

= Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII =

Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII (?????? ????? ?????????XIII , Raitoningu Rit?nzu : Fainaru Fantaj? S?t?n) is action role @-@ playing video game developed and published by Square Enix for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 . It was released on November 2013 in Japan and February 2014 in Europe and North America . A port to Microsoft Windows through Steam was released in December 2015 followed by iOS and Android in Japan on February 17 , 2016 . The game is a direct sequel to Final Fantasy XIII @-@ 2 , concludes the storyline of Final Fantasy XIII , and forms part of the Fabula Nova Crystallis subseries . Lightning Returns employs a highly revamped version of the gameplay system from the previous two games , with an action @-@ oriented battle system , the ability to customize the player character 's outfits , and a time limit the player must extend by completing story missions and side quests .

The game 's story takes place five hundred years after the previous game 's ending . Lightning , the main protagonist of the first game and a key character in the second , awakes from a self @-@ imposed hibernation 13 days before the world 's end , and is chosen by the deity Bhunivelze to save the people of the dying world , including former friends and allies who have developed heavy emotional burdens . As she travels , she learns the full truth behind both the world 's fate and Bhunivelze 's true agenda .

Development of the game started in May 2012 , shortly after the release of XIII @-@ 2 's final piece of DLC , and was unveiled at a special 25th Anniversary Event for the Final Fantasy series in September that year . Most of the previous games ' key creative minds and developers returned , and it was developed by Square Enix 's First Production Department , with developer tri @-@ Ace helping with the graphics . The development team wanted the game to bring a conclusive end to the story of both Lightning and the XIII universe , and to address criticisms leveled against the last two games . During its first week on sale in Japan , it sold 277 @,@ 000 units , and by the end of 2013 become the 17th best @-@ selling game of the year selling over 400 @,@ 000 copies . It has sold 800 @,@ 000 copies as of May 2014 . The Windows PC version has sold over 150 @,@ 000 copies according to SteamSpy . It has received mixed reviews : while the main praise went to the game 's battle system , opinions were more mixed for the graphics , time limit and other aspects of gameplay , while the story and characters were criticized for being weak or poorly developed .

= = Gameplay = =

The player directly controls the character Lightning through a third @-@ person perspective to interact with people , objects , and enemies throughout the game . The player can also turn the camera around the character , which allows for a 360 ° view of the surroundings . The world of Lightning Returns , as with Final Fantasy XIII and its sequel XIII @-@ 2 , is rendered to scale with the character , who navigates the world on foot . In one of the areas , the player can use chocobos , a recurring animal in the Final Fantasy series . The player is able to freely navigate the game 's open world layout , explore towns and country areas , and accept quests from various non @-@ playable characters (NPCs) . Lightning is also able to sprint for limited periods , climb up ladders and jump freely . The game features three difficulty levels : Easy , Normal and Hard , the latter of which is unlocked after first completing the game . There is also a New Game + option , whereby players can start a new game while carrying over their equipment and stats from a previous playthrough . The in @-@ game clock runs continuously during normal navigation , with one in @-@ game day equating to two to three hours in real time on Easy mode and one hour on Normal and Hard modes . The timer starts out at seven in @-@ game days , but can be extended to a maximum of thirteen days . The timer stops during cutscenes , conversations and battles . Lightning can also pause time using an ability called Chronostasis .

Quests are directly linked to Lightning 's growth : as she completes quests , her stats are boosted , with the main story quests yielding the biggest boosts . Many side quests can only be obtained at certain times , since the real @-@ time build of the world means NPCs are in constant movement , and only appear in certain places at a given time . Lightning can also accept quests from the

Canvas of Prayers , a post board found in all the main locations . Upon completing NPC quests , Lightning is rewarded with a portion of Eradia , spiritual energy retrieved when a person 's burden is lifted . Every day at 6 AM game @-@ time , Lightning is drawn back into the Ark , a location where the in @-@ game clock does not progress . Once there , Lightning gives her gathered Eradia to a tree called Yggdrasil : if she has gathered enough , the in @-@ game clock is extended by a day . She can also restock on supplies and collect new equipment . Another feature in the game was Outerworld Services , a feature where players could take photos and share them , along with their personal stats and battle scores , on Facebook and Twitter . The Facebook features were disabled in April 2015 . All Outerworld services were terminated in April the following year .

