Spyro : Year of the Dragon

Spyro : Year of the Dragon is a platform video game developed by Insomniac Games and published by Sony Computer Entertainment for the PlayStation in 2000 . Year of the Dragon is the third installment in the Spyro series and the last Spyro game to be released for the first generation PlayStation . The game was also the last Spyro game Insomniac developed ; their next title would be Ratchet & Clank for the PlayStation 2 .

Named after the animal of the Chinese zodiac , which was the symbol at the time of the game 's release , Year of the Dragon follows the titular purple dragon Spyro as he travels to the " Forgotten Worlds " after 150 magical dragon eggs are stolen from the land of the dragons by an evil sorceress . Players travel across thirty different worlds gathering gems and eggs . Year of the Dragon introduced new characters and minigames to the series , as well as offering improved graphics and music .

Upon release , the game sold more than two million units in the United States and received positive critical response . Reviewers noted the game built on the successful formula of its predecessors by adding more games and expansive environments . It was followed by the multiplatform title Spyro : Enter the Dragonfly , and was later released for download on the PlayStation Store in 2009 in North America and in 2012 in Europe , the latter date coincidentally being another Year of the Dragon in the real @-@ world Chinese zodiac .

Gameplay

Year of the Dragon is set primarily in the third @-@ person ; its gameplay makes few deviations from that of its predecessors . The main objective of the game is to collect special dragon eggs which are scattered across 37 worlds . These eggs are hidden , or are given as rewards for completing certain tasks and levels . The worlds of Spyro are linked together by " homeworlds " or " hubs " , large worlds which contain gateways to many other levels . To proceed to the next hub , the character must complete five worlds , gather a certain number of eggs , and defeat a boss . Players do not need to gather every egg to complete the main portion of the game or gain access to new levels ; in fact , certain eggs can only be found by returning to the world at a later time . Gems are scattered across the worlds , hidden in crates and jars . These gems are used to bribe a bear named Moneybags to release captured " critters " and activate things which help Spyro progress through levels (Such as bridges) . Gems , along with the number of eggs collected , count to the total completion percentage of the game .

For most of the game , the player controls the dragon Spyro . Spyro 's health is measured by his companion , a dragonfly named Sparx ; Sparx changes color and then disappears after taking progressively more damage . If the player has no Sparx , then the next hit would cause the player to lose a life and restart at the last saved checkpoint . Consuming small wildlife known as " fodder " regenerates Sparx . Spyro has several abilities , including breathing fire , swimming and diving , gliding , and headbutting , which he can use to explore and combat a variety of enemies , most of which are rhinoceros @-@ like creatures called Rhynocs . Some foes are only vulnerable to certain moves . Spyro can run into " Powerup Gates " , which give him special abilities for a limited period .

Year of the Dragon introduced playable characters other than Spyro , known as " critters " , which are gradually unlocked as the player proceeds through the game . Critters can be found blocking the level they are played in until released from Moneybags . Subsequently , the player plays as the character in specially marked sections of levels . Each homeworld features one world which is played through entirely by a non @-@ Spyro character . There are a total of seven playable characters , which all have their own special moves and abilities . Sheila the Kangaroo , for example , can double jump , while Sgt. Byrd is armed with rocket launchers and can fly indefinitely .

Besides the primary quest to find dragon eggs , Year of the Dragon features an extensive set of minigames , which are split off from the levels into smaller zones . Some of the minigames were featured in Spyro 2 : Ripto 's Rage ! and were subsequently expanded for Year of the Dragon , while others are entirely new to the series . These minigames are played by Spyro or the other playable

characters .

Plot

Setting and characters

Spyro is assisted by many characters during the course of Year of the Dragon . Spyro is the game 's protagonist , and Sparx is his dragonfly sidekick . Sparx functions as the player 's health meter and assists the player in gathering gems ; Sparx is a playable character in certain levels . Also aiding Spyro is Hunter the Cheetah , who teaches the player game mechanics and is a playable character at special racing levels . Four other playable characters are freed from Moneybags during the game ; Sheila the kangaroo , Sergeant Byrd the penguin , Bentley the yeti , and Agent 9 the space monkey . The primary antagonist of the game is the Sorceress , a tyrant who rules over the Forgotten Worlds with her forces . Aiding her is the apprentice Bianca the Rabbit , who attempts to hinder Spyro on his mission .

Story

The game opens with a celebration in the land of the dragons , where Spyro and his kin are celebrating the " Year of the Dragon " , an event that occurs every twelve years when new dragon eggs are brought to the realm . During the celebration however , a cloaked rabbit girl named Bianca invades the Dragon Realms with an army of creatures called Rhynocs and steals all of the Dragon eggs , bringing them back to the Sorceress , who scatters the eggs throughout several worlds . The worlds are split up into four realms : Sunrise Spring , Midday Gardens , Evening Lake , and Midnight Mountain . Spyro , along with Sparx and Hunter , are sent down a hole to find the thieves and recover the dragon eggs .
While pursuing the thief , Spyro discovers a world once inhabited by the dragons , but long abandoned and forgotten . This world is ruled by the Sorceress and her Rhynoc army . Only a few creatures stand and fight against the Sorceress ' rule . Spyro learns from one such inhabitant named Sheila the Kangaroo that when the dragons left the realm , the magic of the world began to dry up . Spyro travels through each world in the forgotten realm , acquiring aid from the local inhabitants and rescuing the dragon eggs . It is revealed that the Sorceress is seeking not the baby dragons themselves , but merely their wings to concoct a spell that can grant her immortality . Once Bianca discovers this , she sympathizes for the baby dragons and decides to side with Spyro and his allies . Spyro eventually fights and defeats the Sorceress and celebrations occur throughout the realm .
The Sorceress survives her battle with Spyro , however , and waits for Spyro with the last of the dragon eggs . Spyro and the Sorceress battle again where the Sorceress is finally defeated , allowing Spyro to return all the baby dragons to the Dragon Realms .

