



GAME ANALYSIS



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Project 1 - Game Analysis
Game Design Introduction
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Kingdom Hearts - Game Description

Name of Game: Kingdom Hearts

Created by: Tetsuya Nomura (gameplay/story) and Shinji Hashimoto from Square Enix

Original Release: 2002

Original Platform: PlayStation 2

Mode: Single Player

Game Introduction

Kingdom Hearts (Square Enix, 2002) is the first game of a long series of collaborative action role playing games between Square Enix (Matsuda, 2015) and Disney Interactive Studios (The Walt Disney Company, 2015). Ultimately developed and published by Square Enix, the creators of the *Final Fantasy* series, under the direction of Tetsuya Nomura. *Kingdom Hearts* is a fast-paced action



Kingdom Hearts Opening Scene (*Kingdom Hearts*, 2002)

role-playing game presented in a third-person camera angle with elements of a hack and slash system made for the PlayStation 2. The game centres around an optimistic boy named Sora in a universe that encounters Disney worlds. After his home world is destroyed by creatures of darkness and his friends were separated, Sora is chosen by a mysterious weapon called the Keyblade. With the help of its power, Sora embarks on his quest to find his friends and ultimately stop the chaos of darkness (*kingdomhearts*, 2015).

Audience

The audience for this game is considered 11 years and up according to the original Australian packaging, however, has also been shown as 8+ on the Platinum packaging (GameFAQs, 2015). In my opinion, this game really has no age limit. The way the game is structured allows both children and adults to really enjoy the atmosphere. *Kingdom Hearts* crosses over both Disney and Final Fantasy elements into the game. It's satisfying for the audience to watch their favourite movies or childhood memories come to life; to explore the worlds that gave us so much joy and to actually become a part of them. The characters, sound tracks and worlds are extremely recognisable to most people. *Kingdom Hearts* reaches everyone who has a love for Disney, Final Fantasy or just loves a fun and light hearted role playing game.



Platinum Cover of *Kingdom Hearts*
(GameFAQs, 2015)



Game Play Mechanics

Kingdom Hearts is an action role-playing game with a “button-mash” mechanic. It follows a linear story line with the use of cut scenes that are frequently accompanied by a boss fight to determine your advancement in the game. The Player is the controller of the protagonist, Sora; you guide him through his journey, fighting evil creatures of darkness known as Heartless. You are almost always assisted by the characters Donald Duck and Goofy whom act as artificial intelligence-controlled non-playable characters that have minimal customisation options (Gamespot, 2015).

The player is confronted by real-time combat and can rotate physical and magic attacks as well as use items to help the party or use utility moves such as dodge roll and jump to evade enemy attacks. The game involves an experience point system that allows you to level up with each enemy you defeat, which in turn boosts your Health and Magic Points or allows you to gain new abilities. In this particular game of the Kingdom Hearts franchise, you are rewarded with special experience called “Tech Points”. These are experience rewarded to you for a technical attack that exploits an enemy’s weakness, parries an enemy attack or deflects their own attack back at them. This feature of the game makes it a lot more enjoyable for experienced gamers that want to master the game. What makes this game so gratifying is the subtle level up of Sora; if you compare Sora from the beginning of the journey to the end game, you see an incredible difference of gameplay which is rewarded to Players that invest time and effort.

The gameplay also features secret bosses and side events such as the Coliseum Tournaments. These allow the game to still be enjoyed after you have finished the story line. They are somewhat more challenging than the rest of the game experience to keep you entertained long after the plot ending.



The only game in the franchise to include “Tech Points” is *Kingdom Hearts* and its HD remake. This made the game challenging and gave hardcore gamers something to master.

This is the typical opening start menu interface. Players can navigate through different sub-menus which let them look at their items, change Sora’s Keyblade and check their Journal which shows the Player’s progress as well as records the Heartless they have defeated.



More Typical Game Screen Shots



Beginning of the game, having little health and magic. Screen shot shows the lock on feature as well as the party swap options. This Player has taken out Goofy and added in Tarzan.

