The 3rd Birthday

The 3rd Birthday (Japanese : ? ? ??? ????? , Hepburn : Za S?do B?sudei) is a third @-@ person role @-@ playing shooter co @-@ developed by Square Enix and HexaDrive , and published by Square Enix for the PlayStation Portable . It was released in 2010 in Japan and 2011 in North America and Europe . The game is both the third entry in the Parasite Eve video game series , based on the titular Japanese novel , and a spin @-@ off , having only a loose connection to events from past games . The game features a third @-@ person shooter @-@ based combat system with role @-@ playing mechanics . A key mechanic is the Overdive ability , which allows the player to possess pre @-@ positioned human allies and inflict damage upon enemies .

The game takes place in 2013 , a year after creatures known as the Twisted have appeared from beneath Manhattan and decimated the city . To fight back against the Twisted , an investigatory team called the Counter Twisted Investigation (CTI) is formed . Among their number is series protagonist Aya Brea , who was found unconscious and suffering amnesia two years before the game 's events . Using her Overdive ability , Aya travels into the past to alter the outcome of battles against the Twisted . At the same time , Aya attempts to find out the origin of the Twisted and regain her memories .

The 3rd Birthday was created as a conceptual rebirth for Aya 's character , as well as a means of re @-@ introducing her to the gaming community , with it being over a decade since the last game in the series . Among the staff were Hajime Tabata , Yoshinori Kitase , Motomu Toriyama , Isamu Kamikokuryo , and Aya 's original designer Tetsuya Nomura . Originally announced as an episodic title for mobile phones , the game was later changed into a PSP exclusive . Upon release , the game reached sixth place in Japanese sales charts , and was among the top five games in North American and UK sales charts during its opening months . Reviews have been mixed ; critics praised the presentation and several parts of the gameplay , while opinions were mixed about the story , and many cited difficulties with camera control and some of the shooter mechanics . Several reviewers have also made negative comments on Aya 's portrayal .

Gameplay

The 3rd Birthday is a third @-@ person role @-@ playing shooter . The player controls series protagonist Aya Brea through rendered @-@ to @-@ scale environments in from a third person perspective . The game plays out as a series of missions , between which Aya rests at the Counter Twisted Investigation headquarters , which acts as the game 's main hub . In the hub , Aya can receive briefings for missions , view additional documents , buy and customize new weapons . She also has the option to transport back there should she die during a mission . The game can be saved both at the hub and in safe zones within missions . At the end of each mission , Aya is given a grade based on performance , enemies killed , and the number of times she died . Depending on her score , she will earn differing amounts of Bounty Points , a currency used to customize weapons and repair protective gear in the hub area .

During missions , players navigate a series of linear linked areas fighting off multiple enemies . Items can be picked up during missions , such as grenades and medical kits . Aya has access to multiple guns for use in combat , including handguns , assault rifles and shotguns . By holding down a button on the controller , Aya automatically aims at an enemy and can fire at will . Taking cover behind objects or shields , or standing idle outside of battle , allows Aya to regenerate health . While in combat , an energy meter is charged and can be activated when full . When activated , Aya entered " Liberation Mode " , a state enabling her to move around the battlefield at high speed for a short period of time .

In most battle situations , Aya is accompanied by a group of allied NPC (non @-@ playable character) soldiers that the player can direct around the battle area . Available commands include offering supporting fire , directly attacking enemies , or staying behind cover . They can also all fire at the same enemy in certain situations , dealing high damage . Each NPC has a separate health meter , and is permanently removed from battle upon defeat . Central to combat is Overdive , an

ability which enables Aya to transmit herself between bodies . If her health is low , Aya can transport into the body of an allied NPC , taking on their health level , position and current weapon in the process . NPCs not controlled by Aya are controlled by the game 's AI . Aya can remain in a body for the duration of a level , or until the unit has died . If Aya cannot jump to another body , she dies and the level must either be restarted or exited . Overdive can be activated at any time , enabling Aya to transport around the battlefield to avoid enemy attacks or save herself when her current unit 's health is low . Overdive can also be used to attack enemies if Aya maintains a sustained assault . After a time , a triangle icon appears on enemies , allowing her to perform an Overdive attack , dealing high damage to the targeted enemy .

