

= Final Fantasy IX =

Final Fantasy IX (?????????IX , Fainaru Fantaj? Nain) is a role @-@ playing video game developed and published by Square for the PlayStation video game console . Originally released in 2000 , it is the ninth title in the Final Fantasy series and last to debut on the original PlayStation console . In 2010 , it was re @-@ released as a PSone Classics title on the PlayStation Network . The game introduced new features to the series like the " Active Time Event " , " Mognet " , and a unique equipment and skill system .

Final Fantasy IX 's plot centers on a war between nations . Players follow a young thief named Zidane Tribal , who joins with others to defeat Queen Brahne of Alexandria , the one responsible for starting the war . The plot shifts , however , when the characters realise that Brahne is working with an even more threatening person called Kuja .

Final Fantasy IX was developed alongside Final Fantasy VIII , but took a different approach by returning to the more traditional style of the early Final Fantasy games . Consequently , Final Fantasy IX was influenced significantly by the original Final Fantasy game , and features allusions to other titles in the series . It was released to critical acclaim and holds the highest Metacritic score of all Final Fantasy installments . Final Fantasy IX was commercially successful , selling 5 @.@ 30 million units worldwide by March 31 , 2003 .

Ports for iOS and Android were released in February 2016 , while a port for Microsoft Windows was released in April 2016 .

= = Gameplay = =

In Final Fantasy IX , the player navigates a character throughout the game world , exploring areas and interacting with non @-@ player characters . Most of the game occurs in towns and dungeons which are referred to as " field screens " . To aid exploration on the field screen , Final Fantasy IX introduces the " field icon " , an exclamation mark appearing over their lead character 's head , signalling an item or sign is nearby . Players speak with moogles to record their progress , restore life energy with a tent and purchase items ? a deviation from previous installments , which used a save point to perform these functions . Moogles may request the playable character deliver letters to other Moogles via Mognet , playable characters might also receive letters from non @-@ playable characters .

Players journey between field screen locations on the world map , a three dimensional , downsized representation of Final Fantasy IX 's world presented from a top @-@ down perspective . Players can freely navigate around the world map screen unless restricted by terrain like bodies of water or mountain ranges . To overcome geographical limitations , players can ride chocobos , sail on a boat or pilot airships . Like previous Final Fantasy installments , travel across the world map screen and hostile field screen locations is interrupted by random enemy encounters .

Final Fantasy IX offers a new approach to town exploration with the introduction of Active Time Events (ATE) . These allow the player to view events unfolding at different locations , providing character development , special items and prompts for key story @-@ altering decisions . ATE are occasionally used to simultaneously control two teams when the party is divided to solve puzzles and navigate mazes .

= = = Combat = = =

Whenever the playable character encounters an enemy , the map changes to the " battle screen " . On the battle screen , the enemy appears on the opposite side of the characters ; each battle uses the familiar Active Time Battle system that was first featured in Final Fantasy IV . The character 's command list is presented in a window opposite the ATB gauge list ; while all characters can physically attack the enemy or use an item from the player 's inventory , they also possess unique abilities . For example , the thief Zidane can steal items from the enemy , Eiko and Garnet can summon " eidolons " to aid the party and Vivi can use black magic to damage the opposition .

These character @-@ specific commands change when the player goes into " Trance mode " , which is activated for a short duration when an uncontrollable gauge fills as character sustains damage in a style similar to the Limit Breaks used in Final Fantasy VII . When the gauge is full , the character 's strength is amplified , and the player can select special attack commands . Zidane 's " Skill " command list , for example , changes to " Dyne " , allowing him to execute powerful attacks ; Vivi 's " Black Magic " command evolves into " Double Black " , allowing him to cast two magic spells simultaneously . Through the Configuration screen , the player can change the Battle Style from Normal to Custom , which allows two players to control any combination of characters during battle . However , two controllers must be plugged into the PlayStation .