The command HUD allows Players to scroll through in a real time battle to quickly pull out potions or use magic.

We can see Sora has been hit in this screenshot, his character HUD flinches in pain and will even start looking sick when extremely low health as opposed to happy.



This is an end game look at level up. The health bar has increased dramatically, we can see the difference between gaming while roaming and gaming during combat. The command HUD is blue instead of red. This creates an interactive atmosphere as well as gives the Player visual cues to know they have entered combat.



Looking at menu design and customisation, the Player is able to customise what abilities they want active. This allows you to create your own combo length and style of game play, if a Player prefers magic over strength moves they can use abilities that aid magic attacks. This allows Players to experiment with different abilities.



Game History and Context

Kingdom Hearts, developed by Square Enix and directed by Tetsuya Nomura, is considered a cultural hybrid between a Japanese role playing game and western popular culture. This is due to the American company of Disney Interactive being a part of the production (Games and Culture, 2015). This hybrid element is what caused *Kingdom Hearts* to attract so many different Players. It strongly identifies with both American and Japanese popular culture and has even been suggested to promote negative media globalization in that “Disney saves the world” (Brookey, 2010).

2002 was quite a dry year for games as there was the release of many sequels and prequels, in other words more clones of already made games. However, the PlayStation 2 console really knocked it out of the park. Coming in with seven out of the top ten grossing video games of 2002 (Wikipedia, 2015), *Kingdom Hearts* being 8th on the list.

Kingdom Hearts was incredibly different to every other game of its time. It was one of the only real-time action hack and slash role-playing games of its era. The game has its own innovative play style, you get to decide how you want to play the game by changing your abilities around or valuing magic over physical attacks, you can run through enemies or fight every single one. When this game was created, there was nothing as fast paced. *Kingdom Hearts* has depth and created a world that when conceptualised, seemed like it would crash and burn however Square Enix made it work seamlessly. Even though Disney plays an important role in the story, I wouldn't say *Kingdom Hearts* is a rip off or unoriginal. In fact, I think it's quite the opposite. It took ideas from already made franchises and collided them together to create an original intellectual property.

The first *Kingdom Hearts* game sits 7th on the top selling games Square Enix has ever created with approximately 4.68 million copies sold (VG Sales, 2015). It lead to six other original titles being created, a mobile game and two collections of high definition remakes on the PlayStation 3. There is also a trading card game and several manga series, along with books, soundtracks, clothing, merchandise and figurines all based off the franchise. Future titles include the release of *Kingdom Hearts 3* which many fans have been patiently waiting for.

Kingdom Hearts had no significant step forward for games technology, however it was definitely a beautiful game that gave great respect to the technology available. Due to his direction in *Kingdom Hearts*, Tetsuya Nomura was given the “Excellence in Visual Arts” award by the International Game Developers Association (Wikipedia, 2015) and he continues to impress fans and the like with his outstanding art direction. This was one of the games that put Square Enix on the map, along with their other massive franchise *Final Fantasy*.



Kingdom Hearts Start Screen (Kingdom Hearts, 2002)



Rules and Strategies

Juul's Six Features

Kingdom Hearts has simple and straight forward operational controls. It involves a single Player conducting Sora's abilities through the use of a "command list" and using the analog stick to manoeuvre around a fictional environment. Rules such as how to move, interact and fight are learned through tutorials. The Player must progress through the story to unlock new places, they cannot just jump to the end zone. The Player is bound to the implicit rules which include how much experience you obtain, attack speed and animations, "Munny" obtained, respawning and the boundaries Sora can walk into.

The quantifiable outcome of *Kingdom Hearts* is defeating the final boss and thus completing the story. However, Players are then given the option to roam around after seeing the final cut-scene of the story. This is a less valorised outcome, however hardcore Players can enjoy playing more content that is only available to finished games. Players may assign different value to how much they level, how much they explore and how much of the game content has been completed.

