

# Gods & Monsters

## 1. Premise

The story of two brothers, Telamon and Peleus, who were friends of Heracles, voyagers on the Argo and enemies of the goddess Athena. Quest-based gameplay in which the player controls Telamon to fight, but Peleus fights alongside using unique combat mechanics. Together they combine talents to defeat armies and mythic creatures. After playing Telamon and Peleus' story, more quests become unlocked telling tales of different pairs of heroes (e.g. Heracles, Jason etc.). All heroes can be powered up by an RPG-style mechanic.

## 2. Mechanics

### 2.1. Controls

PS2	XBox	Meaning	Notes
X	A	Attack	Can press up to four times for a sequence of attacks
O	B	Power	Used with direction push to dive, flip etc Used with Attack to access special attacks
□	X	Shoot Arrow	If locked on, fires at target
△	Y	-	<i>Currently unused</i>
L1 or L2	L	Lock On	When held, locks player onto target enemy If no other button pressed, automatically blocks
R1 or R2	R	Call to Partner	Changes between Open, Co-op and Guard

### 2.2. Attacks & Special Attacks

The player's first three attacks (on the Attack button) come in quick succession; the fourth is more powerful, but much slower. The most efficient way to attack is therefore to get the rhythm of the first three attacks and never trigger the fourth (a standard fighting game mechanic).

Special attacks can be pressed by using the Power button after a different number of Attacks (A = attack button, P = power button, + = 'then press...'):

- **P:** if Power is used without a direction (or when pressing forwards), causes a jumping weapon attack carrying the player forward a short distance.
- **A + P:** power blow, that knocks back opponent a short distance
- **A + P + P:** as above, but followed by the jumping attack to close distance
- **A + A + P:** wide arc attack clears surrounding opponents (low damage)
- **A + A + A + P:** crushing blow, which can stagger opponent and lower their shield

These different combinations are simple to enter, and hence 'button mashing' still produces useful actions.

### 2.3. Locking On

Holding the Left trigger locks on to an opponent in the front arc. In this mode, the player can use all of the attacks they can use when unlocked, plus they can press Shoot to fire an arrow at their opponent.

## 2.4. Partner Trigger

When the Right trigger is pressed, the player's hero calls out to their partner for help. The partner switches between three contexts:

- **Open:** partner chooses own targets, staying within about 20 m radius of player.
- **Guard:** partner stands back-to-back with player to protect their rear
- **Co-op:** partner attacks the same target as the player, using co-operative attack.

Which context the partners goes into depends upon the circumstances, using a highly intuitive system which can easily be learned experientially:

<i>Final Context</i>		
<i>Current Context</i>	<b>If no enemy locked</b>	<b>If enemy locked on (L-trigger held)</b>
Open	→ Guard	If enemies in rear arc, → Guard Else, → Co-op
Guard	→ Open	→ Co-op
Co-op	If enemies in rear arc, → Guard Else, → Open	If enemies in rear arc, → Guard Else, → Open

Informally, when unlocked, pressing Partner trigger switches between Open and Guard. When locked on, pressing Partner trigger switches between Open and Co-op.

If the player is being attacked from behind, pressing Partner trigger instead switches to Guard.

## 2.5. Armour

To help build atmosphere, the player's state of health is shown visually, by their armour. As they take damage, they lose items of armour. First, they lose their shoulder plate (75% Armour), then their breastplate (50% Armour), then finally their helmet (25% Armour). From 24 to 1% armour they are down to just a loincloth. At 0%, they are dead.

Their partner also has armour, *but cannot be killed*. Instead, when their armour runs out they automatically go into Guard position (the safest position).

