**Final Fantasy: 15 Major Problems Fans Don’t Want To Admit**

* BY [**TYLER LACOMA**](https://www.thegamer.com/author/t_lacoma/)

* – ON NOV 20, 2017

* IN [**LISTS**](https://www.thegamer.com/category/lists/)

*Final Fantasy* gets a lot of reverence these days: The games have spanned multiple generations, untold changes in technology, and more than a few tears from the fans who got super-invested in the stories. Plus, of course, revolutionizing the world of JRPGs forever – that helped too. The ambitious pixelated RPG games have become massive, cinematic endeavors that every gamer recognizes. They demand a certain amount of respect.

But here's the thing about being a hardcore fan of a long-term franchise that's gone through so many different iterations: It's easy to pull on those rose-tinted goggles and see only the glorious airships, while missing the giant piles of Chocobo dung. In other words, *Final Fantasy* has its flaws, and some of those flaws have definitely become more pronounced over time. If we want the *FF*series to survive into the XVIs and XVIIs and on to the future – and I'm pretty sure we do – we need to talk about those mistakes, even if they are a little hard to admit.

So whether your favorite memories include Sephiroth walking through the flames, discovering the true nature of Sin, finding out just why Lightning has returned, or of course *that opera sequence*, we're gonna sit down and talk. It's gonna be honest. It may get a little rough. But we love these games, and they need some tough love in return. Let's begin.

**15**Everyone (Secretly) Misses Turn-Based Gameplay

Right around*X-2* and*XII*, Square started to move away from the turn-based gameplay that had defined *Final Fantasy* games for decades at that point. The developer had *really* good reasons for doing this: Gamers were favoring more kinetic, explosive action, and battle maps were going out of style. But that doesn't mean it was a good choice.

While people complain about the linearity of *FFXIII* or the lifelessness of *XII*, a lot of times they are really in mourning about the loss of turn-based gameplay, which it has defined *Final Fantasy* more than we fans realized. There was something special and intimate about those vs. maps, about standing crosswise from the enemy. There was something also special about the way it encouraged thoughtful tactics and setting up the perfect team combination while managing MP and HP in expert ways. When *Final Fantasy* lost turn-based gameplay, it lost a lot more than just a mechanic – some of the RPG soul left, too. Come on, Square – even today there are examples of [great turn-based RPGs](https://www.reddit.com/r/patientgamers/comments/6b7wdk/any_good_modern_turn_based_rpgs/) that are still reinventing the genre. Is it too much to ask for a return?

**14**Here's Why FF Sequels Suck

Jokes about the name aside, *Final Fantasy* has traditionally been about self-contained stories. Massive stories, but each game was a different world, a different system, a different plot to piece together. Then, starting with *X-2* and pushing forward into however many sequels *FFXIII* ends up with (we're still dreading another), *Final Fantasy* started introducing sequels.

It doesn't work. *Final Fantasy*, in many ways, lives up to its name: The stories aren't meant to go on after the final scenes end. *X-2* is a good example of a game that ruined huge sections of FFX if you were unlucky enough to play through to the end. *FF* games need that finality, or they fail as stories – and you lose some of the excitement of learning a new place, fresh characters, and better combat.

**13**Translation Is A Huge Problem

Okay, the translation in earlier *Final Fantasy* games wasn't great, but the *worst*problem is that we English speakers are stuck with it. The hardcore fans have been debating the meaning of *FFVII*'s plot for many years now based on just one or two lines of dialogue. It doesn't matter what if those lines should have been something different – those are the lines that everyone in the Western side knows. That makes it difficult to talk about early stories with Japanese players and annoying when we find a mistranslation – those old mistakes can still have a nasty bite.

Fortunately, Square is getting better at this. Say what you will about the story, *FFXV* appears to have [some pretty great translation](http://j-entranslations.com/the-beautiful-translation-of-final-fantasy-xv/). But other recent efforts have been pretty bad, and with a retooled *FFVII* on the horizon, we have to wonder: Is a new translation going to destroy our treasured assumptions about the game?

**12**Who Is Final Fantasy For? No One Knows Anymore

We're seriously asking. As mentioned before, turn-based RPG fans are no longer a target audience. Around *FFXI* Square decided to jump headlong into the MMO world to target online gamers, and it was so poorly done that they had to rebuild the entire game. Then a couple games later, they did the same thing *again* (albeit with the more successful *XIV*). And most recently, with XV, they replaced all the main characters with college bros and the gameplay with hack-n-slash, and hoped we wouldn't notice.