= = = Battle system = = =

The battle system , called the Style @-@ Change Active Time Battle system , uses elements from the Active Time Battle (ATB) -based Paradigm system from the first and second XIII games and bears similarities to the dressphere system featured in Final Fantasy X @-@ 2 . Lightning has access to several customizable outfits (garb) with different power sets (plural : Schemata ; singular : Schema) . Each garb has its own separate ATB gauge , and actions for them are mapped onto the controller 's face buttons , meaning that the usual menu @-@ style ATB battle system is no longer needed : this enables Lightning to be moved around the battle field to a limited degree . The majority of the garbs and their accessories are either purchasable in the in @-@ game shops or received upon completing quests . Stronger garbs , items , shields and weapons are unlocked in Hard Mode , along with access to more challenging areas and boss battles . Lightning can equip three Schemata directly , while having additional slots for backup costumes which can be equipped outside battle . She can be equipped a close @-@ combat weapon (sword , spear , etc .) , a shield and a cosmetic accessory . The color scheme of each garb can be customized using both pre @-@ set and custom color : there are options to alter both specific portions and all portions of the costume .

As with the previous game , enemies appear in the open field and can be avoided or engaged . The number of enemies increases during nighttime , and their strength and ability to deal damage increases the more days pass in @-@ game . By killing all the standard versions of an enemy , a final version appears as a boss . Defeating it will yield a high reward and make the enemy type extinct in an area of the game . When Lightning attacks an enemy , or they attack her , the battle starts . If Lightning strikes a monster , they lose a small portion of health , while if the enemy strikes Lightning first , she will lose health . As Lightning performs attacks , her ATB meter is drained and she must switch to another assigned garb : the depleted garb 's meter recharges while not being used . Lightning utilizes her many swords for short @-@ range melee attacks and magic for long @-@ range attacks . She can block enemy attacks using her shield and has the option to evade an attack , which can be assigned to any garb . Each enemy has a stagger meter , represented by a line behind their health bar . As Lightning lands certain kinds of magical or physical blows on the enemy , their meter oscillates more . Eventually , the enemy is staggered , rendering them vulnerable to damaging attacks . Lightning can also spend Energy Points to perform special moves or activate abilities , such as Overclock (which slows time for Lightning 's opponents and enables her to land more hits) ; and Army of One , Lightning 's signature move . By winning battles , Lightning earns gil , the in @-@ game currency , and replenishes a portion of her Energy Point gauge . In Normal and Hard modes , if Lightning flees from or dies in battle , one in @-@ game hour is lost . Unlike the last two games , the player character does not automatically recover HP after battles , instead needing to use remedies bought from merchants and shops , and there is no auto @-@ battle mode , with Lightning needing to be controlled manually at all times . In Easy Mode , Lightning regenerates health if she stands idle .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Lightning Returns is set after the stories of Final Fantasy XIII and Final Fantasy XIII @-@ 2 . In XIII , Lightning is one of six people who are turned by a fal'Cie ? one of a race created by the gods ? into l'Cie , servants of the fal'Cie gifted with magical powers and a ' Focus ' ? an assigned task to be completed within a time limit ; those that succeed in their Focus go into crystal stasis , while those that fail turn into monsters called Cie'th . The six were intended to cause the large , floating sphere named Cocoon to fall onto the world below , named Gran Pulse , killing all of the humans of Cocoon . At the finale of the game , two of the l'Cie transformed into a crystal pillar to support Cocoon , preventing the catastrophe . The remaining l'Cie were made human again by the Goddess Etro , the deity responsible for maintaining the balance between the mortal world and the Unseen Realm . In XIII @-@ 2 , it is revealed that Etro 's interference allowed Chaos , an energy trapped in the Unseen Realm , to escape and distort the timeline as written after the fall of Cocoon . Lightning was drawn to Valhalla , Etro 's citadel , and decided to stay and act as her protector . Three years after Cocoon 's fall , Lightning 's sister Serah sets out to correct the distortions and reunite with Lightning , while the people of Gran Pulse construct a new Cocoon , since the old one is destined to collapse . The protagonists unwittingly end up instigating the death of Etro , which allows Chaos to spill into the mortal world and bring an end to time itself . Serah also dies , causing Lightning to nearly lose hope . Reassured by her sister 's spirit , Lightning chooses to enter crystal stasis to preserve her sister 's memory and keep hope alive .