A character 's performance in battle is determined by numerical values (" statistics ") for categories like speed , strength and magical power . Character statistics are driven by experience ; when players win battles , they are awarded " experience points " , which accumulate until characters gain " experience levels " . When characters " level up " , the statistics for their attributes permanently increase , which may also be amplified by the types of equipment the character is wearing . Winning battles also awards the player money (Gil) , Tetra Master playing cards , items and ability points (AP) .

= = = Abilities and equipment = = =

Final Fantasy IX deviates from the style of customisable characters featured in the last two titles by reviving the character class concept , which designates a character to a certain role in battle . For example , Vivi is designated as a black mage and is the only character who can use black magic , and Steiner is a knight and is the only character who can use sword skills .

The basic function of equipment in Final Fantasy games is to increase character attributes ; arming Zidane with a Mythril Vest , for example , increases his base defense statistic . In Final Fantasy IX , weapons and armor include special character abilities , which the character may use when the item is equipped (permitting the ability matches their class) . Once the character accumulates enough ability points in battle , the ability becomes usable without having to keep the item equipped . In addition to granting abilities the equipment in Final Fantasy IX determines the statistical growth of the characters at the time of level up . Armor not only raises base defense or evasion statistics but raises defense and / or other statistics at level up .

Abilities are classified into action and support categories . Action abilities consume magic points (MP) and include magic spells and special moves that are used in battle . Support abilities provide functions that remain in effect indefinitely and must be equipped with magic stones to be functional . The maximum number of these stones increases as the characters level up .

= = = Tetra Master = = =

Tetra Master is a card @-@ based minigame that can be initiated with various non @-@ playable characters in the field . Players assemble a deck of five cards , which can be obtained via chests , given as a reward , or earned from fighting monsters . Each card has various arrows which point to the four sides and four corners of the card , and various stats that vary between cards , with rarer cards being more powerful . Players take it in turns to strategically place cards on a 4x4 playing grid based on the available directions . Battles can occur when players place a card next to another card , depending on where the player places it . If the defending card has no arrows whilst the attacking card has an arrow pointing towards it , that card is placed under the player 's control . When two arrows meet with each other , the cards do battle based on their point values , with the losing card coming under the winning player 's control , sometimes triggering combos that put multiple cards in the winner 's control . After all cards are played , the winner is the player who has the most cards under their control , with a draw occurring if they have the same number of cards . The winning player may choose a card from their opponent 's deck out of the ones they put under their control . If the winning player scores a perfect win however , in which all ten cards are put under their control , they will win all five cards from the opponent 's deck .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

Final Fantasy IX takes place primarily on the four continents of a world named Gaia (homonymous with Final Fantasy VII 's Gaia , but not the same world) . Most of Gaia 's population reside on the Mist Continent , named so because the entire continent is blanketed in thick Mist . Lands outside the Mist Continent ? the Outer , Lost and Forgotten continents ? are uncharted territories not explored until midway through the game . Several locations on the parallel world of Terra and the dream land of Memoria round out the game 's areas . The Mist Continent features four nations : Alexandria , Lindblum , Burmecia , and Cleyra . Alexandria is a kingdom to the northeast of the Mist Continent ruled by a monarchy located in Alexandria Castle . The technologically advanced Lindblum , ruled by a regent , is nestled on a plateau to the southwest where airships regularly fly by . The Kingdom of Burmecia , whose capital is showered by eternal rain is to the northwest and nearby to the isolated Cleyran civilisation , which is nestled in a giant tree in the desert , protected by a powerful sandstorm . Treno , a large , perpetually dark city , heavily populated by both aristocrats and paupers , is located on the southeast part of the continent . The Mist Continent is extremely mountainous resulting in a natural barrier between many of the ruling nations .

