

The Last of Us on PC is a rare disappointing PlayStation port at launch

I was expecting to write about how *The Last of Us Part I* arriving on PC is the latest example of a great PC port of a Sony PlayStation title. Unfortunately, that's not the case. *The Last of Us Part I* arrived on PC yesterday and players aren't happy. Out of more than 9,000 reviews in the Steam store, 67 percent are negative.

PC players are reporting issues that range from random crashes and stuttering, all the way up to long shader compilation times and characters randomly becoming dripping wet in cut scenes. The game also appears to be poorly optimized, taking up large amounts of VRAM on systems and dropping frames. I've personally experienced crashes and random frame rate drops on my own test system, which is a top-end gaming PC equipped with an RTX 4090.

It's bad enough that PlayStation studio Naughty Dog has had to issue a statement. "*The Last of Us Part I* PC players: we've heard your concerns, and our team is actively investigating multiple issues you've reported," the studio tweeted from its official account. "We will continue to update you, but our team is prioritizing updates and will address issues in upcoming patches."

The response comes nearly two months after Naughty Dog delayed the release of *The Last of Us Part I* on PC, after saying it wanted to "make sure that *The Last of Us Part I* PC debut is in the best shape possible." The additional few weeks of development were supposed to ensure the game "lives up to

your, and our, standards.”

The game was also supposed to launch on Steam Deck, after Naughty Dog co-president Neil Druckmann teased it last year and Valve used the title in a recent marketing image for its handheld gaming PC. *The Last of Us Part I* isn’t verified for the Steam Deck yet, and it takes around an hour for the shaders to compile on the handheld machine. If you try to run the game before that you might as well give up, as you’re going to get incredibly poor performance until the shader processing is complete. But waiting that one hour for shaders to compile is half of the two-hour Steam refund window, which is less than ideal.

Even once shaders have compiled on the Steam Deck, performance still isn’t great. During cut scenes the frame rate holds solid, but in the opening scenes of the game I saw frame rates regularly under 30fps and even 20fps with a mix of low and medium settings and FSR quality enabled. Others are seeing similar results. It feels like Naughty Dog will need to do a lot more work to optimize this on Steam Deck and get it fully verified.

Professional reviewers and critics haven’t been able to sound the alarm because nobody got codes before the game launched yesterday. That’s usually a warning sign that a game is coming in hot, and after the delay to launch it certainly feels like the developers should have been given even more time to polish this PC port. It has left many fans, myself included, wondering if the PC port was rushed out to take advantage of HBO’s well-received *Last of Us* TV show. Given this is already a remake of a game released a decade ago, there was little need to rush the port.

a: hover]: text-gray-63 [>a: hover]: shadow-underline-black
dark: [>a: hover]: text-gray-bd dark: [>a: hover]: shadow-
underline-gray [>a]: shadow-underline-gray-63 dark: [>a]: text-
gray-bd dark: [>a]: shadow-underline-gray”>Screenshot by Tom

Warren / The Verge

A lot of the crashes and general performance issues could be down to shader building issues. Extended shader compilation steps and in-game stutter have plagued many recent PC titles, and developers have increasingly turned to compiling them when the game first loads to avoid stuttering down the line.

Iron Galaxy and Naughty Dog have teamed up for *The Last of Us Part I* PC port, and it appears that a buggy version of the Oodle decompression library that the team is using could be causing performance and shader building issues. Some Reddit users have found that replacing the library with an older version has improved performance and dramatically sped up shader building times.

If the Oodle decompression library is indeed causing issues then this could be a relatively quick and easy fix to address some of the initial problems, but I suspect the shader compilation at launch won't disappear entirely. Iron Galaxy previously opted for this approach for *Uncharted: Legacy of Thieves* on PC. *Digital Foundry* labelled that effort "an accomplished but unambitious PC port," and noted its issues with stuttering and load times.

a: hover]: text-gray-63 [>a: hover]: shadow-underline-black
dark: [>a: hover]: text-gray-bd dark: [>a: hover]: shadow-underline-gray [>a]: shadow-underline-gray-63 dark: [>a]: text-gray-bd dark: [>a]: shadow-underline-gray">Screenshot by Tom Warren / The Verge

The disappointing launch of *The Last of Us Part I* on PC follows some impressive recent ports from Sony's PlayStation PC effort. *Marvel's Spider-Man Remastered* and *Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales* are both great PC ports, and last year's *God of War* release on PC was one of the best yet. While *Returnal* and *Sackboy* both suffered from some stuttering for their PC debuts, they were both better examples of PlayStation PC ports than the technical issues that plagued *Horizon Zero Dawn* on PC nearly three years ago.

Sony now wants half of its games to be on PC and mobile by 2025, with some ambitious plans to grow its gaming presence beyond its PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5 consoles. “We have the opportunity to move from a situation of being present in a very narrow segment of the overall gaming software market, to being present pretty much everywhere,” said PlayStation chief Jim Ryan last year.

References to a PlayStation PC launcher were also spotted in *Spider-Man Remastered* for PC, suggesting that Sony could be looking at PlayStation Network integration for future PC games. Sony also started using a PlayStation PC label in 2021, acquired a PC port developer, and launched its own PC gaming monitors.

This PlayStation PC push sounds promising for PC gamers, but many will now be waiting to see what Sony does next. The entire *The Last of Us* franchise has sold through more than 37 million copies, and this year has already been massive for *The Last of Us* thanks to the TV adaptation. This week’s release was supposed to be another big moment for PlayStation games on PC.

June also marks the 10-year anniversary of the game, which means the PC port has put a temporary dampener on *The Last of Us*’ big year. Porting console games to PC has never been an easy ride for any developer, and Iron Galaxy and Naughty Dog will now need to move quickly to fix things up.

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/3/29/23661352/last-of-us-part-i-pc-launch-bugs-issues>