Lightning Returns is set five hundred years after the ending of XIII @-@ 2 , during the final thirteen days of the world 's existence . Because of the unleashing of Chaos , the world of Gran Pulse has been consumed , leaving only a set of islands called Nova Chrysalia . The new Cocoon , called " Bhunivelze " after the key deity of the XIII universe , acts as the world 's moon . The Chaos has halted human aging and no new children are born due to Etro 's death , causing the human population to stagnate and shrink . Over the intervening centuries , two opposing religions have formed and dominate the life of Nova Chrysalia 's people : the Order of Salvation , that worships Bhunivelze , and the Children of Etro , a rebel cult who worship the Goddess . The world itself is divided into four regions , each dominated by a specific mood and environment . The city of Luxerion is a capital of worship whose people are loyal to the Order . The pleasure capital of Yusnaan is a city of revelry where people live in a constant state of celebration . The Dead Dunes is a desert area dominated by ruins . The Wildlands is an untamed area where the human city of Academia used to stand ; it also houses the remains of Valhalla , the capital of Etro . Within the New Cocoon is the Ark , a zone where time is frozen .

= = = Characters = = =

Lightning , a central character from both XIII and XIII @-@ 2 , is the game 's main protagonist , sole playable character , and narrator . The other main characters from the previous games also make appearances : Hope Estheim aids Lightning using a wireless communicator ; Snow Villiers , devastated by the death of Serah Farron ? his fiancée and Lightning 's sister ? becomes the leader of Yusnaan and the world 's last l'Cie ; Oerba Dia Vanille and Oerba Yun Fang , released from crystal stasis , go separate ways , with Fang becoming the leader of Monoculus , a bandit gang in the Dead Dunes , and Vanille gaining the power to hear the voices of the dead , thus being deemed a saint and falling under the constant protection of the Order in Luxerion . Noel Kreiss , feeling guilty over his role in the deaths of Etro and Serah and the world 's current state , becomes a vigilante in Luxerion . Sazh Katzroy and his son Dajh , who fell into a comatose state , reside in the Wildlands . The region also becomes the home of Mog , Noel and Serah 's former moogle companion from XIII @-@ 2 ; Caius Ballad , Lightning 's old adversary and the one responsible for the unleashing of Chaos into the mortal world ; and Paddra Nsu @-@ Yeul , a former seeress and pivotal character in the previous game whose cycle of early death and reincarnation was the motivation behind Caius 's actions . The game also introduces Lumina , a mysterious near @-@ doppelganger of Serah who both aids and taunts Lightning during her quest ; and Bhunivelze , the main deity of the Final Fantasy XIII universe who chooses Lightning as the world 's savior .

= = = Plot = = =

Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII begins with Lightning being woken from crystal stasis by the god Bhunivelze after 500 years . The world is set to end in 13 days , and to this end Lightning is made the savior , a figure who will free the souls of humanity from the burdens on their hearts and guide them to a new world that Bhunivelze will create once the 13 days are up . Lightning undertakes this task to rescue and ensure the rebirth of Serah 's spirit . Hope acts as her guide from the Ark , which houses the rescued souls of humanity : Bhunivelze chose him and changed his physical form to his 14 @-@ year @-@ old self from XIII . As she journeys and performs her task , she encounters her former allies and adversaries , many of whom now carry heavy emotional burdens . She is also followed about by Lumina , who both gives her advice and taunts her at regular intervals .

