= Shin Megami Tensei : Digital Devil Saga =

Shin Megami Tensei : Digital Devil Saga , known in Japan as Digital Devil Saga : Avatar Tuner (Digital Devil Saga ????? ? ????? , Dejitaru Debiru S?ga Abat?ru Ch?n?) is a duology of role @-@ playing video games developed by Atlus for the PlayStation 2 . They are a spin @-@ off of the Megami Tensei series . The first Digital Devil Saga was released in Japan in 2004 , North America in 2005 and Europe in 2006 . Its direct sequel , Shin Megami Tensei : Digital Devil Saga 2 (Digital Devil Saga ????? ? ?????2 , Dejitaru Debiru S?ga Abat?ru Ch?n? Ts? , lit . Digital Devil Saga : Avatar Tuner 2) , released in 2005 in Japan and North America , and 2007 in Europe . The games were published in Europe by Ghostlight and in other regions by Atlus .

Digital Devil Saga follows the Embryon , a tribe who fight against six other tribes in a digital world called the Junkyard . After being infected with a demon virus that grants them demonic powers , the Embryon must fight with and devour the other tribes to ascend to " Nirvana " . During the conflict , they shelter a woman named Sera , who has the power to calm their demonic powers . In Digital Devil Saga 2 , having escaped into the devastated real world , the Embryon are caught up in the fight against the Karma Society , who are intimately linked to the source of the disaster . The gameplay of both titles feature third @-@ person navigation of playble characters around to @-@ scale environments , and turn @-@ based gameplay against demonic monsters and human enemies .

Digital Devil Saga began development pre @-@ 2002 under the working title New Goddess . The game 's concept and original draft were written by Japanese author Yu Godai , but she withdrew from the project for personal reasons , and was replaced by Atlus scriptwriter Tadashi Satomi . The gameplay concept of the characters transforming into demons was based on an unused idea for Shin Megami Tensei . The second game began development immediately after the first , with the main development effort going into refining and improving the gameplay . While their commercial performances varied , both games were praised by critics for their story , graphics and gameplay . Since release , the game has inspired a mobile prequel , and Godai wrote a series of novels based on her original premise for the story .

= = Gameplay = =

In the Shin Megami Tensei : Digital Devil Saga role @-@ playing games , players take control of the characters Serph , Heat , Argilla , Gale and Cielo , with the characters Sera and Roland becoming playable in Digital Devil Saga 2 . These characters are able to transform into a demon form , which is their main form in battle . Characters navigate to @-@ scale environments , fighting enemies in both random encounters and story @-@ focused boss battles . After each battle , experience points are awarded to characters . Character abilities are governed by Mantra Grids , a system where Mantras are bought using the in @-@ game currency Macca , then mastering them using gaining Atma Points gained from defeated enemies . The maximum number of abilities that a character can learn is eight . If two or more characters equip a certain ability , they can perform a stronger version of it through a combo . Each character can learn abilities from one of four categories : Physical , Magic , Shield and Auto .

The Digital Devil Saga games use a turn @-@ based battle system , with three allied characters fighting in battle . Both player characters and enemies are governed by a mechanic called the Press Turn system : each character has a symbol representing a turn . The character can forfeit a turn to allow the next character an action ; turns cannot be passed more than once . If an enemy 's weakness is exploited or a character lands a critical hit , an extra turn is gained ; if a character resists an attack , a turn is lost . In Digital Devil Saga 2 , characters will sometimes enter battle in a half @-@ transformed " berserk " mode , which increases attack power while locking away magic skills and lowering a character 's defense . While battle is focused around strengthening characters ' demon forms , they can also fight in their human forms using conventional weapons , and can equip ammunition . A human character can perform a combo with one in demon form . The magic system uses nine magic attributes . Ice and Lightning magic have a chance of causing the " freeze " and "

stun " status , while Expel magic reduces an enemy 's hit points by a certain percentage , and Death magic causes an instant kill . Status magic can inflict status effects on enemies .

