In today’s oversaturated market, finding a video game that offers a playing experience unlike any other is surely a plus, but does that fact alone warrant a purchase? Published by Capcom and developed by CyberConnect2, ASURA’S WRATH is essentially an ultraviolent sci-fi *anime* series rooted in Hindu mythology, disguised as a video game whose unique interactive aspects deliver a story that’s always engulfing and often visually spectacular. But it’s also this lack of synergy that may leave some gamers yearning for more.

The story follows Asura, one of eight demigods who, in the first episode, is betrayed by his peers, framed for the murder of the Emperor and thrown out of heaven. With his wife killed and daughter kidnapped, the sheer force of his titular rage enables him to claw his way out of the netherworld some 12,000 years later. Revenge is the only thing on his mind as you control Asura through both spiritual and physical worlds, with his anger growing and growing as the intentions of his former comrades slowly unfold.

The game’s structure is what makes the experience most unique when it comes to video games, and is sure to appease anyone who fancies themselves an *otaku*. It’s split into 18 episodes (broken up into three chapters of six episodes apiece), each bookended by beautifully illustrated, dialogue-ridden stills that further progress the plot, contain both opening and closing credits and even with mid-section commercial bumpers. To pull it even closer to the

realm of television, there’s a quick narrated tease for the next episode at the end of each. Also unique is the gameplay, which changes from scenario to scenario—though it doesn’t have the same appeal the structure does.

A great deal of this game consists of plot-progressing cut scenes, peppered with quick-time events (QTEs) which usually require you to press the corresponding button at the precise moment. However, your success or failure during these segments will only affect your score, and not your health bar or the narrative. Each episode also contains two isolated gameplay segments which can range anywhere from mindless third-person brawling to a sequence-memorizing rail-shooter of a boss battle. But although it gets increasingly challenging, the setup and backdrop to these clashes are usually more interesting. For example, you might be battling on the moon against a planet-sized foe or floating in space against laser-spewing giant squid, but either way, most of the coolest moments occur during a cut scene. If you think too hard about it, basically everything you personally contribute to the tale is glorified button-mashing. Still, the action rarely stops, and you can’t help but feel a bit satisfied after ripping your former companions apart.

In addition to taking on fellow gods, you’ll also encounter creatures known as Gohma, monstrous manifestations of gorillas, turtles, elephants and squids. The combination of cut scenes and battle sequences was healthy enough for me to stay thoroughly entertained, and I found it tough to put the controller down once I completed the first episode.

The game is relatively short, and pretty easy to plow through; it took me roughly seven nonstop hours to complete these 18 episodes on the “normal” difficulty setting. But with an always-engulfing plot and enough unlockable content (including an additional episode), you’ll likely find yourself coming back for seconds and maybe thirds.

ASURA’S WRATH does have its weak spots—including the price, considering the quick and prosaic nature of its storytelling and the lack of human interaction. You’re basically paying $59.99 for an eight-hour interactive *anime* series that can only be recommended to fright fans who don’t necessarily think time should equal money, since it begs to be finished in one sitting. That said, this is surely one of the most unique gaming experiences I’ve ever had…and that’s coming from someone who owned CUSTER’S REVENGE.