During combat , Aya gains experience points and gains experience levels when a certain quantity is achieved . Gaining a level both restores her health and raises her maximum health and energy levels . Weapons also gain levels the more they are used . In addition to leveling up , Aya 's stats can be customized using Over Energy (OE) clips found during missions or acquired during Overdive attacks . Using a 3x3 grid accessed in the hub area , certain OE clips grand different stat boosts and abilities . Creating a new grid automatically deletes the effects of the original .

= = Plot = =

The game 's story plays out in episodes , similar to a television series , with many events told out of sequence . On Christmas Eve of 2012 , monstrous creatures dubbed as " Babels " appear in New York City . Along with lifeforms spawned by them called the Twisted , they lay wasted to the city and consume any human in their path . By the following year , an investigatory team known as the CTI (Counter Twisted Investigation) has been formed . One of the CTI members is Aya Brea , who was found outside St. Thomson 's Cathedral in 2010 , just before the Babels and Twisted began appearing . Dr. Hyde Bohr , Chief of the CTI , finds that Aya is suffering from amnesia , and that her personality has changed . After taking Aya in , the CTI discovered that she was capable of transferring her soul from body to body independent of time , an ability dubbed " Overdive " , which enables her to fight the Twisted .

Bohr and the others planned to use this unique ability to travel back through time and prevent the disaster , developing a machine called " Overdive System " to allow Aya to travel into the past and change events . As she embarks on each mission , she is confronted by powerful , sentient Twisted born from corrupted humans , later dubbed High Ones . One such High One is Kyle Madigan , a man she met and fell in love with during Parasite Eve II . As she defeats each High One , she regains pieces of her memory , most prominently her memories of being engaged to Kyle , and the existence of Eve Brea , her adopted sister . After an incident that saw the CTI HQ and the Overdive device destroyed by the Kyle High One , Aya reunites with Kunihiko Maeda , a man who aided her in Parasite Eve , to resolve the entire mystery behind the appearance of the Babel , Twisted and High Ones . Aya eventually discovers that Bohr is himself a High One . Bohr masterminded the death of other High Ones in order to form the Grand Babel , which functions like a giant Overdive system . Bohr seeks to dive back in the past to Time Zero , the point where events were set in motion , to fulfill his plan for the survival of his own species from a time war cycle between humans , the Twisted , and the High Ones . Aya battles Bohr and is pulled with him into Time Zero , where she discovers the truth .

In 2010 at St. Thomson 's Cathedral , Aya and Kyle were going to be married . The Cathedral was attacked by a SWAT team and Aya was killed . Eve attempted to save Aya by sending her consciousness into Aya 's body , creating the Overdive ability . The event caused Aya 's consciousness to separate from her body and fragment through time to create the Twisted , Eve 's consciousness to become trapped in Aya 's body , and parts of Eve 's body to be transplanted into people close to the pair to create the High Ones . The " Aya " of the main story is in fact Eve in Aya 's body . After these revelations , Eve returns to her body and is asked by Bohr to assimilate him and trigger the birth of a new species . Eve refuses , and when Bohr tries to force the process , a reborn Aya shoots him to death . Aya then reveals that to avert the birth of the Twisted and High Ones , the sources (Aya and Eve) must be removed . Expressing her regret at not being able to

marry Kyle , she tells Eve to shoot her . In a fit of emotion , Eve switches bodies with Aya before shooting her , creating a new timeline where Eve 's body and Aya 's consciousness do not exist , erasing the game 's events . Though Eve offers to marry Kyle , he refuses and hints that he is going to find Aya . In a post @-@ credits sequence four years after the game 's events , Eve is walking the streets of New York and is wished a " Happy Fourth Birthday " by a woman resembling Aya .

