

Why The Last of Us Part II Remastered Is Worth Another Playthrough

When I first finished The Last of Us Part II back in 2020, I sat in silence for a long time. The credits rolled, the screen went dark, and I felt that hollow weight that only a truly heavy story can leave. I put the controller down and didn't pick it up again for months. That game demanded something from you. It asked you to sit with discomfort, to question your own allegiances, and to endure violence that felt personal. I respected it, but I wasn't eager to revisit it.

Then Naughty Dog announced The Last of Us Part II Remastered for the PlayStation 5. My first reaction was skepticism. Another remaster? The original already ran at 60 frames per second on PS5 through backward compatibility. What could a paid upgrade possibly offer? But I decided to give it a fair shot, and after spending about twenty hours with the remastered version, I can say this: it is not just a visual polish. It is a thoughtful rerelease that respects the original while giving returning players real reasons to step back into that brutal world.

What the Remaster Actually Changes

Let's start with the obvious: graphics and performance. The original game on PS4 Pro was already a technical marvel, but the remaster pushes things further. You get native 4K resolution at a target of 60 frames per second, with the option to lock in at 30 fps if you prefer higher graphical fidelity. The difference is not night and day, but it is noticeable. Textures are sharper, lighting looks more natural, and loading times are nearly eliminated. I loaded up the opening sequence in Jackson, Wyoming, and the snow-covered trees looked crisp enough that I could see individual needles on the pine branches. It is a small thing, but it pulls you deeper into the world.

More importantly, the DualSense controller integration is excellent. The adaptive triggers add tension when you draw a bow or squeeze a revolver. The haptic feedback makes every footstep feel distinct. Walking through tall grass feels different from stepping on concrete or wading through water. It is the kind of tactile immersion that makes you forget you are holding a controller, and for a game that relies so heavily on atmosphere, that matters.

No Return: The Roguelike Mode That Surprised Me

The biggest new addition is No Return, a roguelike survival mode. I was skeptical about this at first. The Last of Us Part II is a linear, story-driven game. Slapping a procedural mode on it felt like putting a racing minigame into a visual novel. But after spending several hours with No Return, I have to admit it works better than I expected.

In No Return, you pick a character from the game's cast and fight through a series of randomized encounters. Each run ends when you die, but you unlock new characters, skins, and modifiers as you play. The mode strips away the narrative weight and focuses purely on the combat loop. And that loop is surprisingly deep. The game's stealth, resource management, and brutal melee mechanics translate well into short, high-stakes bursts. I found myself experimenting with weapons and strategies I never used in the main campaign. The pressure of permadeath makes every bullet count, and every hiding spot matters.

It is not for everyone. If you came for the story and nothing else, No Return will feel like a distraction. But if you enjoyed the combat in the main game and wanted a mode that challenges your skills without the emotional baggage, this is a solid addition. I particularly liked playing as Ellie's companion Jesse, who has a unique loadout that changes the pace of combat. It is a small touch, but it shows that Naughty Dog put real thought into making each character feel distinct.

The Lost Levels and Developer Commentary

The remaster also includes three lost levels that were cut from the original release. These are not fully fleshed-out chapters; they are work-in-progress segments with developer commentary. You can explore them and listen to the team talk about why they were cut. As someone who enjoys game development, I found this fascinating. One level, "The Hunt," was a planned early section for Ellie in Seattle that was removed because it slowed down the pacing. Another, "The Boathouse," was a combat sequence that the team felt was too similar to other encounters in the game. Seeing these glimpses of what could have been is a treat for fans, but do not expect them to add hours of new gameplay. They are more like museum exhibits.

The developer commentary extends to the main campaign as well. You can toggle on audio commentary from the creative team, which plays during specific scenes. I listened to a few segments, and they added context without being intrusive. The commentary is well-edited and does not talk over the game's sound design. It is a nice option for people who want to understand the creative decisions behind the story.

Is It Worth the Upgrade?

Now the practical question: if you already own the PS4 version, should you pay for the upgrade? The answer depends on how much you value the new features. If you are a die-hard fan who replays the game every year, the visual improvements and DualSense support are worth the ten-dollar upgrade path. If you never finished the original because the story was too heavy, No Return might give you a reason to engage with the gameplay without the emotional weight. But if you played the game once, appreciated it, and moved on, you are probably fine sticking with the PS4 version. The core experience is identical.

That said, I think there is a strong case for replaying the full campaign in this remastered form. The Last of Us Part II is a game that rewards a second playthrough. Knowing where the story goes changes how you see every character's actions. The remaster's enhanced visuals and controller feedback make that journey more immersive. I found myself noticing details I missed the first time: a painting on a wall that foreshadows a later event, a line of dialogue that carries double meaning, a piece of environmental storytelling that I had overlooked. The game is dense with these moments, and the remaster helps you see them more clearly.

One more thing: the game includes a full suite of accessibility options. This was true of the original as well, but the remaster expands them. You can customize nearly every aspect of the experience, from enemy difficulty to navigation assistance to audio cues. I do not have a disability that requires these features, but I tested a few of them, and they are robust. It is good to see a major studio treating accessibility as a priority rather than an afterthought.

Final Thoughts

[The Last of Us Part II Remastered](#) is not a transformative upgrade. It does not rewrite the story or fix the pacing issues that some players had with the original. What it does is polish an already excellent game and give it new life on current hardware. The No Return mode is a genuine addition that extends the game's replay value, and the lost levels offer a peek behind the curtain for curious fans. If you are new to the game, this is the definitive version. If you are a returning player, the upgrade is worth it if you plan to spend more time in this world.

I went into this remaster expecting a cash grab. I came out of it with a renewed appreciation for a game I had set aside. Sometimes a second look changes how you see things, even when the thing itself has not changed at all.