Each time a character 's experience level raises , they receive stat boosts . While the protagonist can assign stat points at will , the other main characters each have certain specializations . Money is also dropped , which can be used to buy supplies from merchants . Atma is gained after each battle , but a greater amount is gained from eating enemies . If an enemy is " frightened " , the amount of Atma is further increased . Characters can also be afflicted with a status ailment if they overeat . In Digital Devil Saga 2 , special Karma Ring items can be assigned to characters to grant stat boosts . Fitting different gems dropped from defeated enemies granting specific stat boosts and effects . Effects range from granting free status buffs on the player party to casting ailments on enemies . Importing save data from the first game enables some skills and abilities learned during the first game to be transferred to the characters that learned them .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

The first Digital Devil Saga takes place in the Junkyard , a combat simulator program divided between six tribes where it always rains : the Embryon , Vanguards , Solids , Maribel , Brutes and Wolves . Each tribe holds a particular territory , and initially are devoid of emotions : the only common ground is a great tower at the Junkyard 's center called the Karma Temple , which acts as a meeting place for all the tribe leaders . The following game is set on Earth , which has been devastated by a phenomenon known as the " Black Sun " , a manifestation of God 's anger . The survivors of humanity are ruled by the Karma Society .

The main protagonists of the Digital Devil Saga duology are silent protagonist Serph (??? , Sa @-@ fu) , leader of the Embryon ; and Sera (??) , a woman who can commune with God . The other Embryon are the kind Argilla (???? , Arujira) ; the hot @-@ tempered Heat (??? , Hito) the light @-@ hearted Cielo (??? , Shiero) ; and the highly logical Gale (??? , Geiru) . The main antagonist is Angel (?????) , who is Sera 's intersexual biological parent . In Digital Devil Saga 2 , two new main characters are introduced : Rolad , the alcoholic leader of the Lokapala resistance group ; and Madame Margot Cuvier , head of the Karma Society . All the main characters barring Cuvier become infected with the demon virus , a condition that causes them to turn into demonic beings and lust after human flesh .

= = = Plot = = =

During a border skirmish between the Embryon and the Vanguards , a demon virus is introduced that infects everyone in the Junkyard : branded with a mark representing their " Atma " and gradually awakening to basic emotions , the people of the Junkyard must devour their foes to satiate their demonic hunger or risk going berserk . Sera , a so @-@ called cyber shaman , arrives suffering from amnesia and is taken in by the Embryon , revealing herself capable of calming their hunger with her singing . The Embryon first become conscious of their new powers when they meet the surviving Vanguard : during their time there , they are forced to kill the Vanguards ' leader Harley . Serph is then summoned to the Karma Temple along with the surviving tribe leaders . Once they are assembled there , a female being calling itself Angel orders the tribes to conquer their neighbors and ascend the Temple 's tower to " Nirvana " , bringing Sera as proof of their achievements . The Embryon decide to ally with the Maribel as a means of defeating the stronger tribes .

After gaining the trust of the Maribel 's leader Jinana , they are betrayed by her second @-@ in @-@ command Bat , who allies with the Brutes along with the Solids ' leader Mick . Jinana , having refused to eat as she needed to , goes berserk and must be killed . The Solids then capture Sera , leading the Embryon into a fight to the death against Mick . They also successfully trick the Brutes ' forces and Bat into a booby @-@ trapped ship , killing them . During this time , the Wolves are

subdued by the Brutes , whose leader Varin has awakened memories of a former life where he was known as " Colonel Beck " , and unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Angel to release him from the Junkyard . With help from the Wolves ' deposed leader Lupa , the Embryon infiltrate the Brutes ' castle , but Lupa is killed after going berserk . After fighting Varin , he accuses Sera of being a monster before he dies . Sera regains her memories and runs to the Karma Temple with the Embryon in pursuit . There , Sera faces the human form of Angel , who threatens to delete the Junkyard with a computer virus if Sera does not return to the real world with her . The Embryon arrive and successfully fight Angel , but in the process release the computer virus . The Embryon , Sera and Angel only just escape as the Junkyard is destroyed .

