

= Drakengard 3 =

Drakengard 3 is an action role @-@ playing game developed by Access Games and published by Square Enix exclusively for the PlayStation 3 . The game was released in December 2013 in Japan and in May 2014 in North America and Europe . It is the third game in the Drakengard series and a prequel to the original game . The game , like the rest of the series , features a mixture of ground @-@ based hack @-@ and @-@ slash combat and aerial battles . The story focuses on Zero , a woman who can manipulate magic through song . Partnering with a dragon named Mikhail , Zero set out to kill her five sisters , who rule the world 's regions . As she travels , the player discovers the true reason behind Zero 's rampage .

The game , created to cater for hardcore role @-@ playing game audiences , was developed by the same team who created the original Drakengard and series spin @-@ off Nier , including producer Takamasa Shiba , director Taro Yoko and writer Sawako Natori . The music was composed by Keiichi Okabe , who also scored Nier . Unlike previous titles in the series , the team developed the game at Access Games , due to the company 's experience at developing action titles and the team 's wish to address criticisms laid at the gameplay of previous Drakengard games . Drakengard 3 received mixed to positive reviews and sales in Japan and mixed reviews in the west . The ground @-@ based gameplay and story were generally praised , while common criticisms included the dragon gameplay , graphics and multiple technical issues .

= = Gameplay = =

Drakengard 3 features hack @-@ and @-@ slash gameplay and aerial combat on a dragon , as with previous entries in the series . The player controls the main protagonist Zero during the entire campaign and for most levels is accompanied by up to two AI @-@ controlled companions . In ground @-@ based combat , Zero performs multiple attacks on various enemies . These can be combined into combos , which fill up Zero 's Tension Gauge . When the gauge is filled to any degree , Zero can temporarily enter Intoner Mode , a hyperactive state which enables her to move quickly and deal high damage to enemies while also making her immune to attack . As Zero levels up , weapons grow more powerful and Zero gains access to multiple weapon types as the game progresses . Each weapon type produces a different set of attacking moves . Unlike previous titles in the series , the player does not have to pause the games to switch weapons , instead being able to do it at any time without pausing .

Zero can switch between four weapon types : swords , spears , combat bracers and chakrams . Each weapon has a four @-@ level cap and can be leveled up either through combat or by spending money acquired during levels . Each weapon has different effects depending on enemy @-@ type and combat situation , with spears being useful against heavily @-@ armored or shielded enemies and swords being a default weapon . While exploring levels , Zero can collect items from chests and fallen enemies which earn money for buying potions , as well as buying and leveling weapons . Zero can also complete sidequests as the player progresses through the game : these sidequests place within areas of normal levels and limitations on the player 's abilities . The player 's performance during them earns special items and the number of items you earn increases with the number of enemies killed .

For aerial combat , Zero mounts her dragon Mikhail . The two main types of aerial combat are rail shooter @-@ style missions and free @-@ roaming combat which enables both aerial and ground @-@ based combat . Mikhail has multiple attack types at his disposal : while on the ground , after Zero has mounted , the dragon can perform a sweeping attack using his wings and snap at them . During combat in the air , Mikhail can breathe fire down onto the ground and at airborne enemies . Mikhail is fully controllable while in the air , flying through the environment and being able to evade enemy fire . Mikhail 's main attack , breathing fire , features a lock @-@ on feature which can take in multiple enemies . Mikhail can also enter Intoner Mode while Zero is mounted , which magnifies the amount of damage he can deal . During ground @-@ based missions , Zero can also call in Mikhail to deal damage to enemy units .

= = Story = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

Drakengard 3 takes place roughly one hundred years before the events of Drakengard , acting as a prequel to the first two games in the series . Despite being a prequel , Drakengard 3 mostly follows separate timelines unrelated to the events of Drakengard . In earlier times , the land was ravaged by conflict between warlords . At the height of the carnage , five mysterious figures called Intoners appeared and using their ability to utilize magic through song , defeated the warlords and ended the conflict . Due to this , they become worshiped as deities and became rulers of various regions of the land . An unspecified time later , in the game 's present , the strongest Intoner , One , wishes to unite the five once again and bring stability to the land . The source of the Intoners ' power is an evil flower that saved Zero from death to use her as an instrument for mankind 's destruction . Zero was its original host and she now wishes to destroy all those affected by its power , herself and ' sisters ' spawned when Zero attempted suicide and ensure the safety of the world .