Development

Development of Spyro : Year of the Dragon spanned about ten and a half months , from November 1999 to September 2000 ; the development team was influenced by a host of other games , including Doom and Crash Bandicoot . Among the new features touted before the game 's release was " Auto Challenge Tuning " , which Insomniac CEO Ted Price described as " invented to even out the gameplay difficulty curve for players of different abilities " . The levels were made much larger than those in Spyro 2 , so that more areas for minigames could be added ; to prevent player confusion on where to go next , these areas were designed to load separately from the main hubs . Price stated that the addition of critters was a way to make the game more enjoyable and varied , instead of just adding more moves for Spyro . The game was named " Year of the Dragon " simply because it was released during 2000 , the year of the Dragon in the Chinese zodiac .
In previews , publications such as IGN and GameSpot noted that the graphics had been improved ,

and that there were many new characters and locations . The new minigames were previewed , and IGN pointed out that they offered enough complexity to back up the simple gameplay . In an interview with GameSpot , Ted Price stated that the emphasis for the title was on the new critters , but that Spyro would not be left behind in the story . Year of the Dragon also implemented crack protection , in addition to the copy protection previous games had contained . This helped prevent hackers from cracking the game until two months after release .

Despite the positive response the game would go on to receive , Year of the Dragon was developer Insomniac Games ' last Spyro title . In an interview , CEO Ted Price said that the company stopped producing the games because they couldn 't do anything new with the character , and that after five years of development on a single series the team wanted to do something different . Future Spyro games were produced by , among other developers , Digital Eclipse , Equinox Digital Entertainment , Eurocom , Krome Studios , Étranges Libellules , and Tantalus Media .

= = = Music = = =

The music for Year of the Dragon was composed and produced by Stewart Copeland , former drummer for the rock band The Police , with additional contributions by Ryan Beveridge . During the band 's hiatus , Copeland composed several movie soundtracks , and composed the scores for the previous Spyro titles ; Price stated that Copeland 's offering for the third installment was his best work to date .

In an interview , Copeland stated his creative process for writing the music for the Spyro series always began by playing through the levels , trying to get a feel for each world 's " atmosphere " . Copeland noted the challenge of writing for games was to create music that would both be interesting to listen to and complemented the gameplay ; his approach was to incorporate more complicated harmonies and basslines so that the music could seem fresh for players , even after repeated listening . He complimented the compact disc format of the PlayStation and its support for high quality audio ; there were no technical constraints that stopped him from producing the sound he wanted . Copeland recorded entire orchestral scores for extra flourish when the visuals called for an expansive sound , but used more percussive and beat @-@ driven melodies for " high @-@ energy " moments in the game .

= = Release = =

Year of the Dragon was critically acclaimed , with the game receiving an average ranking of 91 % at Game Rankings , and a similar score based on fifteen reviews at Metacritic . According to GameRankings , Year of the Dragon is the fourteenth highest rated PlayStation game of all time . The game sold more than two million units in the United States .

GameSpot noted that while Year of the Dragon made no significant changes to the formula of its predecessors , the combination of new playable characters , more detailed graphics , and the variety of minigames made the game worth the buy . IGN praised the game 's appeal to all ages and the polished levels , as well as the successful multi @-@ character focus . Game Revolution thought that while the game 's premise itself was simply a rehash of previous titles , " the story that unfolds as you actually play the game is flawlessly interwoven and quite entertaining " . GamePro noted that the ability of the game to automatically drop the difficulty if players get stuck was an excellent feature . Next Generation Magazine 's Kevin Rice provided one of the most positive reviews in which he stated the top @-@ notch level design , intuitive controls and excellent graphics made the title the best Spyro game to date , and arguably the best PlayStation game overall .

Copeland 's score was generally well @-@ received , though several critics sharply disagreed with the general consensus . Publications like PSXExtreme thought the music helped bring atmosphere to the varied worlds , and Allgame enthused that " Insomniac should be commended for realizing the importance of music in games ; it seems to enhance the whole experience . " Others , such as Joseph Parazen of Game Revolution , thought the background music sounded " identical to every other 3D , cartoony , action platformer I 've ever played " . Other points of praise were the voice

acting and character development . Among the few complaints aside from the story included the game camera , which could be difficult to control and led to unjustified enemy attacks . Some publications warned that the game might feel too much like its predecessors , with a similar plot and objectives .