 In Digital Devil Saga 2 , the Embryon appear in the real world , which is slowly being destroyed by the Black Sun : the only ones able to survive the sun 's rays are those infected with the demon virus . Serph , Cielo , Argilla and Gale learn that Sera is the captive of Angel and Madame Cuvier at the Karma Society headquarters . With the help of Roland and a young by named Fred , the group infiltrate the Karma Society 's building . While they attempt to rescue Serah , Angel plans to subvert Cuvier and use the demon virus to create a society ruled by the strong . The Embryon are also faced by Heat , who is working with Cuvier on the promise of Sera 's safety . Reaching the EGG , a man @-@ made replica of God , the party rescue Sera , but Heat appears and wounds Serph . Both fall into the EGG , and God begins absorbing the Earth 's data : in the chaos , Angel kills Cuvier , while the remaining Embryon and Sera , now able to assume a demon form herself , shut down the Power Plant in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the EGG . In the process , both Roland and Argilla are killed by a powerful demon . Returning to the EGG so Sera can speak with God , they are confronted by Heat , who has fused with the EGG and gone berserk . Inside the EGG , Serph is met by a higher being calling itself Schrödinger , who reveals the truth about what happened .

 The Karma Society was founded to study God , who was losing his faith in humanity due to their behavior . Sera was the only survivor of a group of children with the ability to communicate with God . To hide from the pain of the experiments , Sera created an artificial environment that would become the Junkyard , populating it with benign versions of Karma Society staff : these artificial beings would become the Junkyard 's five tribes . The original Serph manipulated Sera for his own ends while the original Heat attempted to protect her : when Sera saw Serph killing Heat when linked to the EGG , God felt her pain and attacked Earth . The original Serph was overwhelmed by a flood of data and became a demon before being killed . Now knowing the truth , Serph escapes from the EGG , killing Heat in the process . Sera then decides to head for a secondary Karma facility to communicate with God : on the way , Gale dies defeating Angel , and Cielo sacrifices himself so Sera and Serph can reach the transmission site . As Sera begins transmission , the base is destroyed , killing her and Serph . Their data travels to the sun and merges into a new being called Seraph . Aided by the data of the Embryon , Seraph confronts God , fighting an avatar of him to prove humanity 's worth . Upon victory , Seraph achieves enlightenment and travels with Schrödinger to new worlds , while God restores the sun and Earth . At the game 's end , it is shown that the Embryon , Angel , and aspects of Sera and Serph have reincarnated , with a grown Fred acting as their caretaker .

= = Development = =

 Production on the initial Digital Devil Saga started prior to the beginning of active development on Shin Megami Tensei : Nocturne in 2002 . During production , it was known under the working title New Goddess . The project was formed in part to make the Megami Tensei series accessible to a broader audience while staying true to its roots . The games were directed by Katsura Hashino , a new director who had worked in lesser roles in previous Megami Tensei titles . The design director was Makoto Kitano , while the movie director was Ichir? Itano , a noted anime director . Itano was responsible for storyboarding and character movement choreography . The team was divided into multiple divisions , each in charge of different aspects of the game 's design . The original story was written by Japanese novelist Yu Godai , but due to personal reasons she withdrew from the project before the full scripts were written . Her role was filled by Tadashi Satomi , who had previously

written scripts for the first three Persona games . Satomi 's role as story writer necessitated discussions with other teams assigned to the game . Due to characters having dialogue in the field , the team needed to have extensive notes prepared . The battle system was taken from that used in Nocturne , but with elements added to both differentiate it from other Megami Tensei games and incorporate the game 's themes . During development of Digital Devil Saga , the team were faced with repeated problems with fitting the entire experience on a single DVD : the amount of data was estimated to be two times that of Nocturne .

