QA 1 for David Jaffe

Many games nowadays look for a distinctive appearance to gloss over generic content, rather than using the aesthetics to set the tone of the game. How much deeper is GOW's use of the Greek mythos?

We wanted GOD OF WAR to deal with the GREATEST HITS of Greek Mythology, focusing on the elements most people know and love. To that end, many aspects from the classic tales can be seen in our play mechanics (using medusa's head; throwing Zeus' thunderbolts, etc) as well as in the game's narrative (bickering Gods; tragic love story; brutal level of violence, etc). The monster and set designs are clearly inspired by the classic stories but so are the level and mission designs (avoiding the song of the Sirens is an entire level, for example…with a bit of a twist). In many cases we have had to adjust the stories to get the best gameplay but we feel the essence of the myth has remained (for example, in the classic myths, there was only one MEDUSA…in GOD OF WAR, there are many as they are too fun to battle to limit it to just one enemy).

In using that mythos, you're drawing on probably the richest repository of plot, characters, monster design and puzzle scenarios that exists in the West. It would be easy to assume that it's made your job easier, but what's been the greatest challenge in integrating it into gameplay?

The hardest part was adjusting the play mechanics and story so our favorite mythical elements would be true to the classic stories while still staying true to the kind of game we wanted to make (i.e. fast action, easily accessible). For example: A great gameplay case could be made for creating a puzzle where you had to use reflections to avoid Medusa's gaze. But the fact is, this would have given us a much slower game and limited the number of times we used the mechanic. So while we were adamant about keeping the concept of avoiding the Gorgon's gaze, we had to fudge the classic story in terms of the way Medusa functions. So, to that end, in GOD OF WAR there are many Medusas (not just the single character who appears in the myth) and you CAN look her in the eye.., but only for a short amount of time (which still keeps things tense but doesn't slow encounters with the Medusas down to a crawl). So, yes, the Greek myths did provide us with a large amount of amazing play ideas, but we were left with the task of assembling those many pieces- that were never really designed to fit together- in such a way that would be fun and satisfying for players while still retaining the vibe (tragedy, loss, epic story) of the original myths.

The violence in God Of War is unflinching in its savagery: you've spoken previously about it being a core part of the game experience, not just shock effect. Why do you feel it's necessary?

Creating an epic action/adventure was not the only goal for GOD OF WAR. I was just as interested in making a game that allowed players to unleash their animalistic side. I wanted players to just cut loose, to get lost in pure rage, to get

lost in raw, violent energy…and I wanted players to feel themselves letting go and just going nuts when they took control of Kratos. I am very proud of the violence in the game. Kratos is the kind of guy I wish I could be (a big bad ass capable of taking care of business when things get tough). I am also proud of the violence because I think it is very creative in that the things Kratos does to his enemies are really nasty and very satisfying and quite imaginative (ripping wings off a harpy; pulling Medusa's head off with your bare hands,etc). This really speaks to the character and the vibe I want the game to give off…it is much more than simply having lots of blood on the screen.

How do you feel about EA and Activision's efforts to sanitise the violence in their titles, such as the bloodless Medal Of Honour games or Mercenaries?

Every game has different goals and- to me- action does not need to be gory or realistic in order to succeed. So while I think a bloody, realistic-as-hell WWII game would be cool, I appreciate that EA was not going for that. And if you look at the sales figures, it is apparent that a bloody Medal of Honor is not needed in order to sell copies. While I did not like the latest MOH game, I enjoyed the earlier MOH titles very much (especially MOH:UNDERGROUND) and I really like Mercenaries and I think it's cool that younger players- who are cut off from the gory games- can enjoy these titles. As long as I can still get my hardcore adult games, what's wrong with a company going the mainstream route and trying to appeal to more people?

Recently Japanese developers have been attempting to make games with 'western appeal', with results that often fail to recognise the actual mechanics and themes of the games they draw from. By contrast, you've taken to a genre dominated by Japanese developers with surprising success. Was it a difficult process?

