

Why The Last of Us Part 2 Remastered Is Worth Another Look

When Naughty Dog announced The Last of Us Part 2 Remastered, I saw plenty of eye rolls online. A remaster of a game that already looked stunning on PS4? It sounded like a cash grab, and I wasn't alone in thinking that. But after spending a good chunk of time with it on PS5, I have to admit I was wrong. This isn't just a resolution bump and a frame rate toggle. It's a careful, thoughtful package that makes one of the most divisive games of the generation feel more complete and, in some ways, more playable than ever.

If you played the original on PS4 Pro at launch, you might remember the technical hitches. The game pushed the hardware to its limits, and sometimes it showed. The Last of Us Part 2 Remastered smooths out almost all of those rough edges. The 60 frames per second target is locked solid, and the 4K output on a compatible screen is genuinely beautiful. The haptic feedback on the DualSense controller adds a layer of immersion I didn't know I was missing. Every click of a revolver, every brush of grass, every splash of water in the rain feels tied to your hands in a way the original DualShock 4 version just didn't manage.

A New Mode That Changes the Game

The headline addition here is No Return, a roguelike survival mode that strips away the story and drops you into a series of randomized encounters. I was skeptical at first. The Last of Us has always been about its narrative, and the idea of a mode that ignores it felt like a betrayal. But after a few runs, I got it. No Return is not a replacement for the campaign. It's a training ground and a challenge mode that refines your combat instincts.

You choose from a roster of characters, each with unique loadouts and perks. Ellie plays differently than Abby, and Dina's equipment is tuned for stealth. You fight through waves of enemies across different environments from the main game, with modifiers that change on each run. Sometimes you get a bonus for melee kills. Sometimes the enemies are all infected and you have to manage your ammo tightly. It forces you to engage with the combat system in ways the story never does. In the main game, you can lean on stealth and avoid fights. In No Return, you have to learn the flow of combat, the timing of dodges, the best weapons for each situation.

I found myself getting better at the core mechanics after just a few hours. The mode also includes leaderboards, so there's a competitive edge if you care about that sort of thing. It's not for everyone, but for players who wished the game had more replayable combat, this is exactly what you wanted.

Lost Levels and Developer Commentary

The other major addition is a set of lost levels, which are essentially early, unfinished versions of areas that were cut from the final game. These are presented with optional developer commentary. I expected these to be rough and uninteresting, but I was surprised by how much I enjoyed them. One of the levels, set in a sewer system, includes a unique puzzle that never made it into the final game. It's rough around the edges, but seeing the creative process up close is fascinating.

The developer commentary is not just behind-the-scenes fluff. It's honest and detailed. The team talks about why certain mechanics were cut, how they solved design problems, and what they learned from the process. If you care about game design, this is a goldmine. It's also a nice way to revisit the world without the pressure of combat or story tension.

What About the Story?

Let's be honest: The Last of Us Part 2 is a tough game to recommend to everyone. It's brutal, it's long, and it asks you to sit with uncomfortable emotions for dozens of hours. The remaster doesn't change any of that. The narrative is the same, and the pacing is still demanding. If you didn't like the story the first time, this version won't change your mind.

But if you were on the fence or if you played it once and want to experience it again with better performance and no loading screens, this is the definitive way to do it. The loading times are almost nonexistent. You can fast travel between workbenches in seconds. The DualSense features add a tactile layer to the violence and the quiet moments alike. And the graphics really are noticeably sharper, especially on an OLED display. The lighting in the forest sections and the detail in character faces are stunning.

I also appreciate that the remaster includes the full suite of accessibility options from the original, plus a few new ones. The audio descriptions for cutscenes, the high-contrast mode, and the customizable controls make the game playable for a wider range of people. That's not just a checkbox feature. It's a sign that Naughty Dog takes accessibility seriously, and it makes the package feel more complete.

Is It Worth the Upgrade?

This is the question everyone asks. If you already own The Last of Us Part 2 on PS4, the upgrade to the remastered version costs \$10. That's a small price for the performance boost, the No Return mode, and the lost levels. If you're new to the game, the full price is \$49.99, which is still cheaper than most new releases and includes all the DLC and bonuses.

I think the upgrade is worth it for anyone who plans to replay the game. The combination of 60 fps, reduced load times, and the new mode makes it feel like a fresh experience. If you only played it once and have no intention of going back, you can skip it. But if you're a fan of the series or if you're curious about what makes this game so polarizing, this is the best version to play.

There's also the Guitar Free Play mode, which is exactly what it sounds like. You can sit down with Ellie or Joel and play the guitar mini-game without any story context. It's a tiny addition, but it's a nice way to unwind after a tense session of No Return. It's the kind of small, thoughtful touch that makes the remaster feel like a labor of love rather than a quick cash-in.

One thing I noticed is that the DualSense integration goes beyond just haptics. The adaptive triggers add resistance when you're pulling back a bowstring or when you're aiming a heavy weapon. It makes the combat feel more physical. The speaker on the controller also plays the radio frequencies and the guitar sounds directly, which is a small but immersive detail.

[The Last of Us Part 2 Remastered](#) isn't a revolution. It's a refinement. It takes a game that was already technically impressive and polishes it to a mirror shine. It adds a mode that extends the life of the game for players who want more combat challenges. And it preserves the developer's original vision with respect and care. If you're already a fan, it's an easy recommendation. If you're new, it's the best way to experience one of the most ambitious games of the last decade.

I still have mixed feelings about the story. I think it's brave and flawed and often brilliant. But the remaster doesn't ask you to change your opinion. It just gives you the best possible version of the game to form that opinion on. And that, to me, is exactly what a remaster should do.