= = Development = =

 Concepts for a third installment in the Parasite Eve video game series had been around for some time . As work was being finished on Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII , Nomura voiced his wish to create a new game for the character Aya Brea , and this time it was taken up . Despite the story of Parasite Eve II not leaving many avenues for a sequel , the development team wanted to take advantage of advancing gaming technology and popularity by creating a mature gaming experience that would re @-@ introduce Aya to players around the world . The main staff consisted of director Hajime Tabata , producer Yoshinori Kitase , creative producer and character designer Tetsuya Nomura , art director Isamu Kamikokuryo , scenario director Motomu Toriyama , and main writer Toshimitsu Takeuchi . Nomura requested Tabata as the two had worked well together on previous projects , and Nomura was busy with other projects despite his strong interest . The 3rd Birthday was originally announced in May 2007 as an episodic mobile game developed by Square Enix for Japan 's FOMA mobile service . In 2008 , during a special Square Enix event , the game was announced to have changed to a game for the PlayStation Portable . Part of the reason , as stated by Nomura , was that the desired level of realism was not possible on mobile phones . The game became exclusive to PSP as Tabata wanted to make full usage of the platform 's hardware capabilities , along with it being a gaming platform available worldwide . Tabata and his team worked on the The 3rd Birthday at the same time as fellow mobile @-@ turned @-@ PSP title Final Fantasy Type @-@ 0 . Square Enix requested Tabata to concentrate on finishing The 3rd Birthday , leading to Type @-@ 0 almost being cancelled .
 The final version of the game was co @-@ developed by Square Enix and HexaDrive , a company created by former Capcom staff members . As the new form of The 3rd Birthday had transformed into a third @-@ person shooter , Square Enix wanted staff members with experience at developing such games , and then @-@ company CEO Yoichi Wada recommended HexaDrive to Tabata . As multiple HexaDrive staff members had also worked on fellow shooter Lost Planet : Extreme Condition , Tabata agreed to the collaboration . While aiming for a high quality product , the team designed the game as if for the PlayStation 3 home console , then worked to fit it onto the PSP . During development , the team sought creative help from the team developing Final Fantasy XIII for the visual design . The team had previous experimented with shooters with Dirge of Cerberus : Final Fantasy VII , but this time they wanted to create something closer to a third @-@ person shooter . While working inside the control and hardware limitations of the title , the team created firearms and the lock @-@ on mechanic as the fundamental attack action , instead of the free @-@ roaming style of a standard third @-@ person shooter . While designing levels to function with the game 's Overdive system , the team considered what the level would hold , how often players would utilize the function , the difficulty of levels , and the positioning and strength of enemies . During development , a questionnaire was circulated around company staff concerning the character Aya , to find out which of the planned features was popular . One of those that survived in the final game was Aya 's clothes being damaged when she was hit by an enemy , which was used to emphasize her sexuality . Nomura was among the first to suggest this feature originally .
 Nomura worked on the character designs for the main cast . He was originally only going to work on Aya and Eve , but after seeing the settings for the other characters , he offered to design them too . The team wanted to emphasize the character 's sexuality . As part of this , the team included a scene where Aya takes a shower . This was inspired by a similar scene in Parasite Eve II . When the title was being developed for PSP , the team 's main challenge with the character was to make her look as realistic as possible while retaining her established physical traits . Using this new realism , the team wanted to portray the fear felt by humans when faced with such threats through

Aya . Achieving this realism proved one of the most difficult aspects of development . Her alternate costumes were not a high priority for the team , so their artists had high creative freedom .

While many of the concepts for the final version were present in the original mobile version , such as Overdive and the Twisted , the original story was scrapped when the game changed platforms . In creating the story for The 3rd Birthday , the team took inspiration from the 10 @-@ year gap in the character 's in @-@ game and real @-@ time history . This meant that it would be difficult to create a straightforward sequel , so the team instead decided to make the game about Aya 's return . Toriyama imagined story concepts such as the snowy New York setting and the image of a bloodstained wedding dress . These two concepts survived the platform change . Over the course of the development , he adjusted the plot numerous times to be more adult @-@ oriented and to include complex narrative twists . The original concept was to make the game feel like a television drama , with multiple cliffhangers and moments of high drama . The game was designed from the outset as having no direct connection to the previous Parasite Eve games . The game 's title came from it being Aya 's third video game appearance , as well as it being a noticeable change in setting . The game 's logo was designed to both look like the letter " B " and the number " 3 " . It was originally only going to represent the number , but Nomura added the extra lines to display the game 's " multi @-@ faceted " nature .