In Luxerion , Lightning investigates a series of murders where all the victims match the physical description of the savior . During her journey , she is followed by Noel , who has become obsessed with a prophecy that he must kill Lightning to realize a better world and reunite with Yeul . The two briefly ally to rout the Children of Etro , responsible for the murders , then later do battle . Lightning uses Noel 's rage to make him realize and accept his mistakes , lifting his burden . After this , she meets up with Vanille in the Order 's cathedral . Vanille shows Lightning a place within the cathedral where the souls of the dead have gathered . Vanille is being prepared for a ritual to take place on the final day that will apparently purify the souls . She hopes to atone for past actions by doing so . In the Dead Dunes , Lightning encounters Fang and goes with her on a journey through the region 's dungeons in search of a relic called the Holy Clavis . When they find it , Fang reveals that it is key to the ritual in Luxerion as it has the power to draw in the souls of the dead , and that the ritual will kill Vanille . Fang attempts to destroy the relic , but the forces of the Order arrive and take it . On the eleventh day , the souls of the dead speak to Lightning through the visage of Cid Raines , a man Lightning encountered during XIII . He tells her that the Order has deceived Vanille and plans to sacrifice her to destroy the dead , so the living will forget their existence and be ' purified ' for rebirth in the new world . Lightning decides to stop the ritual , though Cid warns her that she will be defying Bhunivelze 's will .

In the Wildlands , Lightning saves a white chocobo called the " Angel of Valhalla " from monsters and nurses it back to health . The chocobo is revealed to be Odin , one of the Eidolon race who acted as her ally in XIII . She encounters Sazh , whose son Dajh has fallen into a coma and become unwilling to wake because of his father 's current state . Lightning retrieves the fragments of Dajh 's soul , lifting Sazh 's emotional burden and waking his son . Traveling to the ruins of Valhalla , Lightning encounters Caius and multiple versions of Yeul . After fighting with Caius , Lightning learns that he has become tied to life by the Yeuls and thus cannot be saved . She also learns that it was Yeul 's perpetual rebirth that caused the Chaos to seep into the mortal world and trigger the events of XIII @-@ 2 . Encountering Mog as the leader of a moogle village , she helps him fend off attacking monsters . In Yusnaan , Lightning infiltrates Snow 's palace and finds him preparing to enter a concentration of Chaos contained inside the palace . He plans to absorb the Chaos , transform into a Cie 'th , and have Lightning kill him . Though he performs the act and they fight , Lightning manages to renew his hope of seeing Serah again , reverse his transformation and lift his burden . On Nova Chrysalia 's final day , Hope reveals to Lightning that Bhunivelze used him to watch over Lightning and that the deity will dispose of him now that his task is completed .

After Hope disappears , Lightning is transported to Luxerion and enters the cathedral , where Noel , Snow and Fang help her fight the Order to save Vanille . Lightning manages to convince her to free the souls of the dead . This act allows Lightning to find Serah 's soul , kept hidden inside Lumina to keep it safe , but Bhunivelze arrives using Hope as his host and captures everyone but Lightning . Transported to an otherworldly realm , Lightning meets Bhunivelze in person , and learns that he has been conditioning Lightning to replace Etro . After wounding the god in battle , she frees Hope and prepares to become the new goddess and protect the new world by trapping herself and Bhunivelze in the Unseen Realm . An illusion of Serah then confronts Lightning , revealing Lumina

as the physical manifestation of Lightning 's suppressed vulnerabilities . Accepting Lumina as a part of herself , Lightning calls for aid . Hope , Snow , Noel , Vanille , Fang and the Eidolons answer her call , and they sever Bhunivelze 's hold on the souls of humanity , including Sazh , Dajh , Mog , and a revived Serah . The souls then unite and defeat Bhunivelze . In the aftermath , Caius and the multiple versions of Yeul choose to remain in the Unseen Realm and protect the balance between worlds in Etro 's stead . The final incarnation of Yeul , who alone wishes for a new life , is allowed to accompany Lightning and her friends . After the Eidolons and Mog depart for the Unseen Realm , Lightning , her allies , and the souls of humanity travel to a new world where they can decide their own fate . In a post @-@ credits scene , Lightning is seen in normal clothes arriving in a rural town , going to reunite with one of her friends .