### 3. The Legends

Initially, only Telamon & Peleus can be played, but the other legends unlock progressively:

1. **Telamon & Peleus:** the two brothers travel on the Argo, until Heracles leaves the voyage, and ultimately face off against the daughters of Medusa.
2. **Atalanta & Jason:** the first half of the story of the Argonauts, told from the perspective of Greece's legendary female warrior, Atalanta, who is partnered here with Jason.
3. **Jason & Medea:** the second half of the story of the Argonauts, as Jason returns to Greece with the Golden Fleece, partnered with his new wife, the sorceress Medea.
4. **Peleus & Heracles:** the tale of five of the twelve labours of Hercules (Heracles), told from the perspective of his friend Peleus, who helped him on several labours.
5. **Theseus & Telamon:** the legendary story of Theseus and the Minotaur, with Telamon partnering Theseus.
6. **Medea & Atlanta:** as Jason betrays Medea, she seeks revenge upon him, and partners with Atalanta for her own legend.
7. **Heracles & Theseus:** the story of mighty Heracles is concluded, with him partnered with his cousin and admirer, Theseus. Ultimately, Hercales ascends to Olympus as a god.

### 4. The Quests

As well as the seven story-driven Legends above, the player can also complete seven quests – one for every hero. This is carried out in Quest Mode, in which the player can take any pair of heroes into any of the game levels. Each hero can acquire a mythic item (the Silver Bow of Artemis, Zeus' Thunderbolt, the Helm of Hades, the Winged Sandals of Hermes etc.) by completing a series of challenges which are 'hidden' in the levels, but marked with the seal of the hero's patron god. The hero then uses the item to complete a final challenge.

*For example, Medea's quest begins when her patron deity, Hecate, orders her to acquire the head of one of the daughters of Medusa. To do this, she must find where the Adamantium Sickle is held (the only weapon strong enough to cut off the head), and also acquire the Kibisis Pouch (which can hold the head safely). Only when she has found, and defeated the guardians of, these items, can she go to the daughters of the Medusa and get a Gorgon's head. Then, Hecate sends her into the Underworld to 'rescue' Persephone from Hades, using the Gorgon's head to turn her enemies to stone.*

These quests provide a reuse of resources at very little cost, and provide an extended play window, extending the value of word-of-mouth and other consumer-lead market effects.

Additionally, the player receives a letter grade (Epsilon, Delta, Gamma, Beta, Alpha or Omega) for each level in Quest Mode, allowing hardcore players to strive to get Omega on every level.

## 5. Gameplay Example

*This is set in the first Legend, Telamon & Peleus, during the part of the voyage of the Argo when these two heroes were aboard. The player is Telamon; Peleus is their partner.*

The Argo has set ashore on the Arcton peninsula, en route to the Black Sea and Colchis (where the Golden Fleece is held). Desperately short of food, all the Argonauts are told to go out seeking supplies. Telamon briefly talks to Heracles, whom both he and Peleus have befriended. He tells them that the Arcton peninsula is notoriously home to certain Earth-born giants with a bad reputation. Heracles asks the two heroes to take care, and heads off on his own.

Telamon and Peleus talk amongst themselves as they head out into the peninsula – their conversation is ended by unintelligible talking from a ridge nearby. A short engine cut shows the group of six-armed nine-foot tall giants on the other side of the ridge.

The heroes engage. At first, Telamon wades into open combat (Peleus picks his own targets), but the enemy is strong. Soon, Telamon is surrounded. He tries a wide-arc attack to throw them off, then hits his trigger to call to Peleus (“I need some help here!”). Because there are enemies in Telamon’s rear arc, Peleus rushes to fight back to back, guarding Telamon’s back.

They cut the group down to just two opponents, but another giant arrives. This one is twelve feet tall, and is dressed in black armour – the leader of this group. Telamon hits his trigger to free up Peleus (“Go get them...”), and then locks onto the leader of the group. He starts hitting, but the giant’s defence is too strong, and it keeps using a shield to block.

Telamon decides to take out the grunts first, then deal with the leader. Still locked, he hits his trigger to assign Peleus to that target (“Keep the leader busy for me!”), putting Peleus in Co-op mode, then releases the lock trigger (Peleus continues attacking the leader).

Locking onto a distant foe that Peleus has already reduced to just a helm, Telamon hits his arrow button repeatedly and the giant falls down dead – but as he does the other giant hits him and sends him flying. He loses his breastplate – he’s down to 50% Armour. He’s scored a 3-hit combo at the moment from the arrows, and Peleus hits the giant leader 4 times, extending this combo to 7 while the player while gets their bearings.

