REVIEW: ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY ALMOST PERFECTS THE FORMULA

REVIEWS Oct 01, 2018 by: Leo Parrill

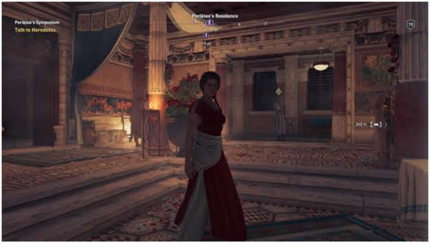
Platform: PlayStation 4 (reviewed), Xbox One, PC

Assassin's Creed has been around for more than a decade now, and it's had significant ups and downs. The newest entry, *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, is much more up than down, bringing together solid writing, a great protagonist, and a breathtakingly detailed interpretation of ancient Greece.

Though it still suffers from a few of the weaknesses the franchise has always struggled with, *Odyssey* is a refinement of a formula that works, and is a hugely entertaining historical playground to explore.

Odyssey takes everything fun about *Assassin's Creed* and adds more, and though those additions don't always work, it's still the best the franchise has been in a long time.

The Same, But Different



Much has been said about how this title was going to be different, how it would have even more RPG elements than last year's *Assassin's Creed Origins*. How character choice would be a huge factor in how your protagonist's story unfolds, and how you'd be able to tell the story the way you want to, as opposed to the more linear narrative the franchise has embraced in the past.

Though it's true that dialogue options, weapon and gear upgrades, and a branching narrative add some much needed variety, the game is still instantly recognizable as an

GAME INFO

Released:	Oct 05, 2018
Developer:	Ubisoft Quebec
Publisher:	Ubisoft
Platform:	PS4, XBOX ONE

FEATURED ITEMS

AMD RYZEN 5 3600 6-Core 3.6 GHz (4.2 GHz Max Boost) Socket AM4 65W 100-100000031BOX Desktop Processor
~~$209.99~~
$199.99
Save: $10 (5%)
ADD TO CART ▶

Corsair Gaming K55 RGB Keyboard, Backlit RGB LED
$49.99
ADD TO CART ▶

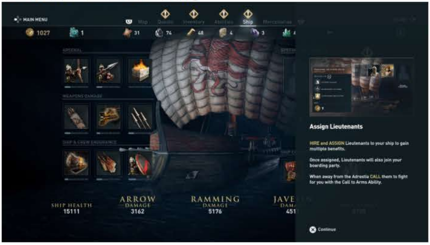
Logitech G203 LIGHTSYNC 910-005790 Black 6 Buttons 1 x Wheel USB Wired Gaming Mouse
$40.99
ADD TO CART ▶

Assassin's Creed title. If you've played any of the games before, you'll feel right at home here.

One area in which *Odyssey* excels when compared to its predecessors, is that it has streamlined the unreliable controls. For the first time, it doesn't feel like you're fighting the camera and your character to get where you want. And this is impressive, because in *Odyssey*, just about every surface is climbable. This is a welcome improvement.

Because there is no stamina meter, Kassandra and Alexios have free reign to climb almost any surface you encounter. From enormous, marble temples and statues to towering trees and cliff faces, every surface holds the promise of new gear, or a new character to give you yet another quest. This goes a long way toward making *Odyssey* feel truly open, and feels like a realization of what this franchise has been trying to achieve from the beginning.

Too Much Of A Good Thing



Assign Lieutenants

HIRE and ASSIGN Lieutenants to your ship to gain multiple benefits.

Once assigned, Lieutenants will also join your boarding party.

When away from the Adrestia CALL them to fight for you with the Call to Arms Ability.

This is a big game.

Not just the explorable landscape, but the sheer amount of ways it asks you to spend your time. It occasionally feels bloated, like features and concepts were added simply Ubisoft was checking a list, not necessarily because they improve the core experience.