= = Development = =

The concept of Lightning Returns originated during development of XIII @-@ 2 , while the development team was brainstorming ideas for possible continuations of the story and universe of the games , though there was no solid decision to make a second sequel to XIII at the time . Development of Lightning Returns started in May 2012 , soon after the release of Requiem of the Goddess , the final story @-@ based DLC episode for XIII @-@ 2 . According to Motomu Toriyama , he had wanted to tell more stories about Lightning , and the DLC had not provided a satisfactory ending for her . The game was designed in a shorter time than the other games in the series ; Yoshinori Kitase explained that this was because the team did not want players to forget the story of the previous games , and the team needed to work especially hard as a result . Another reason was that the team wished to bring the XIII series to a close before the release of the next generation of gaming hardware . The title was also chosen to be the last original Final Fantasy game on seventh generation consoles , and next @-@ gen versions of the game were not considered . Developer tri @-@ Ace , who had previously worked with the team on XIII @-@ 2 , returned to help with the graphics .

One of the key story concepts behind the game was the " rebirth " of Lightning as a character : this was cited as the main reason why the game was called Lightning Returns and not XIII @-@ 3 , alongside the team 's desire to attract new players to the series . Lightning was also made into a darker and more vulnerable character , partly because Kitase felt that her previous stoic depictions might have alienated earlier players . The main scenario and script was written by Daisuke Watanabe , the main writer for the previous XIII games . During the concept process , Watanabe , Toriyama and other members of staff brainstormed ideas for important scenes and events leading up to them . The process of writing the script was slow , causing difficulties for the rest of the team . In response to this , Watanabe worked extra hard to create an appropriate finale for the characters and story . He also wrote the script as more hard @-@ edged than those for the previous XIII games .

The game was designed as the final entry in the XIII storyline (generally dubbed the " Lightning Saga " by the production team) , but was also intended to stand independent of the Final Fantasy series as a whole . One example of the breakaway from series norms is the game 's logo , which was not designed by regular series logo artist Yoshitaka Amano , and which was one of several created during the early stages of development . The concept of the story 's progression was termed as " world @-@ driven " , a concept whereby the world the player interacted with moved independently of their actions : i.e. NPCs would appear in different locations depending on the time of day . That concept partially gave rise to the game 's time limit , which was suggested by the game 's battle designer Yuji Abe after having read of the Doomsday Clock . Another inspiration behind the story pacing and time limit was the 2011 movie In Time . The open world aspect of the game was heavily influenced by The Elder Scrolls V : Skyrim , and some of the hard @-@ edged gameplay ideas were borrowed from Dark Souls . The majority of the hardcore @-@ gaming elements were eventually trimmed out in order to make the game accessible to newcomers .

In terms of assets , the team reused very little from the previous two games , choosing to build a large proportion of the game from the ground up , especially when it came to the overworld design

and NPC behaviors . The Crystal Tools engine , used in the last two XIII games , required a major overhaul as it was not designed for open @-@ world games . In contrast to the previous games , a lot of the game 's cutscenes were created while the game was still in development , meaning many placeholder objects and models had to be used until the final assets could be put in place . The team also had to thoroughly check Lightning 's various outfits and weapons , to ensure that there were no mistakes in cutscenes with the weapons going through the scenery , and that the character 's underwear remained concealed during active battles even for her more revealing outfits . Because the team was mostly using new assets to create the game , the various continents took longer to create than the environments in XIII @-@ 2 , and story scenes sometimes needed to be redone as the game 's overall plot had yet to be finalized when development began . The voice actors , in contrast to the normal procedure doing their performances first and those being used to create the game characters ' facial expressions , recorded their lines for the characters well after the various cutscenes had been created .

The concept of Lightning Returns ' battle system originated while ideas were being discussed for the battle system in Final Fantasy XIII , but technical limitations and problems implementing it in a party @-@ based battle system prevented it from being used in that game . It reemerged when some of the development team wanted Lightning to change her appearance during battle , and reducing to one playable character opened up the memory space necessary for such a system to be implemented . In making the system revolve around one character , the developers ended up removing any opportunity for story scenes between party members , which was cited by Abe as its main weakness . The time limit sprang from the story concept of a world with a set time to live . When the feature was first announced , there were some who felt it was too new a thing , as a time limit was seen as a taboo in role @-@ playing video games . The mechanic originally received negative feedback from test players who were unable to complete the game in time . In response to this , the team made adjustments so that players were given a more comfortable amount of time . Along with sharing design elements with the previous two XIII games , the system also bears similarities to the battle system of Final Fantasy XV , although the developers said that they were not directly inspired by it .