The Player can choose how much effort they exert to get to the quantifiable outcome. Whether they choose to defeat all enemies, do all side quests, level up or just play through the story is up to the Player. Fighting and Exploring is required to finish the story line and Players will find it more challenging not having levelled up meaning more effort must be exerted in boss fights rather than effort exerted in grinding.

The attachment of this game is through its rich narrative drive. The more the Player experiences *Kingdom Hearts*, the more they are introduced to the story and characters creating the need to help Sora save the world. Finishing the story means the individual Player "wins", giving them a sense of accomplishment. All consequences in the game are harmless and as it is an individual experience there is no team to let down for playing poorly.

Game Theory

As the game is a single player, it is not a zero sum game. If the player dies they can either respawn or reload their game, so there is no losing. The game is a single shot game, you play it once and then cannot go back to change what you have done without replaying the game entirely. However, if you are to repeat the gameplay, you can strategize how you want to play and know what you will be up against. You can prepare potions or level up before entering a section of the game you know to be challenging.

Kingdom Hearts is an imperfect gameplay experience the first time a Player lives it. You don't know what will happen or what sort of twist will occur in the story. First-time Players are unaware of the abilities you will obtain, the magic you will acquire and the places you will see. The controls stay pretty much the same throughout the game, however new abilities allow additional controls creating more unknown variables of gameplay.

In terms of strategy for *Kingdom Hearts*, you aren't trying to defeat a randomised artificial intelligence, their moves and abilities stay the same. This means that once you have perfected a dominant strategy, defeating an enemy becomes quite simple. However, each boss has different mechanics and different strategies must be employed for each enemy.

The game does not allow the player to think with a payoff matrix, it's extremely fast paced and real time as well as being a linear progression. You do not get to re-attempt successful gameplay unless you restart the game. The game is fairly balanced in that there are multiple ways you can win a fight while always confronting challenge. In an end game situation where Sora becomes max level, he becomes extremely overpowered and can kill smaller enemies in one hit. However, if you were to get to this level before finishing the game, it would take many hours of grinding, so in that sense it is balanced in terms of "if you put in the effort you get the rewards". Players who put in hard effort will, in turn, become more attached to the game creating a better game experience. (Juul, 2005)



Analysis of Narrative Elements

Understanding the Narrative

The Kingdom Hearts franchise is notorious for its complex storyline. Many commenting on it being confusing or convoluted (Gamesradar, 2014). The storyline may be very intricate however it really isn't hard to follow. *Kingdom Hearts* is filled with depth and layers which makes the whole overarching narrative difficult to explain to someone who hasn't played the game, however it becomes easy to understand as soon as a Player steps into the world.

As *Kingdom Hearts* is the first instalment of the Kingdom Hearts franchise, the game does not rely on knowing any previous plot to understand it. However, in later in the series, *Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep* (Square Enix, 2010) reveals a part of the timeline that was before the original Kingdom Hearts which makes you see the initial plot differently and understand more about the enemies you encounter. In addition, knowing the plots of the various Disney franchises that are revealed would definitely help you connect to the story and understand the atmosphere. It isn't entirely necessary to know the original Disney stories, the worlds loosely follow the natural plot of their own specific tale however put a "Kingdom Hearts" twist on it in order to push the predominant narrative forward.

The story unfolds by means of cut scenes which determine the Player's progression. After being introduced to the "Gummi Ship", you are then able to travel to new worlds through a map which acts as an over world for the game. The Player unlocks more worlds as they advance through the game, until they ultimately reach the final world and conclude the primary story and are greeted with the ending cut scene. Depending on how well the Player adventured and unlocked the game's secrets, they were treated to a secret cut scene.