Yes. It was very, very difficult. Because I fully believe that- for the moment at least- Japan makes the best 3rd person action games in the world. Because of this, we were always holding their games up as our goal, forcing ourselves to try and reach- and then surpass- the bar that companies like KONAMI and CAPCOM have set. To that end, the hardest part was finding animators and combat designers who really understood the feel I wanted GOD OF WAR to have. Most combat games from America just don't FEEL very good. I am not sure if it's a cultural thing or if it's a lack of game tuning time…I don't know…but there are very few American combat games where it just feels GOOD to swing your weapon around. Usually, it is very clunky and the animation is very choppy. Man, we had a hell of a time getting the right animation team in. It was very hard finding the guys who really understood the level we needed to be playing at. But once we got the right team, the combat portion of the game just took off. Once those key guys came on board, it was literally a matter of weeks before the game jumped like 10 notches in quality and fun factor.

So combat animation- which a company like CAPCOM is the master of- was very hard for us to get just right…that said, while I feel Japan makes the best action games, I feel the ADVENTURE portion of their titles is very lacking (save for

the amazing game ICO). So I was very confident that we could 'take them' in our level design and puzzle design as these aspects of the Japanese character games tend to be the weakest. Truth be told, most of our puzzle inspiration came from 16 bit European games like ANOTHER WORLD and FLASHBACK. I don't think either of these were very popular in Japan and I don't think even current Japanese games have succeeded in integrating puzzles and storytelling as well as those older games did.

Japanese developers have often been accused of being insular – for example, when we asked Tsuyoshi Tanaka, producer of Devil May Cry 3, what he considered DMC3's competition to be, he replied that since Metal Gear Solid 3 wasn't really an action game, he couldn't think of any competition in his genre. In your commentary on the GOW demo, you claim you're doing action-adventure better than anyone else at the moment. Is it your awareness of a wider range of influences that will enable you to come out on top?

Well first off, that commentary was NEVER meant for the public to hear! I am so embarrassed about it. When I said that it was meant to hype up the sales force; to get them behind the game! However, in our hectic production cycle, it found its way onto the demo disc…..A few nights ago I saw on the internet that some message poster- who had seen the video you are talking about- wrote, "that Jaffe guy is an arrogant tool" and I was like: yes, you are so right! Man, what a stupid thing to say!!!

But still- all that said- I am very proud of GOD OF WAR because I DO think it manages to merge action AND adventure in a really cool way. I want this game to feel like a grand, epic adventure and I think it manages to do that better than most games out there. Is this because we are good designers? Or is it simply because most games only have the time and budget to just focus on fighting or puzzles or platforming, whereas GOD OF WAR was allowed the time and money to focus on all three? I am not sure. All I know is I was getting sick of being promised a GRAND ADVENTURE on the back of every game box I picked up, only to be let down by a game that was either too puzzle based or too combat centric. So it's nice Sony let us make a game where we had the time to build enough variety into the title so there is something new around every corner and you really feel like you are on this amazing adventure! As a game designer, this has been my wish come true!

During GOW's development the action game has seen several genre-redefining efforts in terms of player control and environment use, from both western and eastern developers. While you haven't made reactionary changes to the game – Kratos can't wall-run, for instance – were you tempted to respond to any titles?

Not really. We were really fortunate in that once we found our voice and core focus, we never wavered. I think that is one of the keys to game design success: find the heart of your game and protect it like a junkyard dog. This is not to say games did not come out during the development process that the team was

not impressed with. Sure, that happens. But I knew what GOD OF WAR was from the very start and nothing moved us from that direction.

It seems a brave decision to allow bosses to be destroyed with button-sequence moves, when traditionally they're expected to be near-insurmountable stumbling blocks for players. In practice, it doesn't cheapen the boss fights at all, but are you prepared for that accusation?