Lightning 's multiple outfits were designed by Isamu Kamikokuryo , the game 's art director , Toshitaka Matsuda , the lead art designer , and Toshiyuki Itahana , a designer who had worked on Final Fantasy IX and the Crystal Chronicles series . The three drew inspiration from character designs done by Amano and the atmospheres of game locations . Matsuda and Itahana also respectively did the character designs for Bhunivelze and Lumina . Tetsuya Nomura returned to design Lightning and Snow 's new looks . Kamikokuryo used the game 's theme of a dying world to create Nova Chrysalia , as well as incorporating cultural and architectural influences from the Middle East , Asia , and London during the Industrial Revolution . Nova Chrysalia was originally conceived as a single island , but as the game 's development advanced , the world grew into its final , four @-@ island configuration . The world 's open design was inspired by MMORPGs such as Final Fantasy XI , described by Abe as a " tourist guide style " . Each island was designed to have a definite feel and theme , while their construction was handled by separate small teams , with the content for each area held and quality @-@ controlled by each team . The art team used multiple real world locations as inspiration : Luxerion and Yusnaan were inspired by Paris and Las Vegas , while the Dead Dunes and Wildlands were influenced by Cairo and Costa Rica . The scenery for the final FMV was based on southern Europe .

= = = Music = = =

The music of Lightning Returns was composed by Masashi Hamauzu , who composed the music for XIII , Naoshi Mizuta and Mitsuto Suzuki , who co @-@ composed the music for XIII @-@ 2 with Hamauzu . Others involved in recording the soundtrack were Japanese band Language and the Video Game Orchestra , founded by Shota Nakama . Multiple tracks used " Blinded by Light " , a recurring theme in the XIII games , as a leitmotif . Unlike the previous XIII games , a theme song was not created , with the composers instead creating a purely orchestral piece for the finale . The

main soundtrack album , Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII Original Soundtrack , was released on four compact discs on November 21 , 2013 . A bonus album , Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII Soundtrack Plus , featuring unreleased tracks and rearrangements of classic themes used in the game , was released on March 26 , 2014 . A promotional album , Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII Pre Soundtrack , was released in July 2013 . The game featured multiple musical Easter eggs , including tunes from previous entries in the franchise . The commercial albums respectively reached # 29 and # 211 on the Oricon charts .

= = Marketing = =

Rumors about a second sequel 's existence started even before XIII @-@ 2 's release , when a domain name was registered in the name of Final Fantasy XIII @-@ 3 , however it turned out that the domain was registered by the company 's western branch without the main company 's knowledge . After XIII @-@ 2 's cliffhanger ending became common knowledge , the game 's creators released a statement saying that the ending was meant to prepare fans for coming DLC packets that would expand upon the game 's story . However , after the release of the last piece of DLC , company officials stated that they would be releasing future content related to XIII . By August 2012 , during the run @-@ up to a special 25th Anniversary commemoration event for the Final Fantasy series , a teaser site titled " A Storm Gathers " was released , promising new developments for the XIII series and its main protagonist . The game itself was finally unveiled at the event , with Toriyama , Kamikokuryo , Abe and Kitase detailing the core concepts of the game . Because character dialogue varied due to the time of day in @-@ game , the western release of the game was delayed by over two months after the local release , as there was far more translation , dubbing work and lip @-@ synching than in previous titles . For the promotion and marketing of the game , the development team rethought their strategy . They worked closely with Yohei Murakami , the publicity and marketing agent for many Square Enix games . Lightning Returns was heavily promoted at gaming events throughout 2013 . As part of the promotion campaign , Lightning and monsters from the XIII series featured in a series of player events in Final Fantasy XIV : A Realm Reborn .