= = = Music = = =

The music for The 3rd Birthday was composed by Mitsuto Suzuki and Tsuyoshi Sekito , with additional work by original Parasite Eve composer Yoko Shimomura . Shimomura was involved from an early stage , when The 3rd Birthday was still a mobile game . When she was originally asked to compose for the title , she was involved with a number of other projects which made handling the entire score difficult . When asked whether she wanted to work with anyone on the composition , she suggested Suzuki and Sekito . The general instruction was to follow the pattern used by the music for Parasite Eve , with Suzuki and Sekito handling the majority of tracks , going so far as referring to the songs from the original Parasite Eve when handling remixes of old themes . In keeping with the game 's other development goals , Shimomura wanted to alter some of the established music , although she asked the team to include familiar themes from earlier games for fans . Suzuki was responsible for a large amount of track mixing . Sekito was mostly involved with choosing and helping with instrumentation , in particular whether to include symphonic music . The composers had a relatively high degree of freedom , but they also had problems when composing some tracks that did not fit into selected scenes . Re @-@ orchestrations of two pieces of classical music , " Sleepers Wake " by Johann Sebastian Bach , and " Joy to the World " , a popular Christmas song , were used by Suzuki and Shimomura respectively to represent key moments and motifs within the game . The order of songs in the game was created to reflect the situation in a level . These variations were emphasized during mixing , while they also needed to adjust the mixing and track length based on the game as a whole . For the game 's theme song , the company collaborated with Japanese rock band Superfly . The game 's theme song Eyes on Me , described as a " standard love song " , was specially composed by the band for the game . It was the band 's first video game theme song . The game 's soundtrack was released as an album by Square Enix on December 22 , 2010 . The 3rd Birthday Original Soundtrack contains 66 tracks across 3 discs and has a total length of 2 : 56 : 52 .

= = Reception = =

During production , Nomura and Tabata stated that the team were aiming to sell 500 @,@ 000 copies of the game , a sales @-@ goal based strategy they had previously used for Crisis Core . During its first week , The 3rd Birthday debuted at # 6 in Japanese gaming charts , selling 140 @,@ 000 units . By the end of 2011 , the game had sold 249 @,@ 747 units in Japan . The game reached the top of the charts for PSP games in North America by the beginning of April 2011 , overtaking fellow Square Enix title Dissidia 012 : Final Fantasy and the PSP port of The Legend of

Heroes : Trails in the Sky . Later that month , it had fallen to # 3 in US charts , remaining there into June of that year . In the UK during the same initial period , it reached # 3 , tailing behind Dissidia 012 and Lego Star Wars III : The Clone Wars .

Japanese gaming magazine Famitsu praised the title 's gameplay , calling Aya " deeply customizable " , finding the Overdive system and its strategic elements exhilarating and saying that those undaunted by the high difficulty would find much enjoyment in repeated playthroughs . Jeremy Parish of 1UP.com called it " an interesting blend of RPG and shooter " , praising the working of Overdive . Eurogamer 's Kristan Reed was less enthusiastic , referring to the conflicts with the Twisted as " relentless and ultimately repetitive " , finding the high difficulty off @-@ putting and Aya 's movement speed unsuited for battle . Game Informer 's Annette Gonzalez enjoyed the control layout and gameplay , but cited difficulties with the camera . Carolyn Petit of GameSpot said that the game sometimes succeeded in creating tension , but that other battles were frustrating and the camera was difficult . IGN 's Patrick Kolan was pleased with the effort put into the game , and generally praised the battle and later levels , despite several cases of repetition during the main campaign . Emily Gera of VideoGamer.com found the basic shooter gameplay repetitive , but felt that the gameplay was saved by the Overdive ability and the quality of fights .

Parish said the game looked " gorgeous " and the soundtrack " exceptional " . Petit praised the CGI cutscenes and varied level environments , and said the score " shifts adeptly between haunting and thrilling to suit the action . " Kolan generally called the game one of the best @-@ looking entries on the platform , and praised the soundtrack , despite it being " a little ho @-@ hum " . Gonzalez also praised the cutscenes , while citing the environments as " [ranging] from detailed to drab " .

Famitsu was less positive about the story , saying that the mix of different elements made it " a bit hard to follow . " Parish positively noted connections to the second game , but finding the later story developments either confusing or weak , and disliked the way returning supporting characters had been changed . Petit said that those who wanted a straightforward story would be disappointed , and positively noted its exploration of existence , identity , and memory . Her main criticism was with the dialogue , which she referred to as " stilted " . Kolan also faulted the voice acting and localization , especially when compared to games such as Tactics Ogre : Let Us Cling Together . Gonzalez cited the story as intriguing , with " plenty of plot twists " . Parish and Petit were both highly critical of Aya 's portrayal : Parish disliked both her outfit , which seemed to conform too much female stereotypes in video games , and the clothes @-@ tearing mechanic , which seemed to be included merely to flaunt her sexuality . Petit shared many points of criticism with Parish , also noting that Aya 's portrayal of " one @-@ part action hero , one @-@ part submissive sex object " was wrong for a lead character , and that Aya 's in @-@ combat vocals were not suited to the game 's situations . Reed referred to Aya as " [a] sighing , whimpering lead character " .