The player controls Zero (?? , Zero) , the main protagonist and antihero , considered a traitor by the Intoners and their followers because of her mission to kill them . Aiding her on her quest is the dragon Mikhail (???? , Mihairu) , who aids her and is her mount in aerial battle . The other five Intoners are : One (?? , Wan) , the current ruler of the Intoners ; Two (?? , Tou) , the more cheerful member of the group and ruler of the Country of Sand ; Three (??? , Surii) , ruler of the Country of Forest and an obsessive over dolls ; Four (??? , Fou) , ruler of the Country of Mountain and the only virgin of the group ; and Five (???? , Faibu) , ruler of the Country of Sea and a woman consumed by greed for everything . Traveling with Zero on her quest are the disciples , a group who formerly served the Intoners and accompany Zero after their original mistresses are killed . They include : Cent (??? , Sento) , a dumb and overconfident man , as well as the lover of the Intoner Two ; Octa (??? , Okuta) , an old and cunning man obsessed with sex ; Decadus (???? , Dec?to) a gentlemanly warrior with a masochistic streak ; and Dito (??? , Dito) , a sadistic young man . Each of the disciples helps the Intoner summon angels and daemons into battle . The game is narrated to the player by Accord (???? , Ak?ru) , an android created by the " old world " to monitor and document all timelines .

= = = Plot = = =

Zero and her dragon Michael slaughter their way into the Cathedral City , the center of power for the Intoners . Zero 's attempt to kill them directly ends disastrously : she and Michael are gravely wounded by One 's own dragon , Gabriel . A year later , Zero and her dragon , now a childlike reincarnation named Mikhail , set off to try killing the Intoners again . They first travel to the Land of Seas to face Five : during the fight , Five is killed by her disciple Dito , whom Zero takes into her service . The group then journey to the Land of Mountains and face Four : after Four 's death , Zero recruits Decadus . They then proceed to the Land of Forests . There , Three 's disciple Octa attempts to betray his mistress , but she forces him to help her fight Zero . She is killed by Mikhail , who is then attacked and captured by daemons summoned by Two and Cent . Zero pursues them to the Land of Sand , freeing Mikhail from captivity and facing the two . Mikhail kills Two and Cent joins Zero . The group then fight their way into the Cathedral City , where Zero transforms the Disciples into their true dove forms , freeing them from their service to her . During her battle with One , Mikhail dies wounding Gabriel , allowing a distraught Zero to finish off Gabriel and One . Zero is then killed by a male clone of One , who decides to create a new religious order in memory of his " sister " .

After this , Accord tells of three alternate series of events or " branches " , caused by a group of singularities (Zero , her sisters , and the disciples) coming together . In the second branch , while in the Land of Forests and having already recruited Cent , Zero finds the surviving sisters being driven

insane by the power of the flower : Three dies of unknown causes , causing her soldiers to go mad . Eventually , the group find One has been killed by a deranged Two . Brought back under her influence , Cent turns on the group , killing Octa and Dito . Two and Decadus kill each other , while Zero kills Cent : before dying , Two and Cent summon their angel Raphael , which poisons Mikhail before being killed . In order to save Mikhail , Zero activates the flower 's power and forms a " pact " , resurrecting him . In the third branch , after rescuing Mikhail from Two 's stronghold , the dragon is devolved back to his child form by Two 's powers . Upon arrival in the Cathedral City , the group faces Two , who destroys the four disciples when they kill her . Zero then faces One , who reveals that she knows the true nature of the Intoners and reveals the reason behind Zero 's partnership with Mikhail : once the other Intoners were dead , Mikhail was to kill Zero , destroying the flower 's power . Gabriel and Mikhail kill each other and Zero and One engage in an enraged battle . After killing One , Zero , still in shock from Mikhail 's death , sets off to try to find another dragon who can kill her . It is implied in Accord 's closing report that she fails .

