dish best served by Kratos

by Gary Steinman

# God of War



# War III

Poseidon, the loyal true-believer,  
will do anything to defend Olympus.



PS3 | PRICE: \$99.99 | ESRB: Mature | PUBLISHER: SCEA | DEVELOPER: Sony Santa Monica

**K**ratos is pissed. Once a hero, then a god, and now a mere mortal, the bald, belligerent battering ram is hellbent on revenge. And why shouldn't he be? After years of loyal service, his only reward was a curse from the Olympians: a merciless torment of nightmares over the loss of his family and the depravity of his own murderous actions. A pawn in the endless, petty battles between the gods themselves, Kratos has had enough. Driven to destroy them, he has found an unlikely ally in the Titans—and now he's on a warpath to kill them all, one by one, including his own father Zeus.

But that's old news to anyone who's played the PS2 *Gods of War* and the seminal PSP outing *God of War: Chains of Olympus*—all system-defining releases, universally acclaimed as some of the best PlayStation exclusives to grace their respective hardware. And even if you didn't play the previous games, it's all explained in the cinematic intro sequence.

So Kratos is pissed. We knew that already. All that really matters is, right now, as the game opens, we're ascending to the lofty heights of Olympus on the shoulder of the gargantuan Titan Gaia, eager to exact bloody revenge, ready to end the era of the gods once and for all.

## THE END BEGINS

It's an opening sequence that's unsurprising yet awesomely epic. Unsurprising because we've come to expect as much from *God of War*, which has started each game with a battle so big that it threatens to burst through our screens and smash us flat against our living-room wall. Awesome because, well...it's even bigger than any of the previous games, which is saying a lot.

First, there's Gaia herself. As she climbs the cliff face, we cling to her body, a tiny speck against her rocky, earthen flesh, no bigger than one of her front teeth. Battles break out on her body—with Kratos

plowing through all kinds of minor foes swarming through the forests populating her arms, shoulders, stomach, back. Meanwhile, the perspective shifts constantly. One moment, we're rushing forward on flat ground; the next we're upside-down, clinging to the underside of the Titan's limbs as she flails about. Gaia isn't just an epic backdrop for the action, but a massive, moving jungle gym whose body presents a unique arena for an even bigger battle to come.

Enter the Olympian gods who, from the heights of their mountaintop lair, are sent hurtling down like a legion of comic-book arch-villains to stop Kratos. Yes, they're musty mythological beings, but from the very start they're given a modern sensibility that

lends an immediacy missing from most stories rooted in the classics. Hades is the ultimate thug who

rules over his own domain; Hermes is a petulant provocateur who uses his speed to play the role of inescapable irritant; Helios is the high-school football star—a puffed-up jock whose smug celebration of his own glory dissipates in the light of reality.

But first there's Poseidon, the loyal true-believer who'll do anything to defend Olympus. When he sends out his steed—a crab-clawed, aqueous serpent with a horse's head—we know we're in for a dust-up of heroic proportions. And as the watery stallion rips through Gaia, we fight it from different angles, even going so far as to crawl inside Gaia's body to reveal the pulsing roots making up her beating heart. To call the multipart battle "intense" seems an injustice—a ridiculous understatement proven utterly inadequate as we close in on defeating Poseidon, eventually finishing off our first god with a brutal beating that (without spoiling why) brilliantly showcases Kratos' rage.

And then it happens. We are betrayed. Again. This time by Gaia. It seems Kratos not only has the gods to kill now, but the Titans too.