Production of Digital Devil Saga 2 began immediately after the release of the first game . To tease it prior to its official announcement , a large number of unfinished plot threads and vague hints relating to the main characters ' previous lives were incorporated into the first game . For Digital Devil Saga 2 , the team expanded upon the systems implemented in the first game . Due to extra features added , the team sometimes felt that they could not fit it all on a single disc . The main priority was to ensure smooth motion and a quick transfer into battles and cutscenes . The game 's setting was inspired in Satomi 's mind by the frequent reporting of natural disasters and outbreaks of diseases around the world . Another theme he incorporate was the inherent contradiction of wanting to avoid violence while being forced to fight others in order to survive . According to Satomi , while the first game 's motif was " rain " , the second game 's was " sun " . Itano returned to his role as storyboarder and movement choreographer . A large amount of work was done to refine the gameplay experience , such as opening up the character customization system . The team used player feedback from the first game 's systems to make their adjustments . For both games , Atlus received additional development support for artwork assets from Kusanagi Corporation .

= = = Character design = = =

The character and demon designs were done by regular series artist Kazuma Kaneko . At the start , Kaneko was given the instruction to give the characters tribal uniforms instead of normal clothes , and an Atma tattoo somewhere on their body to signify their demon power . The uniforms signified their eternal conflict within the Junkyard . To help bring individuality to the main characters , Kaneko create slight variations in them , such as giving them hoods or capes . The grey tribal uniforms were created so the main characters ' key colors would stand out . Serph , as the player character and silent protagonist , was given few personality traits and designed with a stern expression . The aspect that separated him from other silent protagonist within the Megami Tensei series was that his name was spoken by the other characters rather than chosen by the player . To emphasize the fact that the world of Digital Devil Saga was unlike the typical setting for Megami Tensei titles , he gave all the characters hair and eye colors that would be naturally impossible in the real world . The only one not to have a strange hair color was Sera , signifying her unique status . The characters ' demon forms were designed to be animal @-@ like , signifying their urge to eat . They were given prominent mouths as demons , as the idea was that they would eat their foes when in demon form . Their eyes were removed as they stood out too much . Each character was designed around a specific elemental theme , which both flowed into the gameplay and matched an individual 's personality : an example of this is Heat , who has an angry personality and uses Fire as his primary element .

Kaneko was the first to propose the game 's concept , which was then worked on by other staff members . The initial game 's themes were defined as " awakening " and " change " , referenced in how the characters gradually awoke to their emotions and the static environment of the Junkyard was drastically changed . The Junkyard was designed to emphasize the desperation of the characters during their awakening . The concept behind the demon transformations originated during the development of Shin Megami Tensei . Kaneko , who worked on Shin Megami Tensei , had wanted the game 's Chaos Hero to regularly switch between his human and demon forms . The idea did not appear in the finished game , but eventually reemerged and became the base for Digital Devil Saga 's gameplay . The game 's character models were created based on development knowledge from Nocturne . Creating the models proved difficult due to the need to extensively use level of detail while staying true Kaneko 's distinctive designs . While Nocturne was defined by its "

static " feel , the team wanted Digital Devil Saga to have a feeling of motion to contrast Nocturne . Makoto Kitano was responsible for creating 3D representations of the game 's demons , A noted element was the design of Cerberus , which combined elements of the three @-@ headed version first designed for Devil Summoner : Soul Hackers and the shape of sharks . One of the additional challenges was the fact that it was the first Megami Tensei title to feature extensive voice acting , inspired by the need to fully express the game 's themes and story . Before the official voice actors were cast , Atlus staff provided the characters ' voices . Due to the wish to appeal to a wider audience than previous Megami Tensei games , the proposed amount of violence and graphic imagery was cut down .

