= Cloud Strife =

Cloud Strife (Japanese : ???? ? ????? , Hepburn : Kuraudo Sutoraifu) is a fictional character and the main protagonist of Square 's (now Square Enix 's) role @-@ playing video game Final Fantasy VII and several of its sequels and spin @-@ offs . He was designed by Tetsuya Nomura , a character artist for the Final Fantasy series , whose role expanded during the title 's development to include supervision over Cloud 's personality . Yoshinori Kitase , director of VII , and Kazushige Nojima , one of the game 's event planners , developed the story and wanted to create a mysterious character who acted atypically for a hero . After VII , Nomura assumed greater responsibility over Cloud 's development , and his design was revised to better conform with the series ' shift to a more realistic style . Cloud 's appearance is marked by spiky blond hair , striking blue eyes , dark clothing and his Buster Sword (??????? , Basut? S?do) ; the sword previously belonged to his friend , Zack Fair .

In Final Fantasy VII , Cloud is a mercenary claiming to be formerly of SOLDIER , a group of elite supersoldiers employed by the Shinra Electric Power Company , a megacorporation responsible for draining the life from the planet . Fighting against Shinra in the resistance group AVALANCHE , and driven by a feud with the primary antagonist , Sephiroth , Cloud learns to accept his troubled past and adapts to his role as a leader . Cloud reappears as the protagonist in the computer @-@ animated film , Final Fantasy VII : Advent Children , which serves as a sequel to the original game . He acts in a supporting role in other Compilation of Final Fantasy VII titles , and is featured in several other games outside the Final Fantasy VII continuity , such as Ehrgeiz , Final Fantasy Tactics , Itadaki Street Special , Dissidia Final Fantasy , Super Smash Bros. for Nintendo 3DS and Wii U , and the Kingdom Hearts series .

Cloud has garnered a primarily positive reception from critics . Described as " iconic " , Cloud has been cited favorably as an example of complex character writing in video games and as one of its first unreliable narrators . He has ranked highly in various character lists compiled by video game publications , and remains popular among fans , continuing to place highly in popularity polls conducted by Famitsu , Guinness , and other organizations . He has also become the basis for a variety of merchandise , such as action figures and jewelry .

= = Appearances = =

= = = In Final Fantasy VII = = =

Cloud is introduced as a mercenary employed by AVALANCHE , an eco @-@ terrorist group opposed to the Shinra Company . Beginning the game with the placeholder name " Ex @-@ SOLDIER " (?????? , Moto Soruj?) , Cloud assists AVALANCHE 's leader , Barret Wallace , in bombing a Mako reactor , power plants which drain the planet 's " Lifestream " . Cloud claims to be formerly of SOLDIER 1st Class , an elite Shinra fighting unit . Cloud takes pride in his past and boasts of the abilities of its members . However , his background produces misgivings as to his allegiances and trustworthiness , and Cloud 's blasé attitude towards the goals of AVALANCHE creates further tension . Despite appearing detached , Cloud demonstrates moments of camaraderie , and players can choose to interact in a friendlier manner with AVALANCHE 's members . When approached by his childhood friend and AVALANCHE member , Tifa Lockhart , about accepting another job , Cloud at first refuses . However , when confronted with his boyhood promise to protect her were he to become a famous hero , Cloud agrees to continue helping AVALANCHE , despite neither having become famous nor a hero .

While working for AVALANCHE , Cloud encounters Aerith Gainsborough , a resident of Midgar 's slums . Agreeing to serve as her bodyguard in exchange for a date , Cloud helps Aerith evade Shinra , who pursue her because she is the sole survivor of a race known as the Cetra . Aerith notes that Cloud reminds her of an old boyfriend of hers , who is implied to be Zack Fair . During the course of their travels , a love triangle develops between Cloud , Tifa and Aerith , often exploited to

humorous effect . Dialogue choices impact the strength of Cloud 's relationship with Tifa and Aerith , as well as with Barret and Yuffie Kisaragi . These interactions determine who accompanies Cloud through the Gold Saucer , an amusement park . If Aerith joins Cloud , she reflects on how strongly Cloud 's physical appearance and mannerisms resemble Zack 's , and struggles to put into words how she is still " searching for [Cloud] " . Irrespective of who accompanies Cloud at the Gold Saucer , how the player interacts with Tifa may also result in a more sexually suggestive scene playing out during the night she spends with Cloud before the game 's conclusion . Tifa worries instead that the party saw , rather than overheard , the two the morning after .

