

= Blue Dragon =

Blue Dragon ( Japanese : ??????? , Hepburn : Bur? Doragon ) is a role @-@ playing video game developed by Mistwalker and Artoon and published by Microsoft Game Studios exclusively for the Xbox 360 . Blue Dragon is based on a design by Final Fantasy series creator Hironobu Sakaguchi , who also supervised development and wrote the plot . It is both Mistwalker 's debut title and the first title to be helmed by Sakaguchi outside of Square Enix . The game was released in Japan on December 7 , 2006 , where it was sold both as a standalone title and as part of a bundle with the Xbox 360 ( including the game , the Xbox 360 system itself , and a Blue Dragon console skin ) . Other regions received only the game itself , with a release in Europe on August 24 , 2007 , and in North America on August 28 , 2007 .

Taking place in a fictional open @-@ world environment , the story of Blue Dragon focuses on five friends ( Shu , Jiro , Kluge , Zola , and Marumaro ) as they travel across the world to confront Nene , the evil ruler of the Grand Kingdom . The setting inspired separate anime and manga adaptations , although these follow the story to different degrees and feature a different cast of characters . The game follows a traditional role @-@ playing design , based around exploration and turn @-@ based combat .

Blue Dragon is the first Xbox 360 title to make use of multiple discs , spanning three discs in total . Overall , the game has received a positive reception , with an average score of 77 @. @ 48 % on the review aggregator website Game Rankings . Blue Dragon was both applauded and criticized for its adaptation of the traditional elements of role @-@ playing games .

= = Gameplay = =

The gameplay of Blue Dragon uses turn @-@ based gameplay elements seen in older Japanese role @-@ playing video games . The game world contains two major types of areas : towns , in which the player can rest and purchase items , and dungeon @-@ like areas , with numerous foes to be defeated .

= = = Exploration = = =

Players are initially able to walk between locations on the overworld , and later gain the ability to teleport to previously visited locations . The player controls a party of characters , but only one is shown when exploring the overworld . The player is able to cast magic outside of combat situations based on each character 's respective abilities . When combat begins , the entire party appears for battle . Enemies are visible to the player while exploring the game world , and can be avoided . At the same time , players can choose to engage enemies by luring them close and then activating a circle which will allow players to fight multiple monsters at a time . In some cases , specific foes will block a path or desired treasure chest and must be defeated to proceed . Other foes will pursue the player 's character once the player is spotted , but players can elude them if they flee far enough . Frequently , a single enemy or monster displayed on the screen actually represents a number of different foes of potentially different types .

Combat begins differently depending on how the player avatar makes contact with the monster . If the avatar strikes an enemy from behind , they take the advantage in battle with a " Back Attack " . Similarly , if the avatar is struck from behind , the enemy takes the advantage in a " Surprise Attack " . Players can also choose to fight several groups of monsters at once , with each combat taking place immediately after the previous one . A player who successfully employs this tactic is rewarded with bonuses . Players may use " field skills " to aid in controlling enemy encounters , such as using bombs to paralyze enemies . In rare cases , two groups of monsters may be of rival species , in which case a " Monster Fight " will occur , with both monster groups appearing at once and focusing on each other before attacking the player .

= = = Shadows = = =

The core mechanic in Blue Dragon is the use of magical " shadows " , with each playable character having a distinct shadow modeled after either a dragon , a phoenix , a bat , a minotaur , or a saber @-@ toothed tiger . Each shadow can be assigned to a single character class ( from a number of such classes ) at a time , taking on the attributes and abilities of that class . Only the active class may earn Class levels or " ranks " , but players are free to change classes at any time except in combat , allowing the group 's shadows to be customized in order to achieve the desired combination of skills .

As shadows increase in rank in a given class , they learn new skills , which can then be assigned to a limited number of skill slots to be used in combat . Shadows can be assigned previously learned skills regardless of their current class . For example , if a shadow is currently set to be an " Assassin " , but has previously learned the ability to cast " Barrier Magic " while acting as a member of the Barrier Magic class , the Barrier Magic skill can be set as an active skill . This allows mixing or hybridization , with the player able to pick and choose from among the skills learned by a given shadow .