= = = Music = = =

The music for Digital Devil Saga was principally composed by Shoji Meguro , who had worked on multiple previous Megami Tensei titles . Some tracks from the first game were composed by Kenichi Tsuchiya . While he had previously been restricted in his music quality by the limited storage space of the CD medium , Meguro was able to play half the tracks using real @-@ time streaming . For the sound compression , Meguro used ATRAC3 compression software . Using the software , Meguro was able to fit in high @-@ quality music alongside the sound effects and voice track . Nevertheless , he needed to make some compromises on tracks .
For the first game , Meguro made heavy use of guitar music , taking his inspiration from music of the 1960s and 70s . It was meant to represent the vicious new nature of the environment , and of how the main protagonists gradually awoke to their humanity . Tsuchiya was in charge of environmental tracks that deviated from the normal layout and feel of the Junkyard . The game 's battle theme , " Hunting " , was originally going to be the boss theme , but its instrumentation was wrong and so it was changed to the normal battle theme . For the second game , Meguro changed the original 's dark tone to give it a harsher feel and techno instrumentation , reflecting the state of the real world and clashing with the views of the main characters . He also reached out to an external firm to help with fitting in more complicated tracks with less loops , getting round some of the limitations he faced with the first game .
Multiple theme songs were created for the games . The first game 's opening theme , " Pray " , was sung by Sera 's voice actress Houko Kuwashima . " Pray " also formed the core musical theme for the games . For the North American version , the opening theme was changed to " Danger " , composed by electronic band Etro Anime . The song , described as a " melancholy track " , was designed to blend with the constant rain of the Junkyard . The opening theme for Digital Devil Saga 2 was " Alive " : it was written by Meguro , sung by Kayoko Momota , and had backing vocals by Yumi Kawamura . The ending theme song is " Time Capsule " by Japanese singer @-@ songwriter As . The song was used in television commercials advertising the game in Japan , and was the singer 's debut single .

= = Release = =

Digital Devil Saga first announced in the Japanese director 's cut version of Nocturne in February 2004 . The game 's formal title had only been decided upon shortly before its reveal . As part of the game 's promotion in Japan , entertainer and model Mayuko Iwasa appeared in live @-@ action advertisements in the role of Sera , and promoted the game at events . An eight @-@ megabyte PlayStation 2 memory card was sold that featured artwork of Serph and his demon form . Digital Devil Saga 2 was officially announced at the 2004 Tokyo Game Show . To promote Digital Devil Saga 2 , a special DVD containing selected music tracks and movie material was created as an over @-@ the @-@ counter giveaway for the initial print of the game . Both Digital Devil Saga games were re @-@ released by Atlus in 2006 as part of their " Atlus Best Collection " budget release series .
Digital Devil Saga was officially announced for the west at the 2004 Electronic Entertainment Expo for release in the winter of that year . It was subsequently delayed into 2005 , and a delux edition

which would include a box for containing both Digital Devil Saga games was announced as a consolation . The second game 's release window was officially announced at the 2005 Electronic Entertainment Expo , to be published in North America by Atlus . The game arrived in stores in North America a week earlier than originally scheduled . Both Digital Devil Saga games were published in Europe by Ghostlight .

As the original version featured a cast of well @-@ known anime voice actors , the localization team sought out well @-@ known English voice actors for the dub , and took extra care with syncing the English dialogue with the original characters ' lip movements . Digital Devil Saga was the first Megami Tensei project to feature an extensive voice acting element . During localization , localization project manager Yu Namba made a spelling error during one of the early cutscenes where the name of Serph 's demon form was shown : the demon 's name was displayed as " Varna " , when it was actually " Varuna " . The error was not spotted until it was too late , and so remained in the game . One of the main concerns was to keep the characters ' personalities intact when shifting from Japanese to English dialogue : a cited example of how this change was accomplished was Cielo , who was given a Jamaican accent to express the character 's easy @-@ going and friendly personality . After the release of Nocturne , the " Shin Megami Tensei " moniker was attached to the Digital Devil Saga games to help with marketing .

= = Reception = =

By the end of 2004 , the first game sold 153 @,@ 421 units in Japan , coming in at the 81st best @-@ selling title in Japan for that year . The second game sold 90 @,@ 812 units in Japan by the end of 2005 , becoming the 144th best @-@ selling game for 2005 . Digital Devil Saga did not manage to meet its projected sales targets in Japan , and contributed to the company 's console division posting a substantial loss for the 2004 / 2005 financial year , resulting in several staff members being laid off . According to a representative of Atlus USA , the games ' sales performances in 2005 were " absolutely fabulous " . In Europe , it was stated by its publisher that the first game had sold above expectations in the region . Upon their re @-@ release on PlayStation Network , the games appeared in the top ten rankings in North America and Europe .