In the fourth and final branch of Zero 's set of timelines , as she proceeds on her quest , she encounters each of her sisters possessed by the flower 's power , as well as interacting directly with Accord . In each battle with the sisters , the Disciples summon their angels and transform into doves until only Octa remains . In the Cathedral City , Zero and Octa face off against One while Mikhail challenges Gabriel . Octa sacrifices himself to restrain One . Finally , Accord decides to intervene and sacrifices herself so Zero can kill One , which in turn kills Gabriel . Upon absorbing the power of all five Intoners , Zero transforms into a stone monster and goes with Mikhail to another realm , where they engage in a rhythm game @-@ style battle . Upon winning , Mikhail destroys the monster and Accord 's voice declares that the flower 's evil has been sealed away , although there is still the possibility of it reappearing in another time and place . She also suspects that Zero might have survived . In a post @-@ credits scene , a new version of Accord replaces the one destroyed by Zero and many others join her in helping record world events . As they disperse , the new Accord speaks to the player , hoping to see them again and thanking them for playing , before the screen goes black .

= = Development = =

Drakengard 3 was conceived when Takamasa Shiba and Taro Yoko , the respective producer and director of the original game , met up years after Cavia , the company where they created the series , was absorbed into AQ Interactive . The two resurrected early plans to create a third entry in the series . As part of the brainstorming process , the company used fan questionnaires , from which the team learned that many wanted a dark story similar to Nier for the next entry in the series . Speaking about the creation of the game , Shiba said that Drakengard 3 was made partly because the company was making fewer single @-@ player RPG console games and he wished to capture the atmosphere of earlier days . Alongside that was Shiba 's ambition to show that the RPG fanbase was now a mainstream community that wanted a more hardcore gaming experience . The game was developed by Access Games , who were noted for the survival horror Deadly Premonition . Shiba noted that the company was " just really good at creating action games " , which would enable the team to address criticisms laid at the previous games in the series for their poor combat while still being able to craft a story true to the Drakengard series . By the time the game was unveiled in early 2013 , it was 60 % complete , and Yoko commented " It 's not Drakengard or Nier . If you 're expecting that , you 'll be disappointed . "

= = = World design = = =

Kimihiko Fujisaka , character designer for the previous entries in the series , reprised his role . In designing the characters , Fujisaka used the previous two games ' " Medieval Europe " inspiration for the enemies , while leaning towards more modern designs for the main characters . In addition to Fujisaka , actor Shinnosuke Ikehata , who had voiced key characters in previous games in the series , returned to do voice work , and writer Sawako Natori , who had worked on Drakengard ,

Drakengard 2 and Nier , returned to write the scenario with Yoko . The story was written to have " a good balance of darkness and humor " , according to Shiba : he said that there was " actually a good bit of [darkness] , in the in @-@ game dialogue for example . " The team did not want to turn it into a completely dark story , instead still having scenes that people could laugh at . Yoko did not want the emotions of the various characters to fall into simple stereotypes , or for there to be a simplistic take on the situation . He also wanted to create a strange " abnormal " picture for the players : the cited instance was the contrast between the fear and terror displayed by enemy soldiers and the often vulgar dialogue between Zero and her companions . He also stated that he went through a large part of the game 's development " half @-@ laughing " .