Following the player 's departure from Midgar , Cloud is appointed group leader by the other members of the party , upsetting Barret . Shortly thereafter , Cloud narrates his history with Sephiroth , a legendary member of SOLDIER and the game 's primary antagonist , and the events that led to Sephiroth 's disappearance five years prior . According to Cloud , the two were " war buddies " . Joining SOLDIER to emulate Sephiroth , Cloud explains that he would sign up for a " big mission " whenever they became available , as the conclusion of Shinra 's war with the people of Wutai ended his chances for military fame . Cloud explains that Sephiroth started questioning his humanity after accompanying him on a job to Cloud 's hometown of Nibelheim , which suffered from a malfunctioning Mako reactor responsible for producing monsters . Discovering documents concerning Jenova , an extraterrestrial lifeform and Sephiroth 's " mother " , Sephiroth mistakes himself for a Cetra and blames their downfall on humans . Razing Nibelheim , Sephiroth leaves for the Mt . Nibel Mako reactor , and Cloud gives chase . There , Cloud finds Tifa gravely wounded by Sephiroth outside the chamber where Jenova is stored . Cloud says that he then confronted Sephiroth , but that he is unable to remember or explain how he survived the encounter given Sephiroth 's strength .

However , numerous clues suggest the unreliability of Cloud 's memory . Various visual and audio cues , such as the screen flashing white or red and the sound of static , play when Cloud attempts to recall details about his identity . Cloud will spontaneously remember words or scenes from his past , sometimes collapsing to the ground while cradling his head . An unidentified voice questions Cloud in his sleep about why he and Tifa never met alone during his mission to Nibelheim despite their history . Additionally , Tifa makes various remarks suggesting that Cloud 's version of events troubles her , and she feigns ignorance of who Zack is . Cloud 's behavior grows increasingly erratic after searching the Temple of the Ancients for the Black Materia , an item capable of casting the destructive magic Meteor . After its retrieval , Cloud loses control of himself , handing over the Black Materia to Sephiroth and attacking Aerith . Alarmed that Sephiroth can manipulate him , Cloud realizes that he is " afraid to find out the truth " and becomes fearful of himself . Later , Sephiroth takes advantage of Cloud 's insecurities , telling him that his past is merely a fiction and that Shinra created Cloud in an attempt to clone Sephiroth . Although Cloud is initially dismissive , when Tifa is unable to corroborate Cloud 's account of the Nibelheim incident , Cloud realizes he cannot remember things like how or when he joined SOLDIER . Cloud , resigning himself as a " failed experiment " , goes missing after Sephiroth summons Meteor . The party later discovers a comatose Cloud suffering from Mako poisoning , and Tifa helps Cloud reconstruct his past after the two fall into the Lifestream .

It is revealed that Cloud never qualified for SOLDIER , and instead enlisted as an infantryman in Shinra 's army . During the mission to Nibelheim , Cloud served under Sephiroth and Zack , a SOLDIER 1st Class , hiding his identity from the townspeople out of embarrassment . Following Sephiroth 's defeat of Zack at the Mt . Nibel Mako reactor , Cloud took up Zack 's sword , catching Sephiroth off guard and stabbing him . Zack urges Cloud to kill Sephiroth after Sephiroth emerges alive , but when Cloud pursues him , he is run through by Sephiroth 's sword . Cloud , to Sephiroth 's shock , summons the strength to grab hold of the blade and lift Sephiroth off the ground , tossing him into a Mako vat below . Cloud and Zack are then imprisoned by Shinra 's lead scientist , Hojo , for experimentation . Zack later escapes with Cloud , bringing him to the outskirts of Midgar before Shinra soldiers gun Zack down . Due to exposure to Mako radiation and the injection of Jenova 's cells , in addition to the shame stemming from his personal failures , Cloud 's mind fabricated a story blending together his own memories with accounts of Zack 's heroics , creating a false personality .