In an interesting nod to Warner Bros. Lord of the Rings-based *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* (which itself borrowed liberally from *Assassin's Creed*) there is something akin to the Nemesis system in *Odyssey*. Throughout your travels, you'll often commit crimes, and if you aren't careful, will sometimes end up hunted by ludicrously named bounty hunters. It's more annoying than fun, as they frequently rubber band to your location, which can be particularly frustrating if you're fighting a boss, or undertaking a high level mission. Luckily, you can pay a few Drachmae to clear your name and bypass this system, but it showcases how adding new features isn't always a good idea if those features aren't implemented correctly.

There is a lot in this game, and it's hard to argue that's a bad thing, but more isn't always better. The sheer variety of options and systems means they'll probably be something there for everyone, but I'm not entirely convinced all of these systems improve the game. You're able to upgrade your ship, your crew, your weapons, your armor, and your skills. The map screen if full of icons vying for your attention, from bounties and animals to hunt, to timed missions and caves to plunder.

While having so much content is an understandable selling point from a marketing perspective, I wonder if *Assassin's Creed's* weaknesses couldn't have been better addressed if the game wasn't so dead set on implementing additional gameplay mechanics and systems that don't add all that much to the experience.

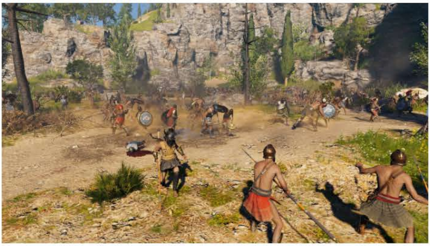
Gigabyte Aorus 5 - 15.6" 144 Hz - Intel Core i7-10750H - GeForce RTX 2060 - 16 GB DDR4 - 512 GB SSD - Windows 10 Home - Gaming Laptop (Aorus 5 KB-7US1130SH) - Only @ Newegg

~~$1499~~
$1099.99
Save: $399.01 (27%)
ADD TO CART ▶

All items sold by: **Newegg**

There's also a pretty intense push toward microtransactions. The in game store wasn't available yet, so it didn't impact my gameplay experience, but it was quite clear that Ubisoft is leaning pretty hard on selling you more in-game items, which was at times distracting.

Combat Weaknesses



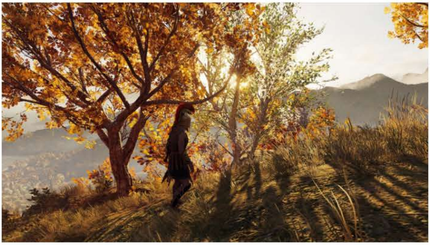
Combat is also improved, though it still feels overly-simplistic. The ability to switch between weapons adds some flexibility to how you approach your numerous foes, as does the inclusion of unlockable skills, like the Spartan kick. This simple move was immensely useful and entertaining, and I never grew tired of kicking people off of buildings, off of cliffs, or into the ocean.

Despite these tweaks, it's still mostly timing based, and all about knowing when to parry. Enemies still attack you one at a time, and once you learn their signature moves, combat becomes a fairly dry affair. It doesn't help that the lock on system is a bit buggy. Often Kassandra would turn to face the wrong person while in combat, only to end up with a sword in her back.

Luckily, combat can often be avoided, because stealth is still a hugely important part of the game. You'll spend much of your time hidden away in grass or shrubs, whistling to get the rather stupid guards to head over, and then killing them and hiding their bodies. It gets repetitive fairly quickly, especially since a lot of the game is simply infiltrating forts and other building, but I never got bored with it. It's a very simple, straightforward style of stealth gameplay, but undeniably entertaining.

The combat is passable, but never particularly enjoyable, and the weaknesses are highlighted by the absolutely abysmal Control Battles. After toppling the ruler of an area, you can engage in a huge conflict, fighting for either the Athenians or the Spartans, in what amounts to a repetitive fighting sequence against endlessly respawning enemies. It absolutely fails to capture the grandeur of an epic battle, and is instead a repetitive and unpleasant gauntlet that highlights the flaws in the combat system in a deeply unflattering way.