No because it sounds like you are really only referring to the boss fight in the demo. That is how part of that particular boss fight plays out, but that is not how every boss functions. The main goal with the bosses was to provide players with spectacle, variety and unique play challenges. Other bosses are more puzzle based, others are more story based. Also, GOD OF WAR is designed and tuned for what we call the HARDCORE MAINSTREAM player (which means someone who loves games and plays them often but is not looking for hard core challenge). It was our assumption that this particular audience values fun over being stuck on a challenge for hours on end….they favor spectacle and cool ideas instead of near- insurmountable stumbling blocks.

What's your opinion of Tomonobu Itagaki's decision to make Ninja Gaiden deliberately inaccessible to unskilled players, and of the 'badge of honour' mentality that this excessive difficulty curve was praised for?

I would never be interested in tuning a game as hard as Ninja Gaiden. To me, game design is all about finding that sweet spot where the game is hard enough to be engaging but not so hard you lose interest. Yes, this is different for every gamer, but it's pretty easy to know when you are tuning most of your audience out of your game by making it too damn hard. That said, it seemed to work for Itagaki as Ninja Gaiden clearly has found an audience. Maybe it succeeded because the hard core gamers have been ignored- in terms of play balance and tuning- as games have gone more mainstream. So Itagaki may have seen a niche and rushed to fill it. As for the technique being praised, hey, if that is what he was going for, then good for him. I think the hardcore market is a valid market…it's just not a market I am interested in making games for. I don't design games to be mastered, I design games to be enjoyed.

There's a large female contingent on the GOW team, including the design leads, which confounds the gaming expectation that violent action games are a domain of male fantasy. What's your take on that expectation? Has the gender balance had any effect on how you've approached the game?

None at all. We got the best people for the job, period. That is all that mattered to me. In the case of GOD OF WAR, many of the best people just happened to be women. And while having lots of women on the team brings about a nice social dynamic to making a game, from a design standpoint, nothing has changed in terms of the initial vision.
As to my take on the expectation that violent action is mainly a male dominated genre, I would agree with that 100%. While that does not mean all

women hate violent action games, it does tend to be more of a male category. However, GOD OF WAR is more than just violent action. It also calls for sweeping, cinematic camera angles; very detailed scripting of complicated events; and complex, creative puzzles. In these areas, the women on the team were always the equal- and many times the superior- to their male counterparts.

You've talked in your blog about GOW being the culmination of a 12-year career at Sony, and that you'd even considered moving on from direct game development once it was complete. What's made your commitment to it so exhausting? And if it was to be your final game, what would you hope people remembered it for?

I think it was really a case of me biting off way more than I was comfortable chewing. But at the same time, I wasn't interested in eating a smaller meal. I wanted to make the big, epic adventure that I'd always dreamed of and I would have been a fool to turn down Sony's amazing offer. But it came at a heavy price. I was never home, never saw my wife and kid, never had any time for my health, my soul, any of my other passions. Very quickly the whole process consumed me. If I hadn't been so busy, I would have easily realized that I was quite depressed. But there wasn't even time to be depressed! Literally, most days I could not walk from one end of the office to the other without being stopped by at least 5 people who needed me for this or that. And yes, that is the job of a game director but man, it takes a toll.

! Don't get me wrong: I love games, I love GOD OF WAR, but my personal life has to come first. Still, I am looking to direct some other titles in the future… just none as big as GOD OF WAR. That is, unless they start paying game directors like movie directors…then I would sacrifice my soul for another few years. But I ain't holding my breath…

As for what GOD OF WAR is remembered for, I'd love it if people played GOD OF WAR and really felt like they had been sent on an amazing adventure. To me, that's why I've always played games, that is why I fell in love with games as a kid. I love the promise of games, the idea that they can send you into your very own fantasy. I would love if lots of people felt we had provided them a kick ass fantasy to be a part of. That would make me very proud.