= = = Combat = = =

Although combat in the game follows a strictly turn @-@ based formula , the turn sequence of the characters you have are calculated based on the speed statistic of the character , and in some cases characters are allowed to strike before enemies can act if they possess sufficient speed . Different attacks can take varied periods of time to execute .

Another combat timing mechanic featured in the game is the " Charge Meter " , which allows players to increase the power of spells or attacks by spending additional time preparing them . This meter is always used for spell casting , as well as when using the " Charge Attack " skill used by the " Monk " class . Although players can choose to act immediately , an ability will become more powerful the longer that the player charges the attack . However , the greater the amount of time one charges attacks , the longer the charging character must wait before the next turn . As a result of this , players can choose to charge up an ability so that the ability triggers shortly before an enemy acts , or can instead aim for the " sweet spot " , a special red area on the charging bar , indicating a charge that allows for less time until the next attack , as well as a smaller mana cost . Overall , deciding on the correct amount of charge and letting go of the button at precisely that time can greatly influence the effectiveness of each character 's attacks during combat .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

Blue Dragon takes place in a fictional open @-@ world environment where every year for the past ten years , purple clouds have mysteriously appeared in the sky , signaling misfortune and disaster for people across the world . For years , a terrifying beast dubbed the " Land Shark " , and other lost technologies , such as the " sea cube " came with the purple clouds , killing thousands of people and destroying a number of villages . The world is split up into climate regions , each containing multiple kingdoms and villages , a few of which are not on the main path , but hold small stories , such as the giants , and the sheep , as well as hidden dungeons . Around the environment are multiple sources of treasure

= = = Story = = =

On an unnamed world , the legendary purple clouds arrive in Talta Village which is the home of Shu , Kluge , and Jiro . While the other villagers seek shelter , Shu and Jiro slow down the Land Shark . After encountering troubles , Kluge saves them . Together , the three trap the Land Shark in a net ,

but the Land Shark breaks free and rushes away , with Shu , Jiro , and Kluge dangling from its back . The Land Shark stops in an ancient ruin that the three friends explore . They discover the Land Shark is really a machine ? a " Mechat " . Without warning , the mechat comes to life , only this time sailing into the sky , again carrying the three with it .

The party arrives at a giant Mechat base in the clouds and are tossed into the throne room of Nene , the apparent leader . Nene explains to them how he enjoys hearing the screams of the dying victims of the Land Shark . The party battles Nene , but are easily defeated . They are thrown out of the base and start to fall to their deaths , but a beam of light from the base catches them , and brings them back to the base . The party find three small floating spheres in the middle of the room ; a mysterious voice commands them to swallow the spheres . The party refuses , and instead hold onto the spheres for safekeeping . As they try to reach another Mechat to escape the base , they are forced to fight a large army of Nene 's robots . When the battle seems it will never end , and with the unseen voice promising them knowledge of how to pilot the Mechat , the party members eat the spheres . As they consume the spheres , a strange transformation occurs to each , changing the forms of their shadows into powerful beings that are able to destroy the robot army . The party escapes the base and crash in a desert .

After becoming familiar with their new shadows , the party travels to Talta village , befriending Marumaro on the way , who also possesses a magical shadow . Finding that the villagers from Talta have started to head towards the capital city of Jibral , the party takes off after them . Just outside Jibral , the party finds the villagers attacked by Steel @-@ Eating Tigers . They are saved by the arrival of King Jibral and his forces , including Zola . Once the villagers are brought to Jibral , the King decides to implement a plan to destroy one of Nene 's bases near Jibral using Shu and his friends along with Zola . Together , the party works with the warriors of Talta Village the Jibral Kingdom to besiege Nene 's Mechat base . After the base is destroyed , the party heads north in search of Nene . Nene captures Kluge , and places a collar around her neck which Nene alleges will explode . After reaching Nene , Zola separates from the party to buy them time to attack Nene . When the party attempts to remove Kluge 's collar , Nene absorbs the party 's shadows by placing collars on all of them . After taking their powers and placing them in himself , he removes their collars and attempts to kill them before they recover . Shu , despite being drained of magical ability , unconsciously teleports the party to the distant Devour village .