Even Sora doesn't understand his own narrative.
(Kingdom Hearts, 2002)

Narrative Structure

Kingdom Hearts follows a linear structure however includes layers of a classical modelled story instead of conforming to Freytag's three-act structure (Workshop 3, 2015). Kingdom Hearts creates an overall conflict, the need to find your friends and get back to your island that seemed to be destroyed. However, within this we are met with antagonists who are trying to gain the power of darkness, internal conflict within the different worlds and enemies who Sora runs into with every turn. There are layers of conflict spiking many climactic experiences and resolutions throughout the game. It has a controlled branching linear story with an overarching plot conflict. Suspense is created through use of cut-scenes foreshadowing events and showing the Player more of the story. The player must progress further through the game in order to see the next cut-scene play out generating interest of "What will happen next?"

Narrative Influences

Kingdom Hearts is set in a fictional galaxy comprising of Disney worlds and original Kingdom Hearts worlds. The main storyline is rather unique, it involves an ordinary boy that has been thrust into heroism which could be considered cliché however there is never a dull moment in the story. The worlds involve stories loosely based on their respective Disney franchise, however twisted to include the original main characters. Donald Duck and Goofy are usually seen as the main character's companions, however in this sense Donald Duck is an experienced wizard and Goofy is the king's knight, again reconstructing Disney characters to fit into the Kingdom Hearts scenario.



Themes

The main themes presented in this narrative are the importance of friendship. The game is about never giving up on yourself or your friends. The game is about not giving in to “darkness” and even if you do, you can always find the light. *Kingdom Hearts* is filled with heartfelt and extremely cheesy quotes about friendship, light and strength. These dramatic quotes are a part of the appeal and amplify the dramatic story.



Friendship is magic! (Kingdom Hearts, 2002)

Interactivity and Story

Kingdom Hearts has no equal when it comes to story because it is so farfetched and is a miracle in itself that the story works. The progression through cut scenes adds to the flow of the game rather than takes away from it as every cut-scene develops the story. Smooth transitions between rooms and worlds make for a polished gameplay experience. Most of what Sora accomplishes in the game make the story progress, there is rarely a moment where the Player is forced to do something that has no meaning to the story.

The game has no sense of fictional time. There is no change of day to night but rather a continuous mood lighting to create atmosphere that differs from world to world. The game calculates how long you have spent on each saved file however it does not affect the story.

The Player has little control over the events that take place in the narrative, there are no choices only linear progression. There are two battles that can either be won or lost, a fight with a giant heartless at the beginning of the game and a fight to a Final Fantasy character called Leon. If you win or lose these fights the plot continues and a similar cut-scene takes place, winning these battles has a minimal effect through metagaming but if you lose you do not get another chance (Neoseeker, 2010).

The game evokes narrative through it's soundtrack, when you enter a combat situation or a dramatic part of the story the music changes to create a believable world and atmosphere, it evokes motivation to fight. How the Player manoeuvres Sora to navigate and survey the world is *Kingdom Hearts*' enacted narrative, as well as engaging with enemies. It's already been discussed multiple times, however cut-scenes are the motivation of the story. There are embedded at certain points in the game, and when triggered they uncover part of the plot. Different qualities of cut-scenes are presented to show hierarchy of story events, particularly the opening scene and the ending scene. *Kingdom Hearts* doesn't cater for emergent narrative.



The dramatic moments of *Kingdom Hearts* were always defined by their high definition, incredible audio and beautiful composition. (Kingdom Hearts, 2002)



Analysis of Simulation Qualities

Simulation vs Reality and Functionality

Kingdom Hearts has its own fictional physics system which pushes the boundaries of real-world simulation. For example, performing an attack combination while jumping allows Sora to stay in the air until said combination is finished. In a real-world simulation, gravity would have forced the character to drop to the floor. However, this helps gameplay run smoothly and creates a hack and slash system that feels like it transcends what reality could offer. Within the unlimited physics that is presented in the game, Sora handles as you would expect him to handle. He consistently abides by the in-game physics which allows the world to be believed. Smaller, yet important qualities of simulations such as leaving a trail of footprints in the sand or waves constantly hitting the shore, allow the world to feel like it could be real through Player expectations thus making it immersive.