After piecing back together his identity , Cloud resumes his role as leader . At the game 's conclusion , Sephiroth reappears in Cloud 's mind a final time , but he is defeated in a one @-@ on @-@ one fight .

= = = In Compilation of Final Fantasy VII = = =

 Cloud appears in a minor role in the cellphone game Before Crisis : Final Fantasy VII , a prequel set six years before Final Fantasy VII . The player , a member of the Shinra covert operatives group , the Turks , encounters Cloud during his time as a Shinra infantryman working to join SOLDIER . The game portrays Cloud 's natural talent for swordsmanship , and recounts his role during Nibelheim 's destruction .
 In the computer @-@ animated film Final Fantasy VII : Advent Children , set two years following the conclusion of Final Fantasy VII , Cloud lives with Tifa in the city of Edge , along with Marlene , Barret 's adopted daughter , and Denzel , an orphan afflicted with a rampant and deadly disease called Geostigma . Having given up his life as a mercenary , Cloud works as a courier for the " Strife Delivery Service " that Tifa set up in her new bar . Confronted by Tifa following the disappearance of Denzel and Marlene , it is revealed that he also suffers from the effects of Geostigma , and he responds that he is unfit to protect his friends and new family . However , when urged by Tifa to let go of the past , Cloud sets out for the Forgotten City in search of the children . There , Cloud confronts Kadaj , Loz and Yazoo , genetic remnants of Sephiroth left behind before he diffused into the Lifestream completely . Cloud 's battle with Kadaj later takes them back to Aerith 's church , where Cloud recovers from his Geostigma with Aerith 's help . Kadaj , merging with the remains of Jenova , resurrects Sephiroth . Cloud , having overcome his doubts , defeats Sephiroth once more , leaving a dying Kadaj in his place . At the film 's conclusion , Cloud , seeing Aerith and Zack , assures the two that he will be fine and reunites with his friends .
 Cloud appears in On the Way to a Smile , a series of short stories set between Final Fantasy VII and Advent Children . " Case of Tifa " serves as an epilogue to VII , and portrays Cloud 's life alongside Tifa , Marlene , and Denzel . " Case of Denzel " relates how Cloud first met Denzel , and was later adapted as a short original video animation for the release of Advent Children Complete , On the Way to a Smile - Episode : Denzel .
 Cloud acts in a supporting role in the PlayStation 2 game Dirge of Cerberus : Final Fantasy VII . A year after the events of Advent Children , Cloud , working alongside Barret and Tifa , lends his support to the ground forces of the World Regenesis Organization and Vincent Valentine in their siege of Midgar and counterattack against the rogue Shinra military unit , Deepground .
 In the PlayStation Portable game Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII , Cloud is presented as a young Shinra infantryman who befriends Zack . During the game 's conclusion , a dying Zack gives Cloud his Buster Sword , telling him that he is his legacy . The game ends with Cloud heading to Midgar , reprising the start of Final Fantasy VII .

= = = In other media = = =

 The OVA Last Order : Final Fantasy VII serves as an alternate retelling of Nibelheim 's destruction and Zack and Cloud 's escape from Shinra imprisonment . Animated and produced by Madhouse , based on a script by Kazuhiko Inukai , several scenes diverge from Final Fantasy VII 's depiction of events , such as reinterpreting Cloud 's rescue of Tifa by having her view his face . Although it is associated with and makes references to the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , Last Order is considered an outside work .
 Cloud 's character has also appeared in various games outside of the Final Fantasy VII continuity . He is a playable character in the PlayStation version of Ehrgeiz , but like the other Final Fantasy VII characters present in the game , he has no storyline . Cloud and Tifa are the only Final Fantasy VII characters with a third costume or a story mode title : Cloud 's third alternate appearance depicts him in his Shinra infantryman attire , and his title is " Guardian " . In Chocobo Racing , Cloud is a hidden character that rides a motorcycle . Cloud is one of several playable Final Fantasy VII

characters in Itadaki Street Special for the PlayStation 2 and Itadaki Street Portable for the PlayStation Portable . LittleBigPlanet 2 features Cloud as a downloadable character model . Cloud is a playable character representing Final Fantasy VII in the rhythm game Theatrhythm Final Fantasy . Players in Final Fantasy Explorers can briefly transform into Cloud , enabling use of his Omnislash Limit Break from Final Fantasy VII . Cloud is the protagonist of Final Fantasy VII G @-@ Bike , a mobile game for which Nomura designed a new costume for him .