Quickly locking onto the last grunt before the combo fades, he starts hitting it just in time to continue the combo. Because a second opponent has been added to the combo, a x2 appears by the combo count, and after 8 hits (15 hits total) the giant falls.

The player locks back onto the leader (combo x3), but as he does, Peleus’ last piece of armour is removed – Peleus falls into Guard (“I can’t hold him any longer”). Telamon will have to defeat the giant on his own. After another 4 hits, the player is knocked back and with Peleus in Guard mode, the combo is broken at  $19 \times 3 = 57$ . The player’s helm is knocked off – they only have 25% Armour left.

Falling back a safe distance, the player locks on and lets loose with arrows. Although Peleus is in Guard, Telamon hits trigger to toggle Peleus into Co-op... since Peleus cannot leave the Guard position without getting some armour, this causes Peleus to shoot arrows to defend Telamon – so the two unleash a rain of arrows together. The giant leader falls, and the highest combo score of the battle (57) is used to upgrade the loot – which includes full armour and a big plus to Attack.

The two carry on, and come to a flock of sheep. Perfect food for the voyage! Telamon tries to grab one, but they run away too fast. Flipping into Co-op (“Help me corner one of these damn sheep!”), the two co-operate to bring down the sheep. They round up the last few with arrows, leaving a dead flock and mutton for all.

The camera pans back to a nearby ridge. From behind it can be see a smooth mound, which rises upwards... then higher... and higher... until a huge thirty foot tall Cyclops shepherd can be seen towering angrily above it’s now slaughtered flock!

Telamon locks on, and triggers Peleus into Co-op (“Try and hit its skullcap!”). Peleus begins hitting the Cyclops’ skullcap (a context-specified behaviour in this case), which partly covers the single eye. When he does, the shepherd stops briefly to readjust its position. Telamon times his shot perfectly and an arrow pierces the Cyclops’ eye, blinding it! The giant comes falls to its hands and knees and begins groping after the two heroes in a blind panic. The adventure continues...

## 6. Notes

### How does the game emotionally involve the player?

- “Buddy movie” stories following the adventures of various pairings of heroes
- Vivid, believable recreation of mythic Greece (rather than over-the-top fantasy)
- RPG structure immerses player as they work to ‘power up’ their heroes
- Strong non-linear interconnections between the stories (“Mythological *Pulp Fiction*”)
- Later quests relate to the relationships between the heroes

### How does the game function as wish-fulfilment?

- Player engages in larger-than-life heroics
- Epic quest format
- Player is immersed in famous mythology

### How does the game appeal to the hardcore gamer?

- Multi-level controls allows hardcore players to perfect ‘advanced’ combat techniques (earning greater rewards in terms of character advancement by using combos to ‘upgrade’ power ups)
- RPG-style format popular with hardcore
- “Fantasy” settings popular with hardcore
- Constant unlocking of materials (new heroes, then mythic items) forms addictive motivating factor

### How does the game appeal to the casual gamer?

- Easy controls, allows the player to “button-mash” and still progress
- RPG format allows less-expert players to “level up” to tackle tougher quests
- Immersive mechanics (very little displayed as HUD overlays) builds atmosphere
- Quasi-historical setting provides easy identification with game world

### Market notes

- Greek monsters are the most recognisable mythic creatures in the West and are perennially popular (especially amongst young males)
- *Shin Sangoku Musou* (*Dynasty Warriors* in the West) series succeeded incredibly in the Japanese market (top five sales positions) by drawing on an identifiable mythology – the Three Kingdoms. (This Three Kingdoms setting is extremely famous and popular in Japan and China). *Gods & Monsters* presents a Westernised version of this approach, using a recognisable Western mythology as the basis for the game.
- Multi-character progression (through reuse of materials in new story contexts) creates longer play window for hardcore players, resulting in longer shelf life and greater capacity to cross over into the casual audience.