Most simulations in *Kingdom Hearts* are quite unrealistic, but together they make a believable fictional world. The ability to wield a large and heavy key but swing it like a twig makes the game fun and run smoothly. It would make for awkward gameplay if this game had lots of real-world qualities. Even the character design pushes the boundaries of being “human”. Sora has big anime eyes and clown feet, all designed to break the reality and let players know that it’s just a game. We relate to the characters because they speak English and resemble a human, but not necessarily are one. The environment is cartoon-like and bulky, again creating a fictional cartoon atmosphere. The functionality of the game is questionable in a real-life situation. The fact that the main character can hold an abundance of potions, several keyblades, many synthesis items and carry around 99 dalmatian puppies with not a bag in sight, is a little questionable in reality but it works within the game environment.

The original *Kingdom Hearts* doesn’t have much space for emergent game play. The only “Asshole Physics” aspect of the game is the ability to keep hitting the opponent after they are defeated for a short period of time in slow motion. Whether this was intentional is unknown, however Players can get a few extra dirty hits on bosses they really dislike. In the remake, *Kingdom Hearts 1.5 Final Mix*, an ability called EXP Zero lets you use a semi-glitch that gives you extra damage on a finisher for the exchange of not getting any experience points. Characters that Sora summons have every hit act like a finisher, so some summons can tear through bosses really fast creating emergent speed-run game play. Again, the original was actually designed quite well, too well some might say, to allow for unpredicted strategies. Not to say that there is only one strategy to beat the game, however there are no ground breaking glitches that allow you to fast track to the end or turn your keyblade into an umbrella.



Sora and his gravity-defying hair! (*Kingdom Hearts 1.5 HD ReMIX*, 2013)



Analysis of Game Aesthetics

Audio-Visual Aesthetics

Kingdom Hearts was named “Best Art Style/Direction” by IGN in 2003 (Wikipedia, 2015) and rightly so. Its distinct anime influenced style is one of the significant elements that sets the game apart from other fantasy role playing games of its era. The Kingdom Hearts aesthetic is colourful, saturated and almost comical. This allows a breath of fresh air in a world dominated by first-person shooters which continue to advocate the colour brown. It promoted an essence of fun which is what all games should be doing. The anime style could almost be considered a modern version of romanticism. Taking reality and bending it to be beautiful allowing an escape to a fantasy world. Hartmann’s research stated in regards to the fantasy genre “it is a tendency to imagine oneself experiencing the feelings of fictitious others (2006)”, with this in mind, Players can feel more empathetic to the characters of Kingdom Hearts through it’s visual aesthetic.



Despite Nomura’s incredible anime art direction, Sora draws like he suffers from Parkinson’s.
(Kingdom Hearts, 2002)

The game has you flying through space to travel to new worlds you unlock as you progress. These worlds are extremely distinct, you can always tell where you are within the game. Particularly in the worlds of The Little Mermaid, you are underwater and turn into merfolk, and again in the world of The Nightmare Before Christmas, Sora and his party adopt creepy looking costumes to fit into the town and it’s atmosphere. The world of Alice in Wonderland kept changing gravities and finding new ways to surprise you. All the worlds are intimate and immersive allowing the player to feel as though they are actually adventuring.

The Disney factor plays a massive role in how the game works, looks and sounds. In regards to the audio, the Disney theme songs fit within the environment perfectly. The songs specific for each Disney franchise stay within their individual world; this allows the player to submerge themselves into the world’s unique atmosphere. However, what makes this game even more captivating is the original Kingdom Hearts music. It captures the emotional and physical journey of the game. From the enchanting music that plays when you first start up the game to the epic fast-paced battle music, it always fits with the escalated emotion of both Sora and the Player.

Game Aesthetics

The game has very little agency in terms of narrative as you are always following the same plot. However, the player is able to slightly alter which parts of the story come first depending on which world they visit first. When in a real-time combat situation, the player has full control over how much they attack, block, use magic or use potions. If the Player chooses to walk through the game and not attack enemies, they will find the consequence is becoming under levelled. In this sense, the Player is encouraged to immerse themselves in gameplay.