QA 2 for David Jaffe

God of War has been in development for quite a considerable time. Is this because the team has been soaking up some Greek sunshine with extended 'working' holidays?

Man, I wish. This has been the hardest game most of us have ever worked on and that's because so much of it was special case. We really didn't follow the traditional path of video game making, where you create 3-6 elements/mechanics and then reuse those over and over again, but in slightly different ways. We approached GOD OF WAR more like a story, less like a game. In a story, if you had something that felt like filler or scenes that were saying the same thing over and over, you'd cut them out, right? But most games don't do this. They stick needless filler in, and tons of backtracking, simply to extend playtime. But with GOD OF WAR, we were given lots of time to make sure that

every room in the adventure, every part of the story had a purpose and moved the game along at a brisk pace. This is why it took so long to make, because every level was new. New from an art standpoint, many new animations, and each level had at least 1-2 new play ideas that you had not encountered before. The good news is I think it really makes the game feel like a grand adventure that players will want to take. The bad news is it was a bitch to create!

Technically, GOW is very impressive - has the PS2 been pushed to its very limits, or do you think the console still has something to give?

I'm not a tech guy, so I could not tell you. What I can say is every time we had a cool idea for GOD OF WAR, the coders and artists found a way to pull it off. There was never a time that the lead coder said to me, "The PS2 can't do that'. So I don't know how much of that is a testament to the team or to the hardware. It's probably a mix of both but I would say that it seems to me that this amazing little machine- in the right hands- can still do some amazing stuff. I love the PS2. It's really been a fun machine to work on and I love that we got to contribute to its fantastic library of games. To me, it's up there with the best systems ever, the best system ever, right behind the SNES.

The combat is incredibly satisfying - how much time has been spent on this aspect of the game?

Lots and lots of time. It took forever to find the right animation and combat design team...took a long time to find people who really got the vibe I wanted the game to have. We redid many of our combat animations over and over, simply because the brutal nature of Kratos was not as big as I wanted it to be. We threw so much work away as we struggled to figure out the system, and while frustrating, it really was worth it. I was originally going for a very brutal, nasty combat system about 10% deeper than the SCEE game Medieval. I love that game, but as you know, it's not a deep combat game. But as the team game together it evolved into a deeper system BUT retained the pick up and play, arcade design that I was always going for. So while we are not trying to compete with the massive depth of a fighting system like Devil May Cry 3, we feel we have a system that allows more casual gamers to feel like a brutal bad ass, while still giving combat players a nice system with a good amount of depth and strategy. It took a very long time to get the game to this level but I feel we ended up with a damn good combat system. I hope players agree!

GOW is pretty bloody violent - was this a conscious decision, knowing that the mythical setting would allow you to include more brutality without causing a stir?

Yes, making Kratos the most brutal, nasty hero in video games was always the goal. I wanted a character that would let players unleash their dark sides. I wanted to take control of a character that let me get my frustrations and anger out. It was a goal that I was so dedicated to and it took a long time to find the team of animators who could really do these nasty ass animations. But once we found the right team, man, Kratos really came alive as a brutal, vicious killer. Putting a brutal character in ancient times just seemed to fit. The Greek Mythology came first and it just seemed natural that Kratos would be the kind of character that would fit in that world.

Are all the creatures from the game taken directly from Greek mythology, or have you created some from scratch?

They are all either taken directly from the Greek Myths or heavily inspired by the Greek Myths. I plowed through all the Greek Mythology I could find and we really tried to take the 'greatest hits' of the Greek Myths, you know? The monsters and characters that most people knew, the ones that were really deep in the culture's consciousness. I grew up loving the Ray Harryhausen flicks, like Clash of the Titans and Jason and the Argonauts and there was a real desire to tap into those 'little boy' fantasies that those movies gave many of us, but update them for a more adult, contemporary audience....but it was tricky because we needed to evolve the creatures but not so much that they no longer resonated.