A Big, Beautiful World



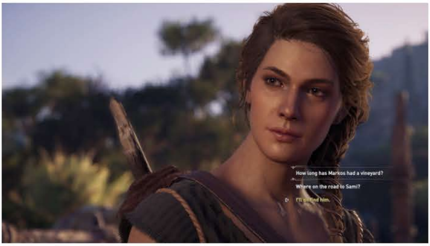
Combat might not be the biggest strength here, but where *Assassin's Creed* has always excelled is in the world that it builds, and Odyssey is no different in that regard. This interpretation of ancient Greece isn't just technically beautiful, it's one of the most detailed and thoroughly constructed worlds I've encountered in the medium.

I've always been impressed by the amount of effort on Ubisoft's part put into fully realizing these historical settings. I have an embarrassingly limited understanding of ancient Greece, but exploring the islands and cities was an endlessly compelling experience, and the amount of attention paid to the details throughout the world isn't just impressive, it's artistically significant.

Assassin's Creed Odyssey is an absolute blast to explore, and you're heavily encouraged to do so. As with previous titles, naval exploration and combat is still a huge part of the gameplay. You unlock a ship and crew fairly early on, allowing you to explore the world pretty much at your leisure. The narrative and side quests follow a recommended level based system, meaning you can technically undertake a mission as soon as it's available, though often you'll need to grind a bit before you can complete it. You can go to high level areas, but the wildlife and enemies you'll encounter are significantly stronger that you, meaning you won't get far unless you're very careful.

I'll never forget when I was attacked on the dusty streets of Athens by a level 13 chicken. Truly traumatic.

Homer Would Be Proud


How long has Markos had a vineyard?
Where on the road to Sami?
I'll find him.

Assassin's Creed Odyssey tackles some fairly heavy themes from the very beginning, and definitely goes to some dark places. That said, there is an undercurrent of lightheartedness that I really enjoyed. Part of this was due to the absolutely fantastic character of Kassandra. For the first time in the franchise, you can choose a male or female protagonist, and though the story unfolds in mostly the same way, this option adds some much appreciated replayability. I played the beginning of the story as both, and vastly preferred Kassandra over her brother, Alexios.

In *Odyssey*, the protagonist is a mercenary, and this inherent moral ambiguity is explored in some interesting ways. There are choices you make throughout that affect the way the story unfolds. I chose to play Kassandra as a rather cold-hearted, practical but quick-to-anger fighter, and had a blast doing so. This isn't *Mass Effect*, but having some agency over how your character interacts with the world was a smart move.

The characters are richly realized, and there is a lot of humor throughout the game, without ever undermining the heavier themes. At no point does the game ever take itself too seriously, which this franchise has occasionally been known to do. *Odyssey* isn't afraid to be a video game, and is more interested in enabling the player to have fun then telling a self-important narrative.

The voice acting is solid throughout, and despite a bit of expected melodrama, the story is a compelling reason to continue exploring the beautiful Mediterranean setting. I'm not particularly invested in the overarching narrative of *Assassin's Creed*, and it seems like

Odyssey is more focused on telling its own story rather than furthering that decades old story. I have a feeling this trend will continue going forward, and I approve.

An Ancient World Worth Exploring

Is *Odyssey* a good *Assassin's Creed* game? Yes, absolutely. It has a great deal of fun with the historical era, provides an incredibly detailed and engaging world to explore, along with a fun and compelling story and protagonist. The controls are significantly improved; so much so that it will probably be difficult to return to previous titles in the franchise, and the amount of content you'll get for your $60 is staggering.

It's not going to change the minds of people who don't like the franchise, but the new implementation of RPG mechanics coupled with a fun story and a beautiful world mean this is the best *Assassin's Creed* title in years.

8.50

Assassin's Creed Odyssey hits all the notes a sequel should. It's bigger, prettier, the existing mechanics have been improved, and there's plenty more added. It tells an engaging story, with an excellent protagonist (play Kassandra), all in a beautifully realized setting. Odyssey attempts to address some of the issues that have plagued this franchise since it first released more than a decade ago, but you can only polish something that's showing its age so much. The combat in particular needs a significant overhaul, and the enthusiasm for more and more gameplay systems and microtransactions at times make the game feel a bit bloated.

Tweet Share

Graphics 9

From the gorgeous, clear oceans, to the dizzying heights of The Parthenon, Assassin's Creed has never looked better, and the attention to detail is truly impressive.