Cloud appears as a playable guest character in the 2014 Nintendo crossover fighting games Super Smash Bros. for Nintendo 3DS and Wii U , sporting his character designs from both Final Fantasy VII and Advent Children . He was revealed in the November 2015 Nintendo Direct broadcast and was made available as in @-@ game downloadable content alongside a stage based on Midgar and a Mii Fighter hat based on a Chocobo on December 15 , 2015 .

In the PlayStation game Final Fantasy Tactics and its PlayStation Portable update , Final Fantasy Tactics : The War of the Lions , Cloud is accidentally pulled into the world of Ivalice by an ancient machine called " the Celestial Globe " , which was activated by Ramza Beoulve . Cloud is disoriented after arriving in Ramza 's world , and after a short exchange with Ramza and the others , he leaves . He wanders into Zarghidas Trade City , where he encounters a flower girl named Aerith . As Cloud is leaving the area , Aerith is accosted by a man demanding payment . Cloud returns to help Aerith escape , and Ramza and his party catch up to him . After the battle , he joins Ramza 's party as a playable character , although he cannot perform any of his signature attacks until the player tracks down his sword . Cloud also appears as an enemy unit in the " Brave Story " series of battles as part of Rendezvous , the unlockable cooperative multiplayer mode in The War of the Lions .

In Kingdom Hearts , Cloud appears in the Olympus Coliseum world . Hired by Hades to kill Hercules , Cloud must fight Sora as a prerequisite . After the fight , Hades sends Cerberus to attack Cloud and Sora , who are then saved by Hercules . Cloud meets with Sora afterward and explains that he is searching for someone . In Kingdom Hearts : Final Mix there is an additional scene where he battles Sephiroth . During the credit roll at the end of the game , Cloud is shown reuniting residents of Hollow Bastion . A memory @-@ based version of Cloud appears in the Game Boy Advance sequel Kingdom Hearts : Chain of Memories as a boss in the Olympus Coliseum and later as a summon card for Sora . Cloud features again in Kingdom Hearts II , depicted in his Advent Children attire . He is searching for Sephiroth , and is himself being sought out by Tifa . Cloud fights alongside Leon 's team during the Heartless invasion of Hollow Bastion . Should the player choose to engage Sephiroth and win the battle , Cloud returns and fights Sephiroth , which ends with both of them disappearing in a flash of light after Tifa gives Cloud her support . Sora concludes that Cloud is still fighting with Sephiroth , and will not stop until he is defeated . A digital replica of Cloud also appears in Kingdom Hearts coded in the Olympus Coliseum , helping Sora and Hercules to battle Hades .

Cloud serves as the representative Final Fantasy VII character in Dissidia Final Fantasy , a fighting game featuring characters from the Final Fantasy series . He is depicted in his Final Fantasy VII outfit , while his Advent Children appearance is also available . His fight against Sephiroth in this game is based on their battles from Final Fantasy VII and Advent Children . Along with the entire cast , Cloud reappears in the prequel Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy as a Warrior of Chaos . Concerned for Tifa , who is on the opposing side , Cloud tries to defeat Chaos alone but is nearly killed . He is later saved by the goddess Cosmos and becomes one of her warriors . Cloud 's main outfit is based on Yoshitaka Amano 's original artwork concept , while his Kingdom Hearts outfit is offered as downloadable content .

= = Concept and creation = =

Conceptualized as one of only three playable characters in early planning stages for the game , Cloud was one of the first two characters designed for Final Fantasy VII by Tetsuya Nomura . Nomura worked to strike an orthodox balance of varied designs for the game . Because he only started receiving character profiles prior to composing their appearances during later game

productions , Nomura thought of the characters ' stories first before tackling their designs . Nomura 's first draft of Cloud featured slicked @-@ back , black hair . The depiction served both as a contrast to the long silver hair of the game 's chief antagonist , Sephiroth , and to minimize the model 's polygon count . However , to make Cloud stand out more and emphasize his role as the game 's lead protagonist , Nomura altered Cloud 's design to give him spiky , bright blond hair . Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojir? served as bases for Cloud and Sephiroth 's appearances , respectively , and in particular influenced the look of their swords . Early renditions of Cloud 's weapon , the Buster Sword , depicted a smaller blade . Its size grew over the course of several revisions , and Nomura called it " the Giant Kitchen Knife " , envisioning it as unrefined steel . The sword at one point featured a small chain connected to the pommel , while magnets would secure the blade to Cloud 's back . More deeply involved with Cloud 's creation than with other characters ' from previous Final Fantasy projects , Nomura also provided supervision over Cloud 's personality traits .

