

Hades – PC Review

Getliffe.

November 15th

When I first completed Hades I did so with just one percent of my health remaining and a dumbfound sense of disbelief. As the adrenaline began to fade, I realised I had initially just started this run to farm some Crystals (one of Hades many Currencies). I hadn't planned, or even wanted to try and get further than the first level.

This is one of Hades main strengths, every attempt feels meaningfully different. What started as a farming run soon changed when a combination of powers that I had selected from different Gods, had turned my least favourite weapon - The Pike, into a twirling ball of electric death. A weapon that became just too much fun to not want to play with.

The Gods however are more than just a means of getting powerful new abilities, they inhabit the world of Hades in convincing and entertaining ways. Bickering, flirting, and straight up trying to murder each other; often trying to murder you. They are all fully voice acted by a talented cast. My favourite 'Hypnos', God of sleep, always had a way to pick me up as I emerged from the pool of blood after a failed run. Successfully helping relieve the frustration of the last defeat. Even after 50 attempts, each time I spoke to them they had something new to say. Some interesting tit bit that fleshed out the world I was in, whilst helping me understand more of the scope of my undertakings.

Hades heavily falls into the 'Lite' category of the increasingly vague, 'Rogue' genre. A genre that normally only rewards success, Hades rewards failure with story and character progression. With each death you are sent back to the House of Hades where the Gods and the Dead hang out. Your father Hades buried in the admin of ruling the dead, whilst the cutest dog of Hell there ever was, sits by his side, hoping for a pat on the head from you. Doing a circuit of the court to see what new things the inhabitants have to say is a great way to relax before starting another attempt. Sometimes I'm even glad to have died to see how things are progressing there, along with a chance to further shape my character.

Permanent unlocks are an important part of the game. Although all abilities you receive during a run are just for that single attempt. There are gems, stones, and many other mythic currencies to collect that can be spent for permanent unlocks once back in the Hall Of Hades. A greater damage at range or the ability to defy death and come back at half-health when otherwise the run would be over are just a few. Gems buy renovations for the hub but also for the underworld itself. Adding rooms with healing pools. Or urns that can be smashed for coins and spent mid level in Charons shop.

The most important unlocks are the different weapons that you can wield whilst battling the varied enemies of Hades. Every weapon is agreeably unique. Hold down attack with the bow and you'll shoot out a devastating power shot, then dash into a group of enemies and hit your special to release a shotgun volley of arrows, making you feel like everyone's least favourite Avenger. The claws can be used like you're an unhinged Wolverine. Or

dramatically altered so that you're dashing around planting a 'one finger death punch' on mobs before quickly escaping before they explode. Then there's the Adamant Rail, which is literally an Aliens style heavy machine-gun, complete with grenade launcher attachment.

All these weapons and abilities can be altered in staggeringly different ways by the Gods you encounter at the end of each arena. Each time you encounter one they will offer you a 'boon' which will change how one of your five abilities work. Perhaps you want to change your magic projectile attack into a crystal, which you plant on the ground and will fire out laser ice death. Or maybe when you dash through enemies you'd like a chance to charm them so they briefly fight on your side. Over the 100+ attempts at escaping Hades nearly every attempt felt meaningfully different and a joy to experiment with. It's often impossible to resist the urge to play with these new toys. Hence when I had first completed the game a line from the film 'Clerks' was ringing through my head, *"I wasn't even supposed to be here today"*.

But I wanted to be here. The world of Hades is a delight. It's beautifully illustrated and fluidly animated. Although sometimes in the heat of combat the visuals can get a little busy and hard to read, you soon learn how to navigate and perform when the intensity builds up. Movement is key, enemies telegraph their attacks well, so every time you get hit it never feels unfair. Mistakes always feel your own fault, but failure is often welcome. Sure, I want every run to end in victory, but I also want to buy those new drapes for my bedroom, improve my back stab damage, along with seeing how this romantic subplot plays out with a boss, who has now started drinking at my bar. I never feel regret. I'm happy to keep repeating this cycle. Even after completion, which isn't even the true end, I felt compelled to start a fresh run. Hades is truly a marvel of game design, and a contender for the best 'roguelite' game of all time.

Verdict.

9/10