

Before we get started

I have 40 hours of play time within the first two weeks of getting this game and making this review.

This is my first experience with a roguelike game.

Gameplay

Controls

Simple and effective! The main controls are used for directional movement, dashing, attacking, casting, and using a weapon's special. Although easy to learn, combos can be learned to maximize damage.

Mirror of Night

Darkness used to upgrade abilities. New abilities can be unlocked with Keys. The upgrades from the mirror are meaningful enough to feel progression between runs, but they are not so powerful that they make the game easy.

Weapons

New weapons can be unlocked with Keys. You can unlock a weapon's aspects after beating the game with the base weapon. Aspects are unlocked and upgraded using titan's blood. I am not a fan of the weapons, I think they need to be more interesting and creative. The aspects are also difficult to use efficiently or require the perfect build. I like the shield because it conforms to playing a slower and more defensive build or the bow because it focuses on keeping a distance on enemies and lining them up and hitting them with area of effect damage.

Keepsakes

Gifting nectar to characters for the first time will prompt them to give you a keepsake. The effects are varied and unique. I really like the keepsake system because you can use them to match your playstyle or you can build your playstyle around them. For example, one keepsake rewards you for clearing rooms quickly while another rewards you for not taking damage. The keepsakes from the Olympian gods ensures that the next boon you encounter comes from that god. This makes working towards certain boons and builds more consistent, which I think is necessary for some of the weapons and aspects.

Boons

Gods have boons that grant Zagreus bonuses to his attack, special, cast, dash and more! They have a cool design and good synergies. The more powerful boons also have prerequisites and can lead to getting legendary or duo boons. These boons have much stronger effects than common boons and lead to interesting decision making. However, I think that the boons suffer from balance issues. Give all the gods a few very powerful boons so that there is a chance to get something good. For example, Athena has the best dash in the

game but weak offensive boons. Poseidon just sucks.

Renovations

Some renovations have huge impacts that become part of the core gameplay, like letting you choose keepsakes between each level of the underworld. Others provide small bonuses that make escaping the underworld easier. They never really stood out to me, but they have huge passive effects.

Pact of punishment

This system allows players to control conditions that make escape attempts more difficult. I like the system because it encourages replaying the game with a variety of different conditions, and I think that the conditions are decently creative. Each condition has an associated amount of heat. The higher the heat, the harder the game. Defeating bosses on new heats will allow you to claim their bounties and earn rewards like titan's blood. One of the problems with the heat system is that some of the difficulty to heat ratios are skewed. Some conditions are easy but give a lot of heat, and some conditions are hard but don't give enough. I also think that some of the pacts have anti-synergy. For example, calisthenics program makes enemies have more health, but tight deadline reduces the amount of time you have to clear each level and complete the run. When you get to really high levels of heat, you often have to choose only one of the anti-synergistic conditions.

Story

Decent enough to keep me interested. The game does a good job progressing the story on both successful and unsuccessful runs. I like that the game provides reasons to keep trying to escape from the underworld. The characters are also extremely well written with clear personalities, including the narrator! I love Zagreus' witty and laid back attitude and the way he reacts to other characters. I think the game does an amazing job with the individual interactions

Sound and Visuals

I really liked the audio. I never played my own music over the game sounds. Attacks sounded satisfying. The soundtrack was amazing, I highly recommend checking out "Good Riddance" by Eurydice and "The Bloodless" which plays on the barge of death. The soundtrack was good enough that I searched it up after playing for the first time. Need I say more? Oh, and they also have music tutorials to play some of the songs. Thanks supergiant!