Kingdom Hearts promotes different types of fun, it is challenging yet has a simple hack and slash control. To attack you spam the attack input button which means combat isn’t entirely hard to play in terms of controls, however it’s learning when to attack, when to defend and when to cast magic that allows Players to generate strategies to defeat different enemy artificial intelligence. There is rarely a relaxing moment as the Player is always being confronted with enemies lurking about the world. This makes it hard for the Player to break concentration with the game and makes it easy for them to lose themselves in the game’s atmosphere.

Kingdom Hearts advocates itself as an action role-playing game genre and surprises its audience with an extremely fast paced real-time combat system. It was the beginning of a game genre that hadn’t been developed to this quality of functionality and flow. The game features a space overworld where the Player can enter different planet levels. The Player is then greeted with local geography in a third person view and can roam around sandbox areas. The transitions between space is really smooth in this game, you see Sora open a door and walk through rather than a loading screen which creates the feel of an open world environment.



Gameplay Comparison

Instead of comparing *Kingdom Hearts* to another franchise, I shall compare it to its later instalments being *Kingdom Hearts 2* (Square Enix, 2005) and *Kingdom Hearts: Birth by Sleep* (Square Enix, 2010). Each game functions differently and has different game mechanics. Square Enix was notorious for experimenting with gameplay in the *Kingdom Hearts* franchise, no game plays similarly which lead to some games being received better than others. I will mostly be focusing on combat system and discuss what worked and what failed.



Logos for *Kingdom Hearts 2* and *Kingdom Hearts: Birth by Sleep*

Platform

Both *Kingdom Hearts* and *Kingdom Hearts 2* were featured on PlayStation 2 however, *Birth by Sleep* was featured on PlayStation Portable. This was *Birth By Sleep's* downfall in my opinion. It made the world seem very confined in such a small visual space and the PSP wasn't a successful platform to begin with. (IGN, 2005)

Plot and Characters

Kingdom Hearts follows Sora's initial journey while *Kingdom Hearts 2* follows Sora's journey after the original plot. However, in the beginning of *Kingdom Hearts 2* Players were introduced to a playable character called Roxas. A character that has so much back story, describing him would take another report. The game used Roxas as a tutorial character as well as introduced a new species of enemy. *Birth by Sleep* takes place years before the first game and follows the story of three characters: Terra, Aqua and Ventus. In *Birth by Sleep* the Player can choose which character they want to play as and uncover different parts of the plot from different perspectives. This made for some great replay value.



These are the three characters that you are able to play as in *Birth by Sleep*. From left to right: Aqua, Ventus and Terra.

Sora is not mentioned in this game or seen as he is yet to be born. These characters gave a refreshing feel to *Kingdom Hearts* as Players weren't locked into Sora, someone that loyal fans are already so familiar with. (*Birth by Sleep*, 2010)



Combat Game Mechanics

All games feature real-time button mashing gameplay however each has it's own twist on combat system which in turn effects the quality of play. *Kingdom Hearts* only valued the X-button for combat which lead combat to start getting dry especially in the early game where you have very little abilities and combination attacks. (IGN, 2014)

Kingdom Hearts 2 played similarly to *Kingdom Hearts* however had included the Triangle-button through a combat system called Reaction Commands. Reaction Commands are triggered enemy specific attacks. While the inclusion of another button was intended to mix up gameplay, Reaction Commands sucked the fun out of combat especially during boss battles. The system essentially gave you a majestic free attack that deals large damage to an enemy that can't fight back as they are locked in a cut-scene-like animation. There was no consequence to spamming the Triangle-button even if you pressed it at the wrong time. This made it less like a reaction and therefore created a bad real-time simulation.