Yoshinori Kitase and Kazushige Nojima developed Cloud 's backstory and his relationship to Sephiroth . The idea for Cloud 's false persona arose after Nojima saw event planner Motomu Toriyama 's standing animation depicting " Cloud showing off " , which impressed him and inspired the basis for the scenario . Nojima created the character of Zack so as to expand upon the mysteries in Cloud 's backstory . Kitase remained unaware of the addition 's significance until playtesting , as Nojima left the unfolding of events concerning Cloud 's identity unwritten . In emphasizing Cloud 's individuality , the staff made repeated use of elements that they believed made the character interesting , such as Cloud 's phrase " not interested " and Toriyama 's standing animation . Kitase felt Cloud 's character was fresh in reviewing Nojima 's scenario , observing that he possessed an atypical personality for a hero by being neither single @-@ minded nor righteous . The love triangle between Cloud , Tifa and Aerith was also viewed as novel for the series , and Nojima likened Cloud 's relationship to Tifa as one of childhood friends since nursery school , whereas Aerith was akin to a transfer student arriving mid @-@ term .

In early drafts , Cloud would act as an alter ego for Sephiroth , influenced to believe he was a creation of Sephiroth 's will . As in the finished game , Cloud would later realize that he is the real Cloud , and that the reason Sephiroth could control his mind and body was because of his weakened will and Shinra 's experiments . Additionally , Cloud would have scarred Tifa prior to the game 's events , although the reasons for as to why were unknown . Early materials listed Cloud 's job as magic swordsman (???? , mah? kenshi) and berserker (?????? , b?s?k?) . Masato Kato , one of the event planners , proposed a scene involving Cloud walking out of the Highwind 's Chocobo stable followed by Tifa the morning before the final battle . Kitase rejected it as too extreme , but maintained a scene written by Kato depicting the night before , in which a risqué line is spoken by Tifa followed by a fade to black . In an interview , Nojima stated that none of the staff thought it would become an important issue at the time .

Nojima has explained that the relationship between the player and the main character in a Final Fantasy title is a dynamic he has always been concerned about . With VII , Cloud 's subdued nature led him to write scenes with the character in such a way that the players would be placed in the position of deciding for themselves what the character was thinking . Cloud 's foggy memories served both to help players " become " the character , and to introduce them to a world which other inhabitants would otherwise share common knowledge of . Nomura believes that the reason Cloud has become so popular with audiences is due to the impact his personality made in Nojima 's scenario .

= = = Further development = = =

Nomura redesigned Cloud for his appearance in Kingdom Hearts . He is depicted with a claw and a crimson cape , and the blade of his sword is wrapped in bandages . Stating that Cloud 's left arm was inspired by Vincent Valentine , Nomura explained that he wanted to give the character a more demon @-@ like appearance due to his ties to the dark side in the game . Nomura stated that he wanted to leave the question of whether Cloud was searching for Aerith open to the player 's

interpretation . Teruaki Sugawara , the game 's voice director , recommended Takahiro Sakurai , Cloud 's Japanese voice actor , to Nomura for the role . Nomura had originally asked Sakurai to play the protagonist of The Bouncer , Sion Barzahd , but found that his voice best suited Cloud after hearing him speak . Sakurai received the script without any accompanying visuals , and first arrived for recording under the impression that he would be voicing a different character than the one featured in Final Fantasy VII .