Gaia is inhabited by humans and various non @-@ human races . Alexandria , Treno , and Lindblum are populated by a mix of humans and anthropomorphic animals . The Burmecians are anthropomorphic rats who value dance , thus accounting for their general aversion to footwear , and live in both Burmecia and Cleyra . The Cleyrans split from the Burmecians when the latter started to appreciate " the art of war " . The dwarves are short humanoid creatures who appear as inhabitants of the village of Conde Petie on the Outer Continent . There is also a village of black mages that have gained sentient thought , who reside in the Outer Continent , as well . The Genomes , an artificial race of soulless vessels inhabit Terra ; they will house the once @-@ dormant Terran souls when Terra assimilates Gaia . Summoners are similar to other humans , but with a horn on their forehead . In the story , only two summoners remain (Garnet and Eiko) ; the others were exterminated when the Terran warship Invincible destroyed their homeland of Madain Sari . Lastly , the Qu are large , seemingly androgynous humanoids , who are recognised as fine gourmands . They inhabit marshlands throughout the world where they catch their main source of nutrition : frogs .

= = = Characters = = =

The eight main playable characters in Final Fantasy IX are Zidane Tribal , a member of a group of bandits called Tantalus masquerading as a theatre troupe ; Garnet Til Alexandros XVII (alias Dagger) , the Princess of Alexandria who has a strange connection to " Eidolons " , Vivi Orunitia , a young , timid , and kind black mage trying to find the meaning of his existence ; Adelbert Steiner , the Captain of the Knights of Pluto and loyal servant of Alexandria and Princess Garnet ; Freya Crescent , a dragon knight from the city of Burmecia looking for her lost love ; Quina Quen , a Qu whose master wants him / her to travel the world so that s / he will learn about cuisine ; Eiko Carol , a six @-@ year @-@ old girl living in Madain Sari , the lost village of the eidolon summoners , and along with Garnet , one of the last two remaining summoners ; and Amarant Coral , a bounty hunter hired to return Garnet to Alexandria . Other main characters include Regent Cid Fabool , the charismatic leader of Lindblum ; Queen Brahne , Garnet 's mother and the power @-@ hungry Queen of Alexandria ; General Beatrix , the powerful leader of the female knights of Alexandria ; and antagonist Kuja , an arms dealer and enemy of Gaia . Other minor characters and groups also appear , such as Blank , Zidane 's good friend and band partner , but their significance and back @-@ stories are revealed as the game progresses .

== Story ==

Final Fantasy IX opens with Zidane and the Tantalus Theater Troupe attempting to kidnap Princess Garnet during her sixteenth birthday celebration in the city of Alexandria . Upon reaching her , they discover that Garnet , who is concerned about Queen Brahne 's increasingly erratic behavior , had planned on escaping the city and is willing to be kidnapped , especially as their employer , Regent Cid of Lindblum , is who she wanted to run to . During the escape from the city , the troupe is joined by Vivi , who is looking to explore , and Steiner , who decides to travel with Garnet for her protection rather than take her back against her will . After the group flees the city and its guards , their damaged airship crashes , and Zidane , Garnet , Vivi , and Steiner travel on together . During their journey to Lindblum , Garnet takes the alias Dagger , and the group discovers a factory in the village of Dali that is manufacturing soulless black mage soldiers that look similar to Vivi .

In Lindblum , the party meets with Cid , who explains that he hired the group to kidnap Garnet to get her away from Brahne , who also worries him . Upon learning that Alexandria has invaded the city @-@ state of Burmecia , the party splits in two . Zidane , Vivi , and new joinee Freya investigate Burmecia , while Dagger and Steiner journey back to Alexandria to try to stop Brahne from starting a war . Zidane 's group finds that Burmecia has been conquered with help from a man named Kuja , and refugees have fled to the nearby city of Cleyra . They rush to Cleyra to defend it from the encroaching forces . Dagger , meanwhile , is ignored and captured by Brahne , who extracts powerful magical weapons called eidolons from her . Brahne proceeds to use one to destroy Cleyra . Zidane and company escaped the city on Brahne 's airship and rescue Garnet , but while they do so Brahne attacks Lindblum with another ediolon .