Compared to many of today's video game characters, Kratos is incredibly distinctive - is this something you intentionally wanted to achieve?

I remember the day we had to lock his facial features and we had to decide if Kratos was going to be a bit more rugged and rough around the edges, or more of a pretty boy. And while we were a bit nervous to have a character who didn't look like a model (like many game heroes), we really tried to stay true to the story and character at all costs. And I love that we did, because to me, Kratos is distinct. Granted, I am very biased but to me, he does seem more fleshed out than most game characters and I think we are all very proud of that. Most games in this genre come from Japan and while I love the visual design of the lead characters in those games, I don't like the sensibilities. I think Dante is just flat out annoying. He's a great character and he looks amazing and the games are superb. But I think he's annoying. And while I love Link, he really doesn't really have much character definition...he's very simple. And it works for him. But for GOD OF WAR, I think we wanted a character who really felt more alive, and less like an ICON and more like a real person.

What sort of creative challenges has setting the game against a mythological setting presented you with? Do you think it's more difficult than setting a game against a more contemporary backdrop?

It was easy to set a game against the Greek Myths because so much of the work had been done for us. When I went through all of the stories, I found a new mechanic and a new level design on every other page. I think the biggest challenge was trying to design the world and story so it didn't feel dry and historical. I really wanted it to be able to stand toe-to-toe with today's most popular games (like the GTAS and the SPLINTER CELLS). And that's tough since, at least in America, realism is really ruling the sales charts. So we were always looking for ways to make the game cool and neat to an audience that has- for the most part- shunned fantasy games and relegated them to niche status. When I started playing video games, almost all the hits were fantasy based. Not anymore. So it was a real challenge, you know? How do we get the Greek Myths to seem as cool as Tom Clancy!

What elements of the game are the team most satisfied with?

Well every department has their favorite things. I mean, we all think the graphics and tech are pretty cool. But overall, I think we just think it's a fun game. For some, the fun is the combat. For others, it's the puzzles and story. And I think that speaks to the

sheer number of cool elements in GOD OF WAR, that we can all say it's fun but for many different reasons.

What's next for the GOW team?

They are moving on to the next big thing! I can't talk about it but I will enjoy watching from the sidelines as I am moving back to external game making. Keep an eye out for our next products. I would love to chat with ya'll again!

God of War QA 3

1: Can you give our readers a little background information on some of the titles members of the team working on God of War have worked on in the past?

(answered by David Jaffe, Creative Director Santa Monica Studio)
I was the lead designer and game director on Twisted Metal 1, 2, and Twisted Metal: BLACK. Many of the core members of the GOD OF WAR team worked on a racing game for the PS2 called KINETICA.

2: Why do you feel there have been so few games based around Ancient Greek mythology and what inspired your making of God of War?

I have loved the Greek myths since my dad took me to see Ray Harryhausen's JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS as a kid. After that, I read all I could on the legends of ancient Greece and just fell in love with the amazing fantasy of those stories. I love how they blend the little kid fantasies of monsters and heroes with the adult fantasies of sex, power, and violence. To me, that is a perfect blend for an action/adventure game aimed at adults. As for why others have not mined this amazing subject matter, I don't really know. There have been a few, but many of the games in this genre come from Japan were the Greek myths are not very popular. I have to say I am a bit surprised that more European developers have not explored the subject matter. Either way, I'm glad it's been untapped for so long, as it gives us a chance to feel fresh in the eyes of gamers.

3: Over the top fighting/melees along with puzzles. How hard has it been to mix and balance the two styles and do you believe this is the winning formula for God of War?

Not hard at all because this is the formula I always wished for. When I would play an amazing game like DEVIL MAY CRY, I loved it but I always wished there would be more to the exploration and puzzles. And when I played ICO or MEDIEVIL, I loved the story and puzzles but the combat was pretty tame. So GOD OF WAR was really a result of getting to make a game the way I always felt it should be, with a mix of the aspects that I love most about games: storytelling, action, exploration, and puzzles! Is it a winning formula? We'll have to see. But end of the day, it doesn't really matter because I don't think you can worry about that when you make a game. All you can really do is follow your gut and make what you want to play and hope there are enough people out there who agree with you.