 For Advent Children , Nomura agreed to direct the project largely because of his attachment to the character of Cloud . Although Nomura stated that Cloud was a more positive character in Final Fantasy VII than in Advent Children , he did not believe that such an " ' upbeat ' image of him is what stuck in the minds of the fans " , and the script was written to explain why Cloud returned to a state of mind " consistent with the fans ' view of him . " Nomura describes Cloud 's life as peaceful but , hurt by the losses he experienced during the original game , one which he grew scared of losing . Blaming himself for things outside of his control , Cloud , Nomura elaborated , needed to overcome himself . In contrast to other heroes , who , in Nomura 's view , typically possess character defects amounting only to quirks , Nomura believed Cloud 's weakness to be humanizing . Nojima viewed the theme of the story as one of forgiveness , which he believed required hardship . Cloud , by taking up his sword and fighting , struggles to achieve it . Nojima sought to establish Cloud 's withdrawn personality by depicting him with a cell phone , but never answering any calls . He originally intended for Aerith 's name to be the last of those displayed while the backlog of ignored messages appears as Cloud 's cell phone sinks into the water , but Nojima altered the scene because it " sounded too creepy " . The wolf which Cloud imagines " represents the deepest part of Cloud 's psyche " and " appears in response to some burden that Cloud is carrying deep in his heart " , vanishing at the film 's end . Nomura cites one of the film 's final scenes , in which Cloud smiles , as his favorite , highlighting the lack of dialogue and Cloud 's embarrassment . The scene influenced composer Nobuo Uematsu 's score , who grew excited after coming across it in his review of the script , commenting on the difficulty players who had finished Final Fantasy VII would have had imagining Cloud 's smile .

 Nomura sought to make Cloud 's design " distinctly different from the other characters . " About thirty different designs were made for Cloud 's face , and his hair was altered both to give it a more realistic look and to illustrate that two years had passed since the game 's conclusion . The staff attempted rendering Cloud based on the game 's original illustrations , but concluded that doing so left his eyes unrealistically big , which " looked gross . " Further revisions were made to Cloud 's face after completion of the pilot film , which featured a more realistic style . In contrast to his hair , Cloud 's clothes were difficult to make in the film . Deciding to give Cloud a simple costume consistent with the concept of " clothes designed for action " , the staff began with the idea of a black robe , eventually parring it down to a " long apron " shifted to one side . Cloud 's weaponry was based on the joking observation that because his sword in the original game was already enormously tall , in the sequel , he should use sheer numbers . Referred to as " the fusion swords " during the film 's development , early storyboard concepts included Cloud carrying six swords on his back , although the idea was later modified to six interlocking swords . While the idea wasn 't " logically thought out " and the staff didn 't think that they could " make it work physically " , it was believed to provide " an interesting accent to the story . " Cloud 's new motorcycle , Fenrir (?????) , was designed by Takayuki Takeya , who was asked by the staff to design an upgraded version of Cloud 's " Hardy @-@ Daytona " motorcycle from Final Fantasy VII . As development continued , the bike got bigger , with Takeya feeling its heaviness provided an impact that worked well within the film .

 For Advent Children , Nomura wanted to contrast Cloud and Vincent 's voices given their similar personalities . As a sequel to the highly popular Final Fantasy VII , Sakurai felt greater pressure performing the role than he did when he voiced Cloud for Kingdom Hearts . Sakurai received comments from colleagues revealing their love of the game , some of them jokingly threatening that they would not forgive Sakurai if he did not meet their expectations . During recording , Sakurai was told that " [n] o matter what kind of odds are stacked against him , Cloud won 't be shaken . " Sakurai says that while he recorded most of his work individually , he performed alongside Ayumi Ito

, who voiced Tifa , for a few scenes . These recordings left him feeling " deflated " , as the " exchanges he has with Tifa can be pretty painful " , Sakurai commenting that Cloud ? whom he empathized with as his voice actor ? has a hard time dealing with straight talk . Sakurai says that there were scenes that took over a year to complete , with very precise directions being given requiring multiple takes . According to Sakurai , Cloud 's silence conveys more about the character than when he speaks . While possessing heroic characteristics , Sakurai describes Cloud 's outlook as negative , and says that he is delicate in some respects . A fan of VII , Sakurai had believed Cloud to be a colder character based on his original impression of him , but later came to view him as more sentimental . After the final product was released , Sakurai was anxious to hear the fans ' response , whether positive or negative , and says that most of the feedback he received praised him . While recording Crisis Core , Sakurai felt that Cloud , though still introverted , acted more like a normal teenager , and modified his approach accordingly . Cloud 's scream over Zack 's death left a major impression on Sakurai , who says that he worked hard to convey the emotional tone of the ending . Sakurai has come to regard Cloud as an important role , commenting that Cloud reminds him of his own past , and that , as a Final Fantasy VII fan himself , he is happy to contribute .