In Devour Village , they find themselves unable to escape the village without their magic , because the community is surrounded by evil trees . Shu has an epiphany and finds himself able to summon his dragon shadow without his sphere . Shu destroys the Eat Yeet in Devour Village , and the party is finally able to leave . Eventually all the party are able to summon their shadows again .

At that point , the party reunites with Zola , who supplies a Mechat for them to pursue Nene . As the party goes after Nene in the Mechat , Nene initiates an ancient machine that splits the world into two hemispheres , with thousands of isolated cubes floating between the halves . The party follows Nene to the Primitive Cube at the core of the transformation . The party journeys through the cube eventually defeating General Szabo and ultimately engaging Nene . As the party weakens Nene , it is revealed that Zola was working for Nene all along , and she was the voice that told the others to swallow the spheres . When Zola was too weak to defend herself , Nene had given her a shadow and sent her to Jibral as a spy . Zola betrays and kills Nene choosing her friends over him .

Deathroy , the small creature that has been on Nene 's shoulder removes himself from his masters body and absorbs Nene 's remaining life force . Deathroy is revealed to be Destroy , the biomechanical weapon that destroyed the legendary ancients that once tried to bring peace to the world . The party defeats Destroy , melting him in lava . The party then quickly escapes from the melting cube to rejoin their families .

= = Development = =

Blue Dragon was first revealed on February 24 , 2005 as one of two unnamed role @-@ playing games in development by Mistwalker Studios for the console which later came to be known as the Xbox 360 . In an IGN interview following the unveiling , Peter Moore stressed the importance to

Microsoft of having Japanese games available on the system , commenting " ... It 's a main priority for me in the next 12 ? 18 months to ensure Japanese developers are our partners . " Contributors to Blue Dragon include a number of well known Japanese figures in the gaming industry . The title 's original story was written by Hironobu Sakaguchi , the game director of the first five Final Fantasy video games . It also features art from Akira Toriyama , the creator of Dragon Ball and visual character and monster designer and illustrator of both the Dragon Quest series and Chrono Trigger .

Much of the actual software development work on the game was done at Artoon , with Takuya Matsumoto serving as director and Manabu Kusunoki responsible for the game 's world view . Matsumoto previously worked as a designer on Blinx 2 : Masters of Time and Space , while Kusunoki is known for his work at Sega , including the world of Panzer Dragoon . Near the end of November 2005 , roughly a year before the title was released in Japan , Artoon 's Naoto Ohshima indicated that the game was around 40 % complete . He also pointed out that Artoon had previously been known primarily for action titles , so that responsibility for Blue Dragon was originally somewhat frightening . Following this , a relative lack of media information for most of 2006 resulted in speculation that the title would be delayed until 2007 , but Microsoft 's Takashi Sensui confirmed in August 2006 that the game would indeed see a year @-@ end 2006 release . Blue Dragon was eventually released on three full DVD discs , making it the first Xbox 360 game to span multiple discs .

In a November 2006 interview with IGN , Sakaguchi confirmed that the sequel , Blue Dragon 2 , was in the planning stages , and would presumably start development shortly thereafter . Later in an issue of Weekly Sh?nen Jump , it was announced that Blue Dragon Plus was in the works for the Nintendo DS . It is a real @-@ time simulation RPG , featuring 2D sprite graphics , and was released on September 4 , 2008 in Japan and on February 19 , 2009 in North America . In 2009 , a second Blue Dragon title was released for the DS , Blue Dragon : Awakened Shadow . The latter is more action oriented , and follows a player @-@ created character , rather than Shu .

= = = Music = = =

Blue Dragon 's score was composed and produced by Nobuo Uematsu , who is better known for composing much of the music in the popular Final Fantasy series . One of the boss themes , " Eternity " , was composed by Uematsu , with lyrics by Hironobu Sakaguchi himself , and includes vocals by English singer Ian Gillan . Blue Dragon Original Soundtrack was released on December 13 , 2006 and was arranged by Satoshi Henmi and Hiroyuki Nakayama . Music from Blue Dragon was performed live at the Play ! A Video Game Symphony concerts in 2006 . IGN praised the track " Cave " as one of the " Top 10 Nobuo Uematsu Musical Moments " . Enter Shikari also made an instrumental song , " Enter Shikari vs. Blue Dragon " for the original soundtrack .