4: The production values of the game are high featuring an hour of cinematic sequences along with a dramatic storyline. Firstly does the storyline lead the action, or does it lead the would-be hero into events and do you feel your story telling approach has been crafted uniquely?

We designed the story first. Then we designed the puzzles and levels and monsters to fit into that story. Because of this, I feel everything ties together and feels natural. All of our puzzles- if we did our jobs right- should not feel like puzzles but instead obstacles that the main character would naturally encounter on a quest. As for the approaching being unique....I don't really know if it's unique. We just came up with a story we really loved and a character we loved and worked really hard to present that in a compelling way. We also worked hard to tell the story in game, not just in cut scenes. Besides all kinds of story telling occurring in the backgrounds as you play, we also tried to create character development moments for Kratos that occurred IN GAMEPLAY, not just in cutscenes. The classic games FLASHBACK, HEART OF DARKNESS, and ANOTHER WORLD were very inspirational to us in seeing that we could keep gameplay and storytelling occurring at the same time. That was the first game to do it and it really made me feel that I was on this amazing adventure. That's how I wanted GOD OF WAR to feel.

5: There has been much acclaim for the visual quality of the game. How important was the technology issue to the game? Have you created a new set of tools for the game and please tell us about 2 features of the game's engine?

(answered by Tim Moss, Lead Programmer) Given that we were going to be releasing this title 4 or so years into the lifespan of the PS2, it was very important to us that we pushed the envelope of what people expected the PS2 can do.

We spent a lot of time on a very fully featured tools path that allowed our talented art staff to keep experimenting and iterating towards there art goals. We wanted to have a high level of interactivity and not so much repetition in the environments and that meant that it had to be easy for the whole team to try out new ideas. Having a tools path that allowed the work to be carried out by the whole team was the way that we achieved this. Every person on the project could build and run any part of the game and make modifications to it without needing to talk to the programming staff. Most puzzles and combat situations were setup solely by the designers. This allowed the programmers to focus on the core technology and visual effects that we felt would allow us to stand out. I would say that the tools path is actually one of the areas we are most proud of, only the results of it are visible to the consumer, but we wouldnt have been able to make the game the way we wanted without the tools.

The streaming system is the another area that worked out really well. Jak and Daxter had just come out on the PS2 when we were starting this game and we really felt that the seamless world brought a lot to that game. It felt really next gen. So we were determined to do as good a job on our product. By not having any loads the player is never removed from the game world and it really makes the whole experience better.

6: The game's baddies are based also on creatures from mythology. What was your reference source and can you tell us about a couple and what may have been the most difficult to create?

We had a group of fantastic concept artists who took the source material and just went nuts. I mean, clearly we were inspired by the classic stories, the descriptions in those stories, as well as some of the creature designs from movies we had seen. But there was also a desire to let in a bit more of a horror vibe to the creature design. In fact, the art director often described it as "a horror version of the Odyssey" and I think that is evident in some of the designs. We actually pushed the horror aspect very far at one point but the game became more gruesome than I wanted. It was very, very cool and you can see some of those designs in the 'making of' material that comes with the game. But, in the end, I decided that the Greek stories themselves were already so cool that we didn't want to re-imagine them to the extent that what is so universally appealing about the stories went away. As for difficult creature design, I think Ares was really tough because it really was important to the vibe of the game that he come across as a human like being. And there are only so many ways you can go with that where it is interesting, visually. We explored much more creature-centric designs for Ares but it always felt wrong. There is a very man vs. man story driving the core of GOD OF WAR, with Ares and Kratos almost having a twisted father-son style relationship. And to make Ares more of a monster really hurt this. So in the end we ended up making Ares more of a man and made his attacks and abilities more fantastic to compensate for his rather normal visual design. But once you toss in his amazing voice, his powers, and the actions and play mechanics he has, Ares becomes a total bad ass and a great game villain.