Cid informs the group , when they reach Lindblum , that Kuja is Brahne 's arms dealer . Believing him to be from one of the other continents , normally inaccessible by airship , the party travels through a tunnel with Quina to the Outer Continent . There they meet Eiko , discover a village of black mages , and find the Iifa Tree , which produces a fighting @-@ stimulant called Mist . They learn that Kuja uses Mist to create the Black Mages , and Vivi was a prototype . After stopping the Mist creation , the group meets Amarant , hired by Brahne to capture Garnet , who joins them instead . They also learn that Garnet is originally from the same destroyed village as Eiko , and has the power to summon eidolons , which was the reason she was adopted by Brahne . Brahne and Kuja then reach the Iifa Tree , but Brahne attempts to kill him with an eidolon ; Kuja instead takes control over it and destroys her and her army instead .

The party returns to Alexandria to install Garnet as queen , but are assaulted at her coronation by Kuja . Garnet and Eiko summon an eidolon to combat Kuja 's ; when Kuja tries to take control of their ediolon , he is stopped by an old man named Garland , who then uses Kuja 's ship to destroy Garnet 's eidolon and damage the city . Kuja flees with the intent to fight Garland for power . Seeking to stop both of them , the party gets an experimental airship from Cid that runs on steam rather than Mist , which will allow them to journey to the other continents . Chasing Kuja , they find a portal to the parallel world of Terra ; there they discover that Terra is dying , and its people created Garland to orchestrate merging the two worlds . Garland in turn created Genomes , sentient soulless beings which would be taken over by Terran souls after the merging . The Iifa Tree serves to block Gaian souls from leaving Gaia but letting Terran souls in to be reborn into the Genomes , with the Gaian souls transformed into the Mist . Kuja and Zidane are Genomes , and Kuja turned against Garland to avoid being taken over at the conclusion of the plan . Kuja kills Garland with his newly gained powers , then destroys Terra as the party flees to Gaia with the Genomes .

At the Iifa tree , the party defeats Kuja , preventing him from destroying Gaia as well . The fight , so near what they find to be the Crystal , the source of life , summons Necron , a force of annihilation . Its defeat destroys the Tree ; the party flees , while Zidane stays behind to rescue Kuja . In the epilogue one year later , the fates of all of the characters are shown , and Zidane reappears in Alexandria to see Queen Garnet .

== Development ==

Development of Final Fantasy IX began before Square had finished development on Final Fantasy VIII . The game was developed in Hawaii as a compromise to developers living in the United States . As the series ' last game on the PlayStation , Sakaguchi envisioned a " reflection " on the older titles of the series . Leading up to its release , Sakaguchi called Final Fantasy IX his favorite Final Fantasy game as " it 's closest to [his] ideal view of what Final Fantasy should be " . This shift was also a response to demands from fans and other developers . Additionally , the team wanted to create an understandable story with deep character development ; this led to the creation of Active Time Events . The scenario for the game was written by Sakaguchi . He began early planning on it around July 1998 . Director Hiroyuki Ito had the idea to make the protagonist Zidane flirtatious towards women .

In the game 's conceptual stage , the developers made it clear that the title would not necessarily be Final Fantasy IX , as its break from the realism of Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy VIII may have alienated audiences . This led fans to speculate that it would be released as a " gaiden " (side story) to the main series . By late 1999 , however , Square had confirmed that the game would indeed be published as Final Fantasy IX , and by early 2000 , the game was nearly finished . The developers made several adjustments to the game , such as changing the ending seven times . Director Ito had designed the battle system used in the game .

