

## *Okami* Review

**Game Name:** *Okami*.

**Game Platform:** PlayStation 2. (Also available on Wii.)

### **Game Overview**

*Okami* is an action-adventure game developed by Clover Studio that puts the player into the paws of the Japanese god Amaterasu in the form of a wolf. The player is thrust into Japanese lore as he/she partakes in a recreation of the story of Nagi and Shiranui who protected Nippon from an eight-headed demon. The demon is released once again, and the player must venture through the land and fight the evil with a special weapon, the celestial brush. With this calligraphy brush, the player uses special attacks made by brush movements, as well as several other special powers that are earned as the player progresses through the game.

### **What did this game do that was different from its predecessors?**

This game shares roots with other action-adventure types of games, such as the *Zelda* games. The most obvious difference is the fact that the avatar is that of a wolf instead of a person, which provides a new set of mechanics. For example, Amaterasu (amicably called "Ammy" by a tiny companion) uses a paw to dig in the ground, and she can't exactly use weapons as Link could or move in the same ways.

Its style really sets it apart from every other game across any genre. It's heavily based around an oriental calligraphic art theme. This theme continues into the gameplay in the form of a celestial brush. With it, the player uses certain brush strokes to fight enemies, grow plant-life, create explosions, and other powers. This mechanic actually has the player drawing shapes with the brush, and it's quite entertaining as well as unique.

### **Favorite Part about the Game (and why).**

I really felt that the best part about the game was probably the overall flow of the style. Everything in the game went together so very well, and it made playing such a fantastic, unique experience. The style and thematic resonance echoed through every aspect of the game, going through art, gameplay, audio, story, and even level design.

The brush aspect was really cool. However, it was something that could be frustrating in certain situations, but on the whole, it was a great, unique mechanic that changed the pacing of the game and the feel of it. Without it, the game would be a somewhat mindless button mashing action-adventure game. The brush makes the gamer pause a little and spend time artistically making a slash or a circle, which can be a little tricky with PlayStation controllers at first.

### **Least Favorite Part about the Game (and why).**

Perhaps the biggest flaw in *Okami* was the fact that there was an overabundance of text and dialog. The story was interesting, but they decided to make it a little too wordy. Some gamers get put off by all of that right away and never make it through the beginning sequence due to its somewhat excessive length. It wasn't really skippable either; the text could only be sped up.

A head-bashingly irritating problem occurred during one of the sequences that blended cut scene with using the brush. If a mistake was made with the brush, then the player had to watch the entire cut scene again and then go through the whole sequence once again until he/she got it right. It was challenging to do because there was a stringent time limit and the circles had to be exact. This section was just utterly unpleasant to endure through and was an objectionable contrast to the rest of the easiness and playability seen in the rest of the game.

### **How would you change the game to make it better?**

To make the game better, I could solve both of the above problems by making the cut scenes totally and completely skippable, allowing players to get to the points where he/she needed to play. I would have also made that one particularly frustrating sequence a bit more lax, since the tightness really didn't seem to fit with the rest of the gameplay, which had been very forgiving and mostly unchallenging. That kind of abrupt increase in difficulty had a negative effect on the flow, and giving more time to draw the circles in the sequence would most likely help with that.