

Strider 2 – Sony PlayStation

Developed by: Capcom (<http://www.capcom.com>)

Published by: Capcom (<http://www.capcom.com>)

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: N/A

Genre: Action

Number of Players: One

ESRB: Everyone

Overall Rating: 7

Graphics: 7/10

Sound: 6/10

Documentation: 7/10

Getting Started: 8/10

Gameplay: 7/10

Value: 7/10

The Good Press: Lightning quick and responsive control; the plasma sword/grappling hook combination is still hella cool; nostalgic gamers will enjoy the inclusion of the original *Strider*.

The Bad Press: The game is incredibly short and unchallenging; repetitive sound.

Supports: Memory card, vibration function

Overview: *Strider 2* is a worthy, if a little short, sequel to the outstanding original.

Tips:

Try to save your power boosts for bosses. And since your homing plasma waves emanate from your sword, continually slash regardless of the distance from your enemy.

If you find yourself falling to your death, press the jump button at the last moment to see if you can catch a wall.

Eleven long years we've waited, but at long last Capcom has released the sequel to the awesome Sega Genesis platformer *Strider*. *Strider 2* successfully combines all of the great hack-and-slash action that made the original so popular, with a much peppier engine, improved graphics, and an acrobatic prowess that would put *Cirque du Soleil* to shame.

Some time in the future, excess overpopulation has caused starvation and turmoil on the earth. The world is under the ruthless control of a notorious dictator known as the Grandmaster. Under his reign, people are at war, disease is spreading, and the few remaining that fight for justice are immediately jailed and confined. The fate of the world is left up to one of the few remaining "Striders" (an underground order with skills similar to ninjas) named Hiryu. Armed with a lethal plasma sword (the "Cypher") and his trusty grappling hook, Hiryu sets out to destroy the Grandmaster and restore order to the Earth.

Fans of the original *Strider* will have no trouble getting acclimated to the gameplay in *Strider 2*. You'll basically only need three buttons to control most of the action (one to jump, one to wield your weapon, and one to slide), but mastering the more complex moves will take practice. The game action takes place at a feverish pace, so much of the challenge involves using lightning-fast reflexes and some impressive aerial maneuvers to avoid traps and enemy attacks. As you might imagine, sliding at just the right moment to avoid the swing of a sword, performing a backwards somersault to grapple the wall behind you, and dicing up the unsuspecting enemy from behind all in under a second is quite a gratifying experience, and is just one of a myriad of moves you can easily pull off to dispatch enemies. With a little creativity and Hiryu's amazing athletic ability, the sky's the limit as to what you can do, and this is what makes the *Strider* games such a blast to play.

The level design was one of the original *Strider's* main strong points, and you'll be happy to know that extra attention was obviously paid to this facet in the sequel as well. *Strider 2* is by no means your average platformer, as you'll have to contend with gigantic leaps, death-defying wall jumps, and rooms with various levels of gravity in order to succeed. Different missions also keep you on your toes with such challenges as disabling a helicopter in mid-air, and duking it out with a snake-like boss creature high above the skyscrapers of a bustling metropolis. As you progress, you'll have to master use of the grappling hook—a vital tool that is simple and fun to use, but is difficult to master. The Cypher sword also has to rank up there as one of the coolest weapons ever used in a video game. This razor-sharp plasma sword is just as deadly as you remember and can be upgraded to improve

its range and power. Another new feature allows you to temporarily power up Hiryu significantly. When this boost is enabled, Hiryu's attacks are momentarily powered up and the beams of plasma that emanate from his sword home in on the enemies. This is especially useful for the many bosses you'll have to face, but should be used sparingly as you're only allowed to use it once per level.

The graphics in *Strider 2* certainly aren't pushing the PlayStation to its limits, but are solid nonetheless. Hiryu himself, the enemies and the backgrounds are all nicely varied and colorful, but seem to lack detail. You'll quickly look past the graphical shortcomings though since the game moves along at an impressive frame-rate and only slows down occasionally when multiple enemies are onscreen. On the sound side, you'll quickly grow tired of the constant grunts of Hiryu as he swings his sword. Maybe I'm old school, but I much preferred the distinctive "schwing" noise used in the original game. The music is perhaps the best aspect of *Strider 2*'s aesthetic performance, and fits the mood of the game perfectly.

Despite enormous entertainment value and rock-solid control, there are a few problems with *Strider 2*. Most notably, the game is painfully short and unchallenging. The average gamer can probably purchase this title, rip it open, and have the whole thing licked in a matter of an hour or two. There is no need to save your game (it's a good thing too since you don't have the option), and when you run out of lives, you can simply continue an unlimited number of times until you finish the game. Worse yet, when you continue, you begin exactly where you left off—you don't have to begin the level again. Now, I'm not one who enjoys playing through an entire level again just because of one ill-timed jump, but this is almost too easy. This problem is curbed somewhat by the ability to find secret locations and power ups, but for such a long-awaited sequel, the fact that it's over so soon is a bit disappointing. It also should be noted that Capcom was kind enough to include the original *Strider* in the package, and although it doesn't offer anything new, it's still an entertaining trip down memory lane nonetheless.

Overall, *Strider 2* certainly was an enjoyable game while it lasted, and the inclusion of the original *Strider* certainly adds to the replay value. Still, it's too bad Capcom couldn't have put forth a little more effort into making the game a little longer and more challenging. As it stands, *Strider 2* offers a good three-to-four hours of fast-paced fun if you take the time to find the secrets, thus making it a perfect candidate for a weekend rental.