The game 's developers sought to make the game 's environment more " fantasy @-@ oriented " than its PlayStation predecessors . Since the creators wanted to prevent the series from following a redundant setting , Final Fantasy IX distinctly breaks from the futuristic styles of Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy VIII by reintroducing a medieval setting . In the game , steam technology is just beginning to become widely available ; the population relies on hydropower or wind power for energy sources , but sometimes harness Mist or steam to power more advanced engines . Continuing with the medieval theme , the game 's setting is inspired by Norse and Northern European mythology . According to Ito , " [The development team is] attracted to European history and mythology because of its depth and its drama " . The main Final Fantasy IX website says the development of the game 's world serves as a culmination of the series by blending the " successful elements of the past , such as a return to the fantasy roots , " with newer elements . The creators made the characters a high priority . The return to the series ' roots also affected the characters ' designs , which resulted in characters with " comic @-@ like looks " . Composer Nobuo Uematsu commented that the design staff attempted to give the characters realism while still appearing comic @-@ like . To accomplish this , and to satisfy fans who had become used to the realistic designs of Final Fantasy VIII , the designers stressed creating characters with whom the player could easily relate .

= = = Music = = =

The music of Final Fantasy IX was written by series regular Nobuo Uematsu , with the title being his last exclusive Final Fantasy score until the release of Final Fantasy XIV in 2010 . In discussions with game director Hiroyuki Ito , Uematsu was told " It 'd be fine if you compose tracks for the eight characters , an exciting battle track , a gloomy , danger @-@ evoking piece , and around ten other tracks . " However , Uematsu spent an estimated year composing and producing " around 160 " pieces for Final Fantasy IX , with 140 appearing in the game .

Uematsu composed with a piano and used two contrasting methods : " I create music that fits the events in the game , but sometimes , the event designer will adjust a game event to fit the music I 've already written . " Uematsu felt Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy VIII had a mood of realism , but Final Fantasy IX was fantasy , so " a serious piece with silly , fun pieces could fit in . " He felt the theme was medieval music , and was given a break to travel in Europe for inspiration ? " looking at old castles in Germany and so on " . The music was not entirely composed in the medieval mode ; Uematsu claims " it would be unbalanced " and " a little boring " . He aimed for a " simple , warm " style and included uncommon instruments like the kazoo and dulcimer . Uematsu also included motifs from older Final Fantasy games " because Final Fantasy IX was returning to the roots , so to speak " and incorporated ideas like " the old intro for battle music " and arranged the Volcano theme

from Final Fantasy and the Pandemonium theme from Final Fantasy II . Tantalus ' band is also heard playing " Rufus ' Welcoming Ceremony " from Final Fantasy VII near the beginning of the game .

Uematsu was twice reported claiming without hesitation that Final Fantasy IX was his favorite score . " Melodies of Life " is the theme song of Final Fantasy IX , and consists primarily of two themes that were frequently used in the game itself , the overworld theme , and a lullaby that is sung by Dagger . It was performed by Emiko Shiratori in both the Japanese and English versions and arranged by Shir? Hamaguchi .

= = Release = =

Final Fantasy IX 's release was delayed to avoid a concurrent release with then rival Enix 's Dragon Quest VII . On October 7 , 2000 , a demo day for the North American version of Final Fantasy IX was held at the Metreon in San Francisco , California . The first American release of the game was also at the Metreon ; limited edition merchandise was included with the game , and fans cosplayed as Final Fantasy characters in celebration of the release . In Canada , a production error left copies of Final Fantasy IX without an English version of the instruction manual , prompting Square to ship copies of the English manual to Canadian stores several days later .

The game was heavily promoted both before and after its release . Starting on March 6 , 2000 , Final Fantasy IX characters were used in a line of computer @-@ generated Coca @-@ Cola commercials . Figurines of several characters were also used as prizes in Coca @-@ Cola 's marketing campaign . That same year , IGN awarded Final Fantasy dolls and figurines for prizes in several of their contests .

Final Fantasy IX was also the benchmark of Square 's interactive PlayOnline service . PlayOnline was originally developed to interact with Final Fantasy X , but when those plans fell through it became a strategy site for Final Fantasy IX . The site was designed to complement BradyGames ' and Piggyback Interactive 's official strategy guides for the game , where players who bought the print guide had access to " keywords " that could be searched for on PlayOnline 's site for extra tips and information . This caused fury among buyers of the guide , as they felt cheated for the expensive print guide . The blunder made GameSpy 's " Top 5 Dumbest Moments in Gaming " list , and Square dropped the idea for Final Fantasy X , which was under development at the time .