In English adaptations , Cloud is voiced by Steve Burton . Burton 's work as Cloud in Advent Children served as his first feature length role , an experience he enjoyed . Calling the character a rare opportunity for him as an actor , Burton describes Cloud as having a " heaviness about him " . Burton says he is surprised when fans recognize him for his work as Cloud , whom he has referred to as " [one of the] coolest characters there is , " and he too considers himself lucky for having voiced him .

= = Cultural impact = =

= = = Merchandise = = =

Cloud has been merchandised extensively , in many different forms , including figurines and jewelry . In commemoration of the franchise 's 20th anniversary , Square released figurines of him alongside other Final Fantasy protagonists . Square Enix 's manager of merchandise , Kanji Tashiro , said at the 2008 San Diego Comic @-@ Con International that Cloud 's likeness has produced some of the company 's best @-@ selling items , and that fans could look forward to further adaptations of the character in the future . Popular models at the time included Cloud 's Advent Children figurine and Final Fantasy VII Hardy @-@ Daytona bike set , both of which sold particularly well in European and North American markets . Square has also released two promotional books primarily focusing on Cloud 's character : Cloud vol.1 , which was released in 2007 , and Cloud message , in 2008 . In 2013 , a replica of the Buster Sword was created by blacksmith Tony Swatton for the webseries Man at Arms .

= = = Reception = = =

Cloud has been mostly well received by critics . In 2005 , Electronic Gaming Monthly placed Cloud seventh in their list of top video game characters . He was named best character of all time in Dengeki PlayStation 's 2007 " Den @-@ Play Awards " . IGN in 2008 ranked him third in both their lists of top Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy series characters . GameSpot published a video titled " Greatest Game Hero : Cloud Strife " for his inclusion in their 2009 " All Time Greatest Game Hero " poll , showcasing scenes of Cloud as he appears in Advent Children . UGO placed him first in their 2010 list of top Japanese RPG characters , stating " Cloud is the cloth from whom the great majority of JRPG characters were cut . " That same year , GamesRadar listed Cloud as the second best Final Fantasy hero of all the time , describing him as " one of the most well @-@ rounded and thought @-@ out characters in the series . " He was also ranked as the second best Final Fantasy character in a 2010 list by VideoGamer.com , who called him a " poster boy for the entire JRPG genre " . In 2011 , Empire ranked Cloud as the 13th greatest video game character , stating : " He is

, and always will be , the definitive FF poster child - an enduring axiom of character desgn [sic] . " GameZone ranked Cloud second in their 2012 list of top Final Fantasy characters , attributing the success of Final Fantasy VII largely to his character . In 2013 , Complex named him the greatest Final Fantasy character of all time , citing his " killer backstory , iconic weaponry , and a great game to the boot . "

In his review of the 1998 PC release of Final Fantasy VII , Ron Dulin of GameSpot commented that " a simple understatement will have to suffice : Cloud is easily the most interesting and complex character ever presented in a game . " RPGamer 's Abadi Aujang called Cloud " one of the most complex characters Square has created , " as well as " the first truly complicated main character . " Unicorn Lynx of MobyGames described him as " one of the most complex characters ever seen in a game , " citing the struggle Cloud faces in assuming responsibility as a leader while confronting " his own deep psychological problems " and " the truth about his very existence . " Kurt Kalata of Gamasutra stated that he is " neither hero nor anti @-@ hero " , but rather " somewhat of a weakling " suffering from grandiose delusions and other psychological issues . He also called Cloud one of the first unreliable narrators in a role @-@ playing video game . Chi Kong Lui , writing for GameCritics , stated that while Final Fantasy VII features " some of the most complex characters ever created , by video game standards , " their personalities are " paper @-@ thin " . He criticized Cloud 's " childish motivations " , stating that Final Fantasy VII could not " match the depth of screenplay in Orson Welles ' Citizen Kane or the complexities of characters exhibited in Martin Scorsese 's Taxi Driver . "

IGN stated that Cloud set a trend for role @-@ playing video game heroes , describing his " spiky blond hair " and " gigantic Buster Sword " as " instantly identifiable icons , recognized by gamers around the world . " Edge described Cloud as an example of " excellent design and characterization " . Famitsu in 2010 published a seven @-@ page tribute to Cloud , showcasing his many appearances throughout the years .