Digital Devil Saga received positive critical reception : aggregate sites GameRankings and Metacritic show ratings of 80 % and 78 / 100 respectively . General praise went to the story , characters and gameplay . The high difficulty , issues with repetition and pacing , and the cliffhanger ending drew criticism . Famitsu cited the game 's significant shift away from the hardcore mechanics of the main series , positively noting the freedom of character customization . The reviewer for 1UP.com , despite missing the demon fusion systems from earlier Megami Temsei titles , thoroughly enjoyed the game , calling it " a great Final Fantasy alternative " . Jeremy Dunham of IGN said that " Despite its repetition and unfinished storyline , [Digital Devil Saga] still has plenty to like " , citing its plot and battle system . GameSpot 's Bethany Massimilla said that Digital Devil Saga 's combat and world design made it a compelling title worthy of the Shin Megami Tensei moniker . RPGamer 's Derek Cavin said that Digital Devil Saga " manages to be a good game , despite its flaws " . Eurogamer 's Rob Fahey said that players expecting a traditional role @-@ playing game would be disappointed , while stating that Digital Devil Saga delivered a generally positive impression while avoiding many cliches of the RPG genre . John McCarroll of RPGFan generally enjoyed his time with the game despite issues with camera control , praising the positive mixture of gameplay and story elements .

Digital Devil Saga 2 received an even better reception : its aggregate scores from GameRankings and Metacritic were 83 % and 83 / 100 respectively . While critics generally cited a necessity for knowledge of the first game , the story and gameplay were generally cited as an improvement over the original . Famitsu was again fairly positive , enjoying the story and characters , while also noting the accommodations for first @-@ time players . Dengeki PlayStation was highly positive about the game , praising its story and gameplay additions , though saying that the two games were a little too similar , and that people who had not played the first game would be confused by the story and character relations . 1UP.com 's Shane Bettenhausen said that while the game shared many

similarities with its predecessor , it was not as repetitive as other games such as the .hack series , and was still a good game . Masimilla said that Digital Devil Saga 2 had managed to realize the first game 's storytelling ambitions , enjoying the experience despite noting some design flaws . Fahey said that the game was " everything that an excellent sequel should be " , generally praising its mechanical and narrative improvements over Digital Devil Saga . Cavin said that it improved on nearly every aspect of the original game , recommending it to players of RPGs . McCarroll said " [Digital Devil Saga 2] is easily the finest game I 've had a chance to play this year and stands to be one of the great games of this generation " .

= = Legacy = =

 In its reviews , RPGFan named both Digital Devil Saga games as " Editor 's Choice " . In 2011 , Digital Devil Saga and its sequel Digital Devil Saga 2 ended up topping the site 's " Top 20 RPGs of the Last Decade " list . Kurt Kalata , writing for 1UP.com in an article concerning the controversial content of the Megami Tensei series , made mention of Digital Devil Saga due to its examination of the ethics of eating others to survive .

= = = Related media = = =

 A manga spin @-@ off of Digital Devil Saga titled Digital Devil Saga : Avatar Tuner - Shinen no Matou was published in Japan in 2005 by Jive . The manga revolves around a separate group of characters within the Junkyard . A five @-@ volume light novels series titled Quantum Devil Saga : Avatar Tuner (??????????? ??????????) have been authored by Yu Godai in 2011 . While she had left the project early , her contract with Atlus enabled her to write her own work based on the premise . The novels are Yu 's alternate take on her own story , redone without any of the restrictions involved with a video game narrative .
 Digital Devil Saga : Avatar Tuner : A 's TEST Server (???? ? ??? ? ??? ????? ? ????? A 's TEST Server) , a mobile role @-@ playing game , was developed by Interactive Brains for mobile phones and published by Atlus and Bbmf through the Megaten ? service . Using gameplay systems similar to the console games , the story is an original narrative set within the Digital Devil Saga universe : when Serph awakens in an enormous tower with no memories , he and the other Embryon must explore the towers with Sera 's help to recover his memories .