During the story development process , the team decided upon a female protagonist as the game 's lead , in contrast to the previous games which had featured male protagonists , along with a large number of other female characters : this was primarily because all other proposals had been rejected or scrapped . Many aspects of Zero 's design and abilities were intended to evoke the game 's gritty atmosphere , while the flower growing from her eye was almost cut when Shiba thought it would be too much of a risk for the series when coupled with the character 's gender . A couple of Yoko 's ideas that were cut out or rejected during development included a fully contemporary setting with a school @-@ girl protagonist , and calling the game Drakengard 4 instead of Drakengard 3 , with the story revolving around searching for the missing installment in the series . Yoko , Natori and supplementary writer Emi Nagashima were jointly responsible for creating the disciples ' personalities . Yoko wanted Nagashima to write Cent to be as much of an idiot as possible , while she received some negative feedback for her portrayal of Decadus despite her best efforts . Octa was the character Natori and Nagashima best understood , though Nagashima found it difficult writing his novella . While writing Mikhail 's dialogue , Natori was asked by Yoko to embody the good qualities of animals and children in him . Instead of being realistic , Natori borrowed elements from other fiction to create his personality , finding him the most fun to write . The dialogue between Zero and her disciples was written by Yoko to contrast in content with the violent combat . Elements of fourth @-@ wall breaking were included in the game , such as some of Zero 's dialogue or Accord 's actions during the final ending : this both acted as a callback to Drakengard , and to suggest that the real world was simply another branch of the Drakengard universe .

Fujisaka 's design for Zero was the first to be approved by Yoko . The other Intoners were designed fairly quickly after that : Yoko told Fujisaka to " think Puella Magi Madoka Magica " when designing them . Each character had different design themes : for example , Five 's was nudity and knitwear , Four 's was her being a female captain , and Two 's were underwear and " lolita " . Three was meant to have bangs covering her face and multiple hairpins , but this was dropped . The characters ' number @-@ based names and differing eye colors were meant to help players identify them , while aspects of Zero 's design were incorporated into the other Intoners to emphasize their connections . The Apostles were designed and approved quickly as they were not a high priority . They were designed around prime male archetypes : Cent , originally the group 's sadist , was the " pretty boy " , Octa was the " old man " , Decadus was the " middle @-@ aged man " , and Dito was the " little boy " .

= = = Music = = =

The game 's music was composed by Keiichi Okabe , who also created the score for Nier . Okabe wished to match the work of Nobuyoshi Sano , finding creating it a new experience . He was also requested by Yoko not to follow the musical route of either Drakengard or Nier and was inspired by the games theme of " the sense of contrast " . One of the game 's theme songs , " Kuroi Uta " (????? , Black Song) , was sung by Eir Aoi , a singer native to Hokkaido who was a self @-@ confessed fan of the Drakengard series . Her liking of the series was the reason Shiba selected her to perform the theme song . The lyrics were written by Kikuchi Hana , one of Nier 's scenario writers . The game 's second theme song , " This Silence Is Mine " , used in the game 's Tokyo Game Show trailer , was specially written and sung by Onitsuka Chihiro . Drag @-@ on Dragoon 3 Original Soundtrack was released on January 21 , 2014 under the catalog number SQEX @-@ 10414 ~ 5 .

The theme songs were released both as part of the soundtrack and as singles .

= = Release and merchandise = =

Drakengard 3 received few gameplay previews and was promoted in the form of novellas : this was because Shiba wished for the game 's story to be a mystery for players . The game was originally meant to be released in October 2013 in Japan , but was pushed back to December due to Square Enix wanting to improve the overall quality of the game and ensure it met fan expectation . While it received a physical and digital release in Japan and North America , Drakengard 3 was released in digital format only in Europe . It was also localized into Chinese with the assistance of Sony Computer Entertainment Japan Asia , in an attempt to actively tap into the Chinese @-@ speaking market . The collector 's edition released in Japan also included an outfit inspired by Kainé , the female protagonist of Nier . A limited collector 's edition was also released in North America , Europe and Australia through Square Enix . It contained a prequel novel concerning the game 's main characters , a scenario involving One , and DLC for both Japanese voice acting and a costume for Zero inspired by the first game 's protagonist .

Alongside the game , there were also two manga released in Japan written by Emi Nagashima under her pen name Jun Eishima : Drag @-@ On Dragoon : Utahime Five , a prequel focusing on the other Intoners , and Drag @-@ On Dragoon : Shi ni Itaru Aka , which acts as the game 's sequel . Both manga were created and written with Yoko 's supervision . The game was complemented with multiple DLC packs : they included multiple character outfits for Zero inspired by previous series protagonists , cosmetic adornments for Mikhail , and six prequel chapters detailing past events in the lives of both Zero and her sisters . This DLC was later released in the west along with alternate music for Zero 's Intoner Mode sequences . ASCII Media Works also published a complete guide to the game , which included guides to the series history and a novella following on from Shi ni Itaru Aka which retold the events of Drakengard . A novel , Drag @-@ on Dragoon 3 Side Story , was released on 28 August 2014 . The novel detailed a fifth series of events connecting the narratives of Drakengard 3 and Drakengard , as none of the game 's endings did so .