On December 18 , 2012 , the game was re @-@ released as part of the Final Fantasy 25th Anniversary Ultimate Box Japanese package . On February 10 , 2016 , ports for iOS and Android were released . A port for Microsoft Windows was released on April 14 , 2016 .

= = Reception = =

Final Fantasy IX sold over 2 @.@ 65 million copies in Japan by the end of 2000 , making it the second @-@ highest selling game of the year there . Although it was a top @-@ seller in Japan and America , Final Fantasy IX did not sell as well as Final Fantasy VII or Final Fantasy VIII in either Japan or the United States . As of March 31 , 2003 , the game had sold 5 @.@ 30 million copies worldwide . The game was voted the 24th @-@ best game of all time by readers of the Japanese magazine Famitsu .

= = = Critical response = = =

Final Fantasy IX was released to critical acclaim both in Japan and the US . On the review aggregator Metacritic it has achieved a score of 94 % , the highest score for a Final Fantasy game on the site . On GameRankings it has received a score of 93 % , the second highest of any Final Fantasy title , behind Final Fantasy VI for the Super NES .

Across the reviews , praise was given to the graphics and nostalgic elements . Critics pointed out the strength of the game within its gameplay , character development , and visual representation . GameSpot noted that the learning curve is easily grasped , and that the ability system is not as

complex as in Final Fantasy VII or Final Fantasy VIII . Each player character possesses unique abilities , which hinders the development of an over @-@ powered character . GameSpot describes the battle system as having a tactical nature and notes that the expanded party allows for more interaction between players and between enemies . Nevertheless , IGN disliked the lengthy combat pace and the repeated battles , describing it as " aggravating " , and RPGFan felt the Trance system to be ineffective as the meter buildup is slow and unpredictable , with characters Trancing just before the enemy is killed .

The characters and graphics received positive reviews . Although IGN felt that the in @-@ depth character traits in Final Fantasy IX could be generally found in other Final Fantasy games , it still found the characters to be engaging and sympathetic . GameSpot found the characters , up to their dialogue and traits , amusing and full of humor . IGN also noted that the Active Time Event system helps to expand the player 's understanding of the characters ' personalities as they question many ideas and emotions . Their semi @-@ deformed appearance , which also covers monsters of every size , contain detailed animation and design . They gave praise to the pre @-@ rendered backgrounds , noting the careful attention given to the artwork , movement in animations and character interactivity . The movies are seen as emotive and compelling , and the seamless transition and incorporation to the in @-@ game graphics helped to move the plot well .

Critics acknowledged that the overall storyline was mainly built upon elements found in previous Final Fantasy installments , such as evil empires and enigmatic villains . The main villain , although considered by GameSpot to be the least threatening in the series , was seen by IGN as an impeccable combination of " Kefka 's cackling villainy " and " plenty of the bishonenosity that made Sephiroth such a hit with the ladies " . Mixed reactions were given to the audio aspects of the game . Some reviewers , such as RPGFan felt that the music was " uninspired and dull " whilst GamePro praised the audio for evoking " emotions throughout the story , from battles to heartbreak to comedy " . Some criticism was leveled on composer Nobuo Uematsu who reused some tracks from past iterations of the series . Still , reviewers have come to agree that this and many other elements are part of the overall effort to create a nostalgic title for fans of the older Final Fantasy titles .

The strategy guide also received criticism ; it urged buyers to log onto an online site to gain the information , instead of providing it within the actual guide . The book 's given links are no longer accessible on the PlayOnline website . Tetra Master was seen by GameSpot as inferior and confusing compared to Final Fantasy VIII 's minigame Triple Triad , as the rules for it were only vaguely explained in the game and there were very few rewards earned from playing it despite its expansive nature .

= = = Game quotes = = =