7: Kratos will meet up with GODs throughout the game. What do they impart, how many are there and is their a sequence that runs through the whole game?

Athena is Kratos' patron goddess. So she appears throughout all in the game, coming to life in statue form and giving him advice, guidance and such. There are other Gods, such as Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Aphrodite, and Artemis who show up from time to time to give Kratos magic powers and to also guide him on his quest. Having the classic Gods in the game was very important to us in that they really do ground the game in the classic stories. It also makes it very clear that we are dealing with the myths in a more literal way, which I think is the best way to deal with them. I don't like it when the Greek Myths have the fantasy aspect removed. It seems so boring when that happens.

8: Please give the readers an insight into the sophistication of the combat system – how it works and any areas it makes the fighting more realistic etc?

(answered by Combat Designer, Derek Daniels) The combat system works with Square being the quick, light attacks, Triangle being the slower more powerful attacks. We have throws on the Circle button and a dash on R1. The beauty of the combat shines through when we allow the player to jump at almost any point in any attack, as well as evade (Right Analog) or Parry/Block (L1 Button). What this allows for is the player to be attacking while always having the option of evading/blocking at any given moment

instead of having to wait until their favorite attack has finished animating. So you can have complex setups where you hit the enemy a few times, launch them into the air, hit them some more, air throw them, dash downwards and keep hitting them or even finding new enemies as you land. If someone attacks you as you land you can parry their attack and keep fighting, allowing the combat to flow smoothly from doing ground attacks to air attacks, to combo'ing the throws to being on the defense without suffering any slowdown in gameplay.

9: Games with puzzles can come across as mere extra padding or simple embellishments so how have you gone about creating puzzles with interest and variety that offers dexterity of thought?

I can tell you that we took puzzle design inspiration from early INFOCOM games, as well as classic 16 bit titles like FLASHBACK and ANOTHER WORLD. I wanted puzzles that not only tied into the story, but that felt like real puzzles. I really wanted our ICO influence to shine through as well. So there was always a drive to get away from the 'pull a lever and a door opens' school of puzzle design that seems very prevalent in today's action games. I guess the thing is, I wanted GOD OF WAR to be an action/adventure game...and I did NOT want the adventure element to be left out in the cold, which happens a lot. So you need not worry about puzzles being an afterthought or put in for padding. The adventure and puzzle elements are KEY to this game and it really was designed with all elements in mind so that players felt like they were on a grand adventure. GOD OF WAR is not a combat game like DMC3 or Ninja Gaiden. It really is an adventure, with many puzzles and exploration, as well as combat. As for fluff, we have very little in our minds. We made the game like you would write a story, in that if we saw a boring part or a repetitive part, we threw it out. This is why it took 3 years to make, because we really wanted to give players a fast moving experience that compelled you to reach the end. We have lots of save points, and TONS of check points that don't force you to replay lots of the game you have already solved. The idea was we wanted to give players an experience, not a game. And fluff and replaying areas you have already beaten makes the product feel very game-like. We didn't want that. GOD OF WAR is really trying to deliver an epic quest for players to go on. When I was a kid, that was what the back of the game box always promised, but it never really felt that way. With GOD OF WAR, we worked very hard to deliver on that back of the box promise. I'm very excited to see if players think we pulled it off.

10: What do you see as the one most innovative feature of the game apart from its presentation?

I think our 'lack of fluff' game design is pretty unique in an industry where that tends to be the norm. I think our respect for gamers desire to actually be given interactive entertainment that is more about the experience and less about the hard core challenge is somewhat unique. But to be honest, I don't really care about innovation. If you are looking for innovation, there are many games that will thrill you. But this is not one of them. Our only goal was making a fun adventure for players to go on.