Cloud has appeared in various other lists . These include IGN 's " Worst Videogame Haircuts " (2006) and " Top Videogame Sword Masters " (2008) , and ScrewAttack 's " Top Ten Coolest Characters " (2007) . 1UP.com featured Cloud in their list of top Final Fantasy character types , citing him as an example of " The Sullen Asshole " alongside Squall Leonhart from Final Fantasy VIII and Cecil from Final Fantasy IV . GameDaily ranked him fifth on their list of top " gaming hunks " , praising his design and weapon . GamesRadar included his name among the 50 " most gloriously stupid " in video game history , and featured him in its " RPG Emo @-@ Off " , listing Cloud as the second " most emo character of all JRPGs " behind Genesis Rhapsodos from Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII . GamesRadar also listed Cloud 's Buster Sword as one " the most ludicrously impractical RPG weapons " and included his cross @-@ dressing scene in its list of " [g] aming 's most piss poor disguises " , commenting that " it makes Cloud look so damn feminine , the escort @-@ loving baddie chooses him over ... Aeries [sic] and Tifa " . Cloud and Aerith 's relationship ranked third in GamesRadar 's 2008 list of top Square Enix couples , who called it " a classic love story " , while IGN ranked it ninth in their 2006 list of best video game couples overall . In 2013 , Complex ranked Cloud as the eighth greatest soldier in video games .

In an Oricon poll conducted in 2008 , Cloud placed second overall for most popular video game character , ranking second among men and third with women . In a 2010 ASCII Media Works poll asking fans which video game or manga character they would like to name their children after , Cloud 's name ranked third for male characters . That same year , Famitsu readers voted Cloud as the third best video game character of all time . In one of IGN 's 2007 " Hero Showdowns " , Cloud was pitted against Link and lost . The character placed similarly in contests by GameFAQs , winning the " Character Battle II " (2003) and finishing second in the " Character Battle III " (2004) and the " Battle Royale " (2006) . In the Guinness World Records Gamer 's Edition of 2011 , Cloud was voted as the fifth best video game character .

PSXextreme praised Cloud 's redesign in Kingdom Hearts as one of the best in the game , describing it is a " hybrid " of his and Vincent Valentine 's designs . According to AnimeFringe , Cloud 's appearance in Kingdom Hearts was one of the things that excited Final Fantasy VII fans the most . His development in Advent Children was praised by DVD Talk as one of the best parts from

the film . James Mielke of 1UP.com commented that Cloud 's guilt over Aerith 's death was effective enough to move viewers , but regarded such scenes as " manipulative " . Michael Beckett , writing for RPGamer , referred to Cloud overcoming Aerith 's death as central to the film , and called his fight sequences " the most creative and impressive scenes " . Mielke also described the characters as " beautiful ; perfect almost " , commenting that Cloud possessed " unbreakably perfect hair " . Briana Lawerence of Mania Entertainment , however , listed Cloud second in her article " 10 Male Headaches of Anime " , criticizing his feeling of guilt about Aerith 's death . Joystiq 's Andrew Yoon opined that the director 's cut version of the film provides more depth to Cloud 's development , taking advantage of its longer runtime by better " humanizing [him] " . A 2010 GamesRadar article showcasing classic game character redesigns contrasted Cloud 's appearances in Advent Children and Final Fantasy VII , stating that the move away from low polygon models necessitated the change , and commenting that Square Enix alters the design with each title he features in .

  Tasked with creating a " female version of Cloud " for Final Fantasy XIII , Nomura designed Lightning with Cloud 's success in mind , stating that he " desired for her to be ... loved for a long time , like Cloud . " After Lightning was voted as the most popular female character in the series by Japanese fans , Mollie Patterson of EGMNOW commented : " Some have also brought up that Lightning is kind of the female equivalent to Cloud , which might be why she gets so much love . "