Skateboarding is better in hell

Skate Story is two very different things simultaneously. On the one hand, it's a visceral take on skateboarding, providing a tight, fast, ground-level view as you brute-force your way through tricks and combos. But it's also a surrealist trip through the underworld where you control a skateboarding demon who faces off against the devil. Think of it like Dante's *Inferno* meets *Thrasher* magazine, and you're most of the way there.

The premise is actually quite a bit stranger than just skating through hell. You play as a demon made of glass, who is both hungry and tired, and so decides to… eat the moon. This pisses off the devil, and your response is to delve into the deeper layers of hell where even more tasty moons of various colors await. You're guided by a talking rabbit, and at various points you'll meet a pigeon blogger, frog barista, a cute bag of trash, and a whole lot of talking skeletons.

The result is sort of a mashup of skateboarding and adventure games. In order to descend further into hell, you'll need to complete tasks, which mostly involve doing a lot of skateboarding. *Skate Story*'s world is essentially divided into three types of levels. There are hub areas where you can skate freely, and also take on tasks like doing the devil's laundry or find a permit so you can take a nap. Usually this involves pulling off specific combos of tricks, collecting items, or chasing down something or someone. There are also fast-paced sequences where you speed down a set path trying not to crash while racing through portals, and elaborate boss battles where you have to defeat eldritch horrors by pulling off combos.

Basically, it’s a lot of skateboarding with some cryptic and occasionally philosophical dialogue thrown in. Which is just fine because the skating in *Skate Story* is excellent. The action plays out from a third-person perspective, but with the camera in nice and tight, sort of like *Gears of War*, bringing you really close to what’s going on. So even though *Skate Story* is pretty forgiving — wiping out means shattering your glass body, but you can restart immediately — it feels incredibly tense and reactive. Actions have weight to them. Even better: the controls are relatively straightforward, at least by skateboarding standards, so it’s possible to do cool combos without warping your hand into a claw. The game also really gradually introduces new concepts letting you slowly get the hang of things. You don’t even learn how to grind until a few chapters in.

What really brings the two sides of *Skate Story* together is its sense of style. This is the coolest looking game I’ve played in ages. Almost everything is harsh and gritty, from the goth color scheme to the jagged glowing spikes that serve as obstacles. There are towering red skeletons just lazing about, and levels that look like you’re grinding through a hellish version of New York City, complete with bagel shops and subway tunnels. It looks like nothing else I’ve ever played, particularly when you mix in the adorable side characters, who soften things, and the surprisingly chill soundtrack that helps you get in that flow state so necessary to skating.

Skate Story *is out December 8th on the PS5, PC, and Nintendo Switch 2.*

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