Blue Dragon Original Soundtrack track listing

= = Manga = =

On November 12 , 2006 , Shueisha announced that a manga adaptation of Blue Dragon would be produced . Known as Blue Dragon ST ( ???????? ?????????? , Bur? Doragon Sh?kuretto Torikku , " Blue Dragon : Secret Trick " ) , the manga was done by Ami Shibata and premiered in Monthly Sh?nen Jump in January 2007 . The production was ended in July 2007 with the magazine 's cancellation .

A second manga was later produced under the name Blue Dragon Ral ? Grad , also known as Ral Grad . This adaptation was done by Tsuneo Takano and Takeshi Obata , the illustrator of Death Note . Ral Grad began serialization in issue 1 , 2007 of Weekly Sh?nen Jump . Viz Media later began releasing the manga as simply " Ral Grad " in February 2008 .

= = Anime = =

An anime adaptation directed by Yukihiro Matsushita , animated by Studio Pierrot and co @-@ produced by SKY Perfect Wellthink , TV Tokyo and Pierrot was announced in November 2006 . The anime began airing April 7 , 2007 , featuring a different vocal cast than that used for the game . It also ignored most of the game 's plot . It aired on TV Tokyo , and ran for 51 episodes . A second season of Blue Dragon ? Blue Dragon : Trials of the Seven Shadows ( BLUE DRAGON ????? , Bur? Doragon : Tenkai no Shichiry? ) ? premiered on TV Tokyo on April 5 , 2008 .

On April 16 , 2007 , Viz Media announced that it had licensed the anime for release in North America and Europe . An edited English language dub of the series premiered in the United States on Cartoon Network , on April 5 , 2008 , where it aired on Toonami Jetstream until Jetstream was cancelled on January 30 , 2009 . Since then it has been discovered that Viz Media did make an uncut version of the Blue Dragon anime in English . This uncut version released by Manga Entertainment has had the first 24 episodes released on DVD ( so far exclusively in the UK ) over three 2 disc DVD sets with the release date of the next DVD set to be announced . These uncut episodes unlike the US DVD releases fully restores the original Japanese opening and closing , all edited scenes from the Cartoon Network version are restored including the original music , as well as having the option to view the series in Japanese with English subtitles . On July 22 , 2011 , Viz Media started streaming Blue Dragon episodes on VizAnime and Hulu . At Otakon , Viz Media representative Amy Mar said that if the streaming numbers are good , they might release the uncut episodes on physical media .

= = Reception = =

Pre @-@ orders of Blue Dragon bundled with a limited edition Xbox 360 Core system were sold out in Japan well before the December 7 , 2006 release date . Microsoft and Mistwalker initially hoped to sell over 200 @,@ 000 copies , which would break their record for sales of an Xbox 360 game in Japan . The game did manage the goal , with almost exactly 200 @,@ 000 copies sold as of December 27 , 2007 . Creator Hironobu Sakaguchi was pleased the game sold as well as it did .

Reviews for Blue Dragon were somewhat mixed , though generally favorable . On the review aggregator Game Rankings , the game had an average score of 77 % based on 62 reviews . While many reviewers praised the game for its traditional approach , a few reviewers criticized it for that very reason , with one reviewer remarking , " In fact , there is very little you can point to in Blue Dragon that hasn 't been done multiple times over before " . The story also came under scrutiny from some reviewers for being too generic and too similar to existing Japanese RPGs , with slow pacing during the beginning of the game . Eurogamer stated that the apparent lack of effort put into the facial animations for each character resulted in a limited ability to express emotion . They also noted that the mouth movements are well timed , but that the rest of the characters ' facial movements are " static " .

Game Informer commented that Blue Dragon lacked " jaw dropping " moments and was missing a nebulous " key element " to make it perfect . 1UP.com also picked up on this , adding that Blue Dragon was missing " strong characters , gripping storytelling , and excellent pacing " . X @-@ Play said that the game was very visually pleasing , but indicated that it was like any other role @-@ playing game . Though most of the reviewers criticized the game in one way or another , they all complimented it for its excellent graphics and music . Specifically , Game Informer remarked that " the characters look like sculpted figurines wandering around a world built to scale " . GameSpy complimented the title 's music and graphics saying the game had " phenomenal music ; and magnificently rendered cutscenes " .