

Video Game Review: ‘Asura’s Wrath’ is Weirdest Game You Will Play This Year

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 5, 2012 - 4:43pm

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CHICAGO – “Asura’s Wrath” is a whole lot of weird. It’s kind of anime, kind of a fighting game, kind of a “God of War” button-masher, a bit of sci-fi shooter, and a whole lot of something completely new. The odd mix is off-putting at first. I kind of hated it for the first hour. Like a midnight movie that doesn’t exactly work the first time you see it but becomes your favorite on repeat viewing, “Asura’s Wrath” takes time to get under your skin. It’s not perfect but it’s almost too weird to ignore.

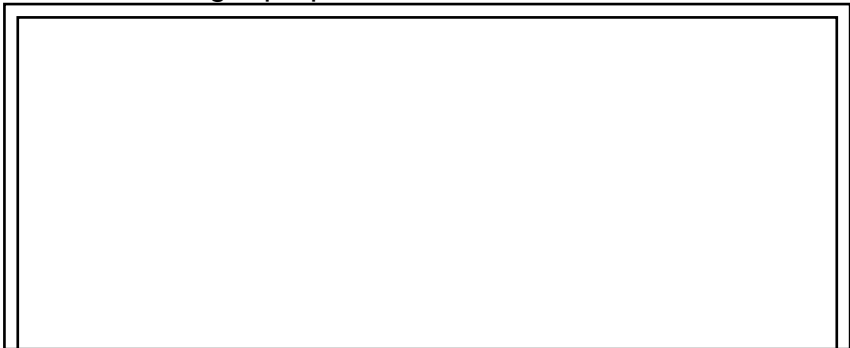

XBOX XBOX XBOX XBOX XBOX
Video Game Rating: **3.0/5.0**

A lot of Japanese games are cut-scene-heavy but “Asura’s Wrath” takes it to a new level. A vast majority of “Asura’s Wrath” plays like an interactive motion comic. The game’s biggest problem is that the story isn’t resonant or interesting enough to justify the amount of time you’ll be forced to hold a controller and watch it. I’ll admit that I ended up skipping far too much of “AW” for it to not be considered a weakness of the game. Skipping cut scenes is no big deal in most games but when SO MUCH of the game consists of cut scenes, what do you have left?



Asura’s Wrath
Photo credit: *Capcom*

The episodic structure of “Asura’s Wrath” tells the story of the title character, a demigod who is betrayed by his fellow demigods. Asura is a member of a group of 8 demigods who have successfully defended their people for thousands of years when they decide to stab one of their own in the back. They kill his wife and kidnap his daughter before sending him plummeting to his presumed death. It takes thousands of years but Asura’s anger propels him back to a now-decimated world where he must take his revenge.





Asura's Wrath
Photo credit: Capcom

I think so. Like I said, the story of "Asura's Wrath" lost me pretty early on but I must admit that I did admire the structure. Instead of levels, the game is broken up into 18 episodes, complete with a "To Be Continued" and sneak preview structure. It reminded me of "Alan Wake"'s excellent structure and I admire anything that approaches video game storytelling from a new angle. The 18 episodes run about 20 minutes apiece but many of them only include a half or even a quarter of that in terms of actual gameplay. So, yes, that's less than 3 hours in which your controller will actually have an impact. That's a notable problem for a full-priced game.

But are those 3 hours worth playing? Sometimes they are. The game has two major gameplay sections — a sci-fi shooter and a fighting game meets "God of War." If it sounds a bit ridiculous, it definitely is but both gameplay types really do develop their own successful rhythms. The fighting portion of "Asura's Wrath" is based on meter filling. Fight with a familiar light/heavy attack system, dodge attacks, and fill a meter to a point where you can end the fight, typically in a flurry of QuickTime Events. In the other, you shoot in lock-on or rapid fire format, typically at spaceships or incoming missiles.

Every time that "Asura's Wrath" seems to fall into a recognizable groove, it gets totally weird again, often in a refreshing way. Take for example the fact that during a few of the games longer monologues you can actually interrupt the speaker by punching them in the face. I wish more game monologues could be ended through fisticuffs. And the animation, especially in the cut-scene fights, can be truly spectacular. The game often looks great.

But looks only go so far. As much as I admire any game that stretches expectations like "Asura's Wrath" and as much as I enjoyed moments in it, I have to say that the short experience and lackluster storytelling were more significant problems than a lot of games. It looks great, but I really didn't care and in this incredibly crowded season that means that Asura is likely to get lost in the shuffle.

"Asura's Wrath" was developed by CyberConnect 2 and released by Capcom. The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360 but the title was also released for the PS3 on February 21st, 2012.



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