= = Downloadable content = = =

While the previous game had a large amount of downloadable content in the form of character costumes , extra story episodes and battles in the game 's fighting arena , the reaction to these was mixed . The costumes were liked by fans , despite some complaints of them being purely cosmetic , but the presence of story DLC caused many to criticize the original game as incomplete . In reaction to this , the developers decided to package the game 's entire story with the retail edition . However , they did create pre @-@ order DLC for the game in the form of outfits Lightning could use in battle . One of these featured the clothing , weapon and equipment of Cloud Strife from Final Fantasy VII , available with the game 's limited edition Pre @-@ Order Bonus Pack , while another featured a collection of Samurai @-@ inspired outfits . In addition to this , as part of a cross @-@ game promotional campaign , Square Enix of Japan also made Yuna 's costume from Final Fantasy X a playable garb for those who had purchased the Japanese HD Remaster of the game on either PS3 or Vita . The garb was later made available as a pre @-@ order exclusive from Amazon.com. After the game 's release , an additional set of DLC costumes was released , among them a moogles outfit . In the Western release of the game scheduled on February 11 , 2014 , a free DLC pack was released that enabled players to play the localized version of the game with Japanese voice acting and lip @-@ synching . The DLC was free for the first two weeks , and then became paid DLC .

= = Versions and merchandise = = =

Lightning Returns was released on November 21 , 2013 in Japan and on February 11 , 13 and 14 , 2014 in North America , Australia and Europe respectively . Alongside the standard release , a

special box set titled " Lightning Ultimate box " was released . It included Final Fantasy XIII , XIII @-@ 2 and Lightning Returns , a figurine of Lightning , selected music from the games , a special stand from the game and a book of artwork . A limited edition of the PlayStation 3 version containing a specially @-@ themed Dualshock 3 controller was also released in Asia . A Collector 's Edition exclusive to North America was released through Square Enix 's online store . It contained a copy of the game , an artwork book , a pocket watch embossed with the game 's logo and codes for costume DLC . The game is also being ported to Microsoft Windows platforms via Steam for release in 2015 . After a long delay , Kitase announced in October 2015 that the game would release in December that year . Its official release date was announced in November 2015 . It features all DLC outfits apart from the Aerith @-@ themed one , and removes the ability to name customized outfits and the Angel of Valhalla chocobo . A release on iOS & Android followed on February 17 , 2016 in Japan and later on the Amazon Appstore . It also available on PlayStation Now .

As part of the game 's promotion in Japan , Square Enix teamed up with Japanese confectionery company Ezaki Glico to market a range of Pocky snacks in packaging promoting the game . A Play Arts Kai figurine of Lightning as she appears in the game was also created by Square Enix Merchandise . After the game 's release , an Ultimania guide to the game was also released , containing concept and character artwork , interviews with staff members , and guides to the game 's enemies , continent layouts and times for events . A book set between XIII @-@ 2 and Lightning Returns , Chronicle of Chaotic Era , was originally scheduled to be released alongside the game in Japan , but was eventually cancelled due to the author falling ill . After the game 's release , a three @-@ part novella set after Lightning Returns ' ending was released through Famitsu Weekly magazine , titled Final Fantasy XIII Reminiscence : tracer of memories . Written by Watanabe based on and incorporating the material written for Chronicle of Chaotic Era , the book takes the form of a series of interviews with the main characters of the XIII series .

= = Reception = =

= = = Sales = = =

In Japan , the PS3 version of Lightning Returns reached the top of the Top 20 in software sales in its first week , selling just over 277 @,@ 000 units and beating Nintendo 's Super Mario 3D World . In the same period , the Xbox 360 version sold 4 @,@ 000 units , under half of the initial sales of XIII @-@ 2 for that platform . By the end of 2013 , the PS3 version was 17th among the 100 best @-@ settling titles of the year , selling over 400 @,@ 000 copies . In the United Kingdom , Lightning Returns debuted at third place in the top ten debut video games . The game was 8th in the top ten best @-@ selling video games of February . By May 2014 , the game had sold approximately 800 @,@ 000 copies worldwide . According to Steam Spy , a further 150 @,@ 000 copies of the Windows PC version were sold by March 2016 .

= = = Reviews = = =

Lightning Returns has received mixed reviews from critics . The game scored 37 / 40 in Famitsu magazine , with the reviewers giving scores of 10 , 10 , 9 and 8 out of 10 for each console version of the game . Famitsu later gave the game an " Excellence " award during the 2013 Famitsu Awards . Aggregating review websites GameRankings and Metacritic gave the Xbox 360 version 71 @.@ 69 % based on 16 reviews and 69 / 100 based on 21 reviews. and the PlayStation 3 version 66 @.@ 15 % based on 40 reviews and 66 / 100 based on 62 reviews .