Pressing Triangle never looked this good or felt this boring!
(Kingdom Hearts 2, 2005)

Kingdom Hearts 2 also featured a Drive Gauge which was a meter that when full could activate Drive Forms. These forms allowed Sora to bond with a party member to acquire special attributes. This was just another way to get Sora out of tight situations but it never felt petty because you still had to put in hard effort to win. Drive forms were a last resort option to combat that wasn't going in your favour. This is a system that improved the combat compared to *Kingdom Hearts*. The consequence for using these forms was the loss of a party member during the Drive duration, overuse resulted in a form called Anti-Form where Sora is unable to heal or gain experience. Drives were one of the best received mechanics of the franchise (kh13, 2015).



Valor Form is one of the many Drive Forms Sora obtains. It combines the party member Goofy with Sora. Sora can wield two keyblades, jump higher, run extremely fast and attack even faster.
(Kingdom Hearts 2, 2005)

Birth By Sleep took an entirely different approach to combat with a system called the Command Deck. Players are able to customise their attacks in their Command Deck to their liking. Using abilities and attacks of the same type would allow the chosen character to enter a Drive-like state dealing great damage. It allowed Players to experiment with gameplay making them more immersed. *Birth by Sleep* was also the first game in the franchise to not feature Magic Points for casting spells. Instead it used Focus to perform a technique called "Shotlock" in which the Player switched to a first-person mode to cast homing spells. In my opinion this feature disrupted flow of combat compared to the other games.



Custom "Command Deck" interface
(Birth By Sleep, 2010)



Comparison Summary

Kingdom Hearts as a franchise has so much to offer. Combat is always interesting and unique no matter what game you play. If I had to put one of the games above the other in terms of game play mechanics, Kingdom Hearts 2 would win only just. Square Enix took the first game and really tried to ramp up the fluidity of battle with faster attack animations that all blend seamlessly together. It made Players feel as though they were actually doing something instead of realising they are just pressing the X-button over and over. Although Reaction Commands may look aesthetically pleasing, they ruined the real-time challenge Players received from the game. Luckily for Kingdom Hearts 2, Drive Forms did the exact opposite. They offered a cool way to engage in difficult combat that still allowed Players to put in hard effort.

Game Improvements

In 2013, Kingdom Hearts 1.5 HD ReMIX was released. Not only did this game have some amazing high definition aesthetics but it took the game mechanics to where it should have been when it was first released. Including the Square-button in attack combinations made the Player more engaged and allowed them to mix up combat to their liking instead of seeing the same combo over and over. It also kept the original Tech Point system that had not been featured in other games. In my opinion, this game has been the best to come out of the Kingdom Hearts franchise, followed closely by its brother Kingdom Hearts 2.5 HD ReMIX.



HD is all in the biceps. (Disney Wikia, 2015)

Conclusion

Kingdom Hearts means a lot to me as a game and I don't know why I'm so attached to it. I've never experienced something so engulfing, it pulled me into a new world and allowed me to revisit old ones. You could say my love for Disney and Final Fantasy play a big part in how I received the game, but the Kingdom Hearts universe reimagines everything I ever knew about them. Kingdom Hearts was such a refreshing game when it came out. I grew up with my hands around a Nintendo 64 controller, I remember the Rare era of games like it was yesterday. I grew up on games that were made with love and happiness, that had interesting game mechanics and far-fetched narratives that somehow worked. Kingdom Hearts simulated that same cartoon-ish atmosphere in a more mature aesthetic just when I thought those genres of games were long gone and it left me wanting more.

This game makes me want to lie down when I think about it for too long because I feel exhausted over how much I love every aspect of it. "What is it about Kingdom Hearts?" I hear you say. It's exploring the dramatic and epic narrative, it's discovering the personalities of the characters, it's the audio that feels like you've just come home from being away too long, it's the fluid combat system and the challenge of every real-time battle you encounter. It's even yelling at Donald Duck because he doesn't feel the need to heal you when Sora is dying. All of this makes me so attached and invested in the game. Still, after all this time I replay it and feel a sense of accomplishment. I believe that's when you have made a successful game.



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