So, who is FF for? The online gamer? The "cool" teenager? The DnD fan? The action gamer? The strategist (we saw you, *FF Tactics*)? It looks like Square doesn't know, and it's starting to ruin what made *Final Fantasy* great.

**11**FF Games Are Getting Worse With Women

In the early games, *Final Fantasy* had a really respectful relationship with its female pixels. Aeris/th broke our hearts, Rinoa was a surprisingly complex revolutionary, Yuna was great example of a woman defying the system... we could easily go on. But it seems like someone turned the T-and-A knob up to 11 around *X-2* (notice how things keep falling apart at this point), which put conservative Yuna in a spring break outfit that made zero sense.

Since then, we've had [developers joking](https://www.wired.com/2013/07/final-fantasy-is-dead/) about making Lightning more, ah, *busty*between her first and second games, a bimbo car mechanic in *XV* [who's clearly just eye candy](https://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/kwzjzy/final-fantasy-xv-has-some-big-problems), and other decisions that are starting to raise a lot of eyebrows. You used to be good at this, *FF*. What happened?

**10**Autoattacks Aren't Fun, And Here's Why

For several games now, the *FF* combat has focused on autoattacks, starting notably in *XII*. The big advantage of the autoattack system was that it allowed you to carefully tool character reactions until you could stop playing entirely and just eat a bag of chips while the game progressed. *That's the only advantage.* I remember a friend and I joined minds to beat the [hardest boss in *XII*](http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Yiazmat_(Final_Fantasy_XII)) by customizing character auto-moves in just the right way so no one would die...and then we just waited around for 6 hours while the game slowlyyyyy beat the boss for us. We barely noticed when it happened.

There's no sense of accomplishment there. You don't feel involved. Also, if you're bad at programming or predicting those moves, you'll never feel successful at the game. This autoattack problem went on in *XIII* and, while somewhat improved, is still an issue in *XV*. It needs to change.

**9**Let's Talk About The Voice Acting

At the least, fans have to admit that voice acting in the series (starting with *FFX,*the first fully voiced game) has been all over the map, frequently within the same scene. Long threads have been devoted to wondering if voice acting was the series' downfall. Things didn't get much better. For every Balthier, there are a dozen other characters who sound like trash. The [crew that did XV](http://www.digitalspy.com/gaming/final-fantasy/news/a805469/final-fantasy-xv-english-voice-cast-very-familiar/) was skilled, but the end result was frequently bland.

Part of the problem is finding voice actors that can give interesting characters a real sense of self and emotion in an utterly alien world, without many useful prompts to go on (so, uh, this is your father, but he left you, but he had to turn into a giant monster, but also he's good at sports, now go for it). Those are a lot of differing elements that have to come together *just* right for a good voice ensemble. Maybe it's time to admit that this is just really hard for *Final Fantasy*to do.

**8**The Menus Deserve The Hate

You would think that along with all the graphical improvements, *Final Fantasy*could have also improved its interface and menus. That...hasn't happened. Even in FFXV, simple things like fast traveling in your car or [navigating the map to find what you want](https://kotaku.com/final-fantasy-xv-s-user-interface-is-so-bad-1792396935) are unclear, confusing, time-consuming, and just generally frustrating.

It doesn't help that *Final Fantasy* has to more or less reinvent its interface with every game, but come on: They don't have to be this bad, and there are many, many industry guidelines out there [for building good menus](https://kotaku.com/5955855/the-ten-commandments-of-video-game-menus). Don't make things too complex. Don't hide very common actions behind multiple menu screens. Have clear maps that are easy to navigate. When in doubt, simplify. Also, hark back to the simpler menus of old in *FFVI* and *FFVII*, which were at least easy to understand.

**7**When Was The Last Time A Final Fantasy Story Made Sense?

"Never," a fan might say, "That's not the point." But it is, because people play *Final Fantasy* for the story. They may not understand everything that's going on, but the story beats and characters and the ending are all still important. For a while, that worked.*FFIX*, for all the love it gets, stumbled with a, "Get the characters together" story that pushed people around the world for no reason, but *FFX*picked up again with a great, cohesive plot that had us all hoping for the future.