= = Reception = =

During its first week on sale in Japan , Drakengard 3 sold 114 @,@ 024 copies , coming fourth in Japanese sale charts and reached 125 @,@ 500 units by the end of the year . Total physical sales in Japan as of May 2014 have reached 150 @,@ 866 units . It reached 79th place on Famitsu 's list of 100 best @-@ settling titles of the year , while it reached 62nd place Dengeki Online 's list . Drakengard 3 received a 34 / 40 from Famitsu , with the four reviewers giving it scores of 9 , 9 , 8 and 8 . The game received " average " reviews , according to Western video game review aggregator Metacritic . Anime News Network 's Todd Ciolek named Drakengard 3 Game of the Year in 2014 .

The story received mixed reviews . Dengeki PlayStation called it the best story of the Drakengard series , while Famitsu was generally positive about the world and characters , praising the character dialogue . Destructoid 's Chris Carter stated that the story compelled him to " truck forward and figure it all out for [himself] " , while he found the dialogue between the characters funny and their relationships entertaining . Game Informer 's Kimberley Wallace was less enthusiastic , saying that while there were a few interesting scenes , " the narrative and characters make a lot of missteps . " IGN 's Meghan Sullivan criticized the story for being too slow and too reliant on foreknowledge of the previous games , while calling the main characters " poorly written " . Gamespot 's Heidi Kemps generally praised the story , especially the ways it poked fun at the genre and focus on the many paths the game took players down , while GamesRadar 's Becky Cunningham called the story " the main reason to play [the game] , especially as it approaches medieval fantasy with dark comedy instead of straight @-@ laced tropes . " Eurogamer 's Chris Schilling said that the game played out " like a jet @-@ black comedy " , calling its narrative far colder than that of Nier , while praising Zero 's characterization .

In contrast to previous titles in the series , the gameplay received praise . Dengeki praised the redesigned battle system , citing the ability to switch weapons instantly as its best feature . Famitsu was also positive , despite it not having many distinguishing features to separate it from other video games in the genre . Sullivan praised the ground aspect of gameplay , especially Zero 's Intoner Mode , but criticized the dragon gameplay as awkward and exacerbated by the poor control layout . Cunningham said that the combat will " keep [players] on [their] toes " , praising the balance between character and enemy power and the weapon switching ability , but being more mixed about the dragon gameplay . Carter called the action gameplay his " favorite part " , referring to it as a faster and smoother version of combat from the Dynasty Warriors series , while Kemps found it generally satisfactory despite its simplicity , while citing the dragon sections as " a welcome , if not always particularly well @-@ designed , break from stabbing troops directly . " Wallace was positive about many aspects of the system , but stated that it got bogged down by the level design and predictable enemy movements . Schilling enjoyed the ground @-@ based gameplay despite its simplicity , comparing it to " a cross between [DmC : Devil May Cry] and Dynasty Warriors " , but cited the dragon gameplay as far less enjoyable . Poor AI for Zero 's companions and dragon drew criticism .

The graphics and level design were generally criticized . Cunningham called the environments " very bland " when compared to the narrative , while Wallace generally criticized the in @-@ game level and character design , though cited the cinematic cutscenes as an improvement . In contrast , Carter praised the character design and called the other visuals " absolutely beautiful " . Sullivan was generally negative , citing the level design and narrow color palate as part of her critique , and comparing the graphics to a game from the PlayStation 2 era . Schilling generally faulted the game for its textures , graphics and character design , despite noting the developers ' attempts to lampoon gaming conventions . Technical issues such as frequent frame rate drops , an erratic camera and screen tearing were cited as general faults with the game .

= = = Game quotes = = =