The battle system gained the highest amount of praise . Matt Elliot of Official PlayStation Magazine said the battle system was fun and " [felt] like Final Fantasy : an energetic , modern approximation of combat that was previously turn @-@ based . " IGN 's Marty Sliva greatly enjoyed the battle system , saying that " Lightning Returns did a great job of empowering me to create a [trio of Schema] that felt unique and personal . " Joe Juba of Game Informer was also pleased with the

system which he considered to be an improvement over the previous two XIII games , noting that the switching of Schema created " a fast @-@ paced , high @-@ tension system that makes fights exciting . " Eurogamer 's Simon Parkin called it " perhaps the best and certainly most flexible version yet " when compared to the other XIII games , while GameSpot 's Kevin VanOrd stated that if it were not for a few flaws such as the blocking , " it may have even found a place among Final Fantasy 's better battle systems . " Famitsu generally cited the battle system as " excellent " , noting it as fast @-@ paced and fun , but also noting that some enemies were tricky even on Easy mode . It also praised the level of " uniqueness " available in garb customization .

The quest gameplay was less @-@ well received , with Sliva saying it made him " feel like [he] was stuck in the opening hours of an MMO " , while Juba called the tasks " dull " . Parkin stated that the quests " can seem trivial under the eye of the apocalyptic clock " . VanOrd commented that while many quests were " absorbing on their own " , he admired their ability to get the player out into the world . Destructoid 's Dale North felt that the time limit made the quests " a waste of the precious time left " . The time limit itself received mixed reviews . Sliva said the time limit gave the game " a sense of urgency ... that I really enjoy . " , while VanOrd said the limit worked against the player and " collides with almost every other aspect of the game . " Juba enjoyed planning out his days , but on the other had felt that the time limit prevented exploration , and that it " severely [limited] your ability to fully dive into some of the systems . " Elliot said the limit overly pressured him , and became unpleasant when coupled with the time penalty for fleeing battle . The Famitsu reviewers said that the time limit was not an overly stressful factor .

The graphics received mixed reviews . Sliva referred to the locations as " visually interesting and varied " , while VanOrd said the player " can 't help but gawk at the beautiful spectacle before [them] " . Juba liked the overall look and design of the main cast and environment , but critiqued the environment textures and NPCs . Elliot praised the CG cutscenes , but said that " the tired , boxy side streets feel unfinished . " However , he further said that the expansive nature of environments balanced this issue out . The environments were praised by Famitsu , which stated that due to the expansive nature of the environments and the lack of hints concerning quests , new players might take a bit of time getting used to it . It also generally called the game " quite nice " .

The game 's story was poorly received by most reviewers . Sliva said the narrative was " drenched in uninteresting pathos that failed to give me a reason to care about these characters that I 've spent well over 100 hours with . " Juba called the story " a joke " , saying that there was little development for Lightning as a character , and that the narrative " killed whatever lingering investment [he] had in the universe . " VanOrd found the large amount of character dialogue a distracting and jarring feature , while Parkin said that the game 's narrative could not fix the issues present in the previous two XIII games , although the side @-@ quests and dialogue helped lighten Lightning 's character . Elliot spoke of it as one of the reasons to play the game , terming it a " typically bonkers narrative " .

= = = Awards = = =

The Final Fantasy XIII series won a Sound Division : Award of Excellence at the CEDEC AWARDS 2014 for the sound development team .

= = = Official response = = =

Both Toriyama and Kitase have responded to the mixed review scores the game received . Speaking to Siliconera about the Japanese reviews , Toriyama said that most of the negativity stemmed from the time limit , and that " opinions on the game become more positive after some time since Lightning Returns ' initial release [after players get used to the nuances] . " Speaking with Joystiq , Kitase said that he " wasn 't really shocked . There are negative reviews and positive reviews , it 's a real mixture . When I started making this game I took on very new challenges , so in a way I had anticipated that there would be mixed opinions , so this is more or less what we had anticipated . "