Gameplay 8

From the gorgeous, clear oceans, to the dizzying heights of The Parthenon, Assassin's Creed has never looked better, and the attention to detail is truly impressive.

Story 8

Though this isn't a particularly experimental or thoughtful story, the extremely likeable protagonist, mixed with a healthy dose of humor and ridiculousness, make this one of the more compelling narrative experiences from the franchise in a long time.

Controls 9

Though still not perfect, kudos to the development team for streamlining the complex controls, and making climbing everything you see much less of a hassle than ever before.

Disclaimer:

GameCrate is owned by Newegg.com, a site which may sell the products being reviewed. GameCrate reviews represent the opinions of the GameCrate writer who wrote them, and not necessarily those of Newegg. The product used for this article was provided to GameCrate by the manufacturer or publisher for the purposes of conducting a review. The writer did not retain personal possession of the product after the review.

What do you think?

2 Responses

Upvote Funny Love Surprised Angry

Sad

1 Comment gamecrate.com Disqus' Privacy Policy 1 Login

♡ Recommend Tweet Share Sort by Best

Join the discussion…

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

stirfry • 2 years ago • edited

I have just started playing, and the craftsmanship of the open world Greece they've created is mind blowing. I've wandered through some pretty cool towns that are nicer than the city I live in. The ease of climbing, and lack of cheap deaths from falling, which prevent the requisite lengthly reloads have really encouraged me to wander far afield, taking in the massive world.

1 ^ | ˅ • Reply • Share ›

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Do Not Sell My Data DISQUS

VIDEO GAME REVIEWS | GAMECRATE

REVIEW: BRAVELY DEFAULT 2 PUTS SYSTEM OVER STORY, AND THAT'...

REVIEWS Mar 01, 2021

What's the reason we play RPGs? Many people would say "the story" and that's understandable. The RPG was one of the first genres to really focus on...

REVIEW: GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS RESURRECTION IS A MEDITATION ON...

REVIEWS Feb 24, 2021

When you think of Capcom's classic Ghosts 'n Goblins franchise, what do you remember? I personally remember the difficulty. I remember dying over and...

REVIEW: SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD + BOWSER'S FURY IS A GREAT...

REVIEWS Feb 12, 2021

Platform: Nintendo Switch (reviewed) This is such an odd game to talk about because it's so many things to so many different types of people. Do we...

NEWS

INDIEWATCH: LOOP HERO DESERVES ITS HALF A MILLION SALES

NEWS Mar 12, 2021

Every so often an indie game comes out of nowhere to become a surprise hit. It looks like Loop Hero fits that bill, selling more than half a million copies in...

REVIEWS

REVIEW: PERSONA 5 STRIKERS MAKES IT FEEL GOOD TO GET THE...

REVIEWS Feb 09, 2021

Platforms: PC, PlayStation 4 (reviewed), Nintendo Switch If you have been playing the numerous "Warriors" spin-offs, like Hyrule Warriors, Fire Emblem Warriors...

VIDEOS

RTX THEATER: CYBERPUNK 2077 RAY TRACING ON/OFF WITH A...

VIDEOS Feb 10, 2021

The game designers at CD Projekt Red have programmed major ray-traced lighting effects in their latest blockbuster, Cyberpunk 2077 . To experience this, we...

BORDERLANDS 3 DIRECTOR'S CUT DLC DELAYED TO APRIL

NEWS Mar 12, 2021

Borderlands 3 players thirsting for new content will have to wait a little bit longer. Developer Gearbox Studios shared an update on Twitter that the upcoming...

REVIEW: LITTLE NIGHTMARES II IS A FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCE OF...

REVIEWS Feb 09, 2021

Platforms: PC (reviewed), Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X | S Little Nightmares was a fantastic horror styled puzzle...

KEANU REEVES TALKS ABOUT WORKING ON CYBERPUNK 2077

VIDEOS Nov 19, 2020

As we near the December 10 release date for Cyberpunk 2077 , developers CD Projekt Red are consistently dropping new and cool behind the scenes videos about...

2013-2019 Newegg Inc.
All Rights Reserved.
Copyright Policy