That future of great *FF* stories never arrived. Do you even remember what *FFXII*was about? Did *FFXIII*'s story at any moment grab you? What about – and be honest – *FFXV*? Things aren't improving here at all.

**6**Mobile Efforts Are The Real FF Villain

No one can blame Square for getting involved in the mobile world – and some efforts are very impressive, such as the excellent remastered *FFVI* for mobile. But we're not talking about that: We're talking about cheap brand tie-ins that are made to get a few extra bucks and don't deliver on the *Final Fantasy* promise at all.

The worst culprit so far has been the [*Final Fantasy* F2P New Empire](https://www.polygon.com/2017/6/29/15889192/final-fantasy-15-a-new-empire-ios-android-impressions-it-sucks) game, which is clearly just a poorly made mobile app with some *FFXV* words and a few images tacked on. It's such an obvious cash grab that fans should be both ashamed and frightened by this tie-in. The *Final Fantasy* brand doesn't have a lot of HP right now, and it can't take hits like this.

**5**Summons Don't Deliver: Here's Why

They're always the same. It doesn't matter if you called them Eidolons or Espers or whatever else, it's all the same. Strip away all the graphical improvements of the past 30 years, and you have the exact same list of monsters appearing in a storm of vengeance and attacking things. *Every* time.

By now, fans know exactly what's going to happen when Bahamut shows up. They know just what Ramuh is going to do from the moment they see the name. And a dozen summons later, they are bored with the whole process. We know that summons are part of the heart of *Final Fantasy*, but they are in desperate need of an upgrade. We need to be surprised. We need to make them interesting again (and let's call out *FFXII* and some aspects of *FFXIV* for doing this well).

**4**There's Too Much Technology!

It's time to put the Fantasy back in *Final Fantasy*. There's nothing better than exploring mystic castles, wandering around enchanted forests, or seeking after old wizard relics. Sure, we were okay with a little steampunk here and there, but (except for *FFIX*), *FF* games have grown increasingly more technological until we now have modern-day cars zipping along paved roads (what about the Chocobos?). That just doesn't have the same *Final Fantasy* vibe to it. Some of the magic has literally been lost.

It would be excellent if the next *Final Fantasy* games could return to a more fantastic setting instead of the usual mix of technology and magic. That would also help set it apart from other JRPGs, which tend to suffer from a similar problem and could use some inspiration.

**3**People Miss Classes For A Good Reason

Classes and job systems once helped defined *Final Fantasy*, and...why did they go away, again? We're putting part of the blame on western RPGs here, which tend to embrace more open-ended leveling and specialization in pretty much whatever you want to work toward. However, when *Final Fantasy* moved away from these stereotypes, it lost a lot of identity. Interestingly, the games that tend to embrace classes more also tend to be stronger performers.

We don't think this is just nostalgia: Classes help give the story direction, give the characters more definition, and give you something to work toward as you level up and start seeking more powerful abilities When none of that matters anymore, there's less incentive to see where the characters go...and that means more people quitting over time.

**2**Character, Meet Cliché

Maybe it's a function of the sped-up, less coherent plots, but *Final Fantasy*'s characters are suffering, too. In fact, they've never been that great. *FFVII* was lucky that much of the story depended on just what was happening in Cloud's head – other main characters haven't been so lucky. We had to think for a while before we could even remember their names. Squall, Zidane, Vaan, Tidus...they are all definitely dudes. They all react in surprise to stuff. One has a tail. That's about it.

Even Noctis and Lightning are typically as interesting as old toast, and they were *improvements* to the formula. Character motivations and emotional investment are being sacrificed to make main characters look cool. Meanwhile, side characters are so relegated to clichés that they are becoming unrecognizable, or so off-note that it feels like they belong in different games.

**1**Everything's Too Easy Now

[Check out this story](https://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/nzn5pw/why-this-final-fantasy-xv-player-spent-60-hours-grinding-during-chapter-one) about a FFXV player who spent 60 hours in Chapter 1 just so that the rest of the game would be easy. This is not the only time this sort of thing has happened. Sometimes it seems like the only challenge in *Final Fantasy*games is finding the exact way to grind for several hours so that the rest of the game is easy. Sure, there are always a few ultimate enemies to face if you want to progress far enough, but those are rare and only available at certain times. The main story doesn't have many challenges as long as you know what you're doing – and we have the internet, so everyone knows what they're doing. *Final Fantasy*could use more challenges for the average gamer!