

= Final Fantasy =

Final Fantasy (?????????? , Fainaru Fantaj?) is a science fiction and fantasy media franchise created by Hironobu Sakaguchi , and developed and owned by Square Enix (formerly Square) . The franchise centers on a series of fantasy and science fantasy role @-@ playing video games (RPGs) . The eponymous first game in the series , published in 1987 , was conceived by Sakaguchi as his last @-@ ditch effort in the game industry ; the title was a success and spawned sequels . The video game series has since branched into other genres such as tactical role @-@ playing , action role @-@ playing , massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing , racing , third @-@ person shooter , fighting , rhythm and anime .

Although most Final Fantasy installments are stand @-@ alone stories with different settings and main characters , they feature identical elements that define the franchise . Recurring elements include plot themes , character names , and game mechanics . Plots center on a group of heroes battling a great evil while exploring the characters ' internal struggles and relationships . Character names are frequently derived from the history , languages , pop culture , and mythologies of cultures worldwide .

The series has been commercially and critically successful ; it is Square Enix 's best selling video game franchise , with more than 115 million units sold , and is one of the best @-@ selling video game franchises of all time . The series is well known for its innovation , visuals , and music , such as the inclusion of full motion videos , photo @-@ realistic character models , and orchestrated music by Nobuo Uematsu . Final Fantasy has been a driving force in the video game industry , and the series has affected Square Enix 's business practices and its relationships with other video game developers . It has also introduced many features now common in role @-@ playing video games and has been credited with helping to popularize console @-@ based RPGs in markets outside Japan .

= = Titles = =

= = = Games = = =

The first installment of the series premiered in Japan on December 18 , 1987 . Subsequent titles are numbered and given a story unrelated to previous games ; consequently , the numbers refer more to volumes than to sequels . Many Final Fantasy games have been localized for markets in North America , Europe , and Australia on numerous video game consoles , personal computers (PC) , and mobile phones . Future installments will appear on seventh and eighth generation consoles ; upcoming titles include Final Fantasy XV . As of January 2014 , the series includes the main installments from Final Fantasy to Final Fantasy XIV , as well as direct sequels and spin @-@ offs , both released and confirmed as being in development . Most of the older titles have been remade or re @-@ released on multiple platforms .

= = = = Main series = = = =

Three Final Fantasy installments were released on the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) . Final Fantasy was released in Japan in 1987 and in North America in 1990 . It introduced many concepts to the console RPG genre , and has since been remade on several platforms . Final Fantasy II , released in 1988 in Japan , has been bundled with Final Fantasy in several re @-@ releases . The last of the NES installments , Final Fantasy III , was released in Japan in 1990 ; however , it was not released elsewhere until a Nintendo DS remake in 2006 .

The Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) also featured three installments of the main series , all of which have been re @-@ released on several platforms . Final Fantasy IV was released in 1991 ; in North America , it was released as Final Fantasy II . It introduced the " Active Time Battle " system . Final Fantasy V , released in 1992 in Japan , was the first game in the series

to spawn a sequel : a short anime series titled Final Fantasy : Legend of the Crystals . Final Fantasy VI was released in Japan in 1994 , but it was titled Final Fantasy III in North America .

The PlayStation console saw the release of three main Final Fantasy games . The 1997 title Final Fantasy VII moved away from the two @-@ dimensional (2D) graphics used in the first six games to three @-@ dimensional (3D) computer graphics ; the game features polygonal characters on pre @-@ rendered backgrounds . It also introduced a more modern setting , a style that was carried over to the next game . It was also the second in the series to be released in Europe , with the first being Final Fantasy Mystic Quest . Final Fantasy VIII was published in 1999 , and was the first to consistently use realistically proportioned characters and feature a vocal piece as its theme music . Final Fantasy IX , released in 2000 , returned to the series ' roots by revisiting a more traditional Final Fantasy setting rather than the more modern worlds of VII and VIII .

Three main installments , as well as one online game , were published for the PlayStation 2 (PS2) . The 2001 title Final Fantasy X introduced full 3D areas and voice acting to the series , and was the first to spawn a direct video game sequel (Final Fantasy X @-@ 2 , published in 2003) . The first massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing game (MMORPG) in the series , Final Fantasy XI , was released on the PS2 and PC in 2002 , and later on the Xbox 360 . It introduced real @-@ time battles instead of random encounters . Final Fantasy XII , published in 2006 , also includes real @-@ time battles in large , interconnected playfields . The game is also the first in the main series to utilize a world used in a previous game , namely the land of Ivalice , which had previously featured in Final Fantasy Tactics and Vagrant Story .

In 2009 , Final Fantasy XIII was released in Japan , and in North America and Europe the following year , for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 . It is the flagship installment of the Fabula Nova Crystallis Final Fantasy series and became the first mainline game to spawn two direct sequels (XIII @-@ 2 and Lightning Returns) . It was also the first game released in Chinese & High Definition along with being released on two consoles at once . Final Fantasy XIV , a MMORPG , was released worldwide on Microsoft Windows in 2010 , but it received heavy criticism when it was launched , prompting Square Enix to send an apology for the players , and to re @-@ release the game under the title A Realm Reborn , this time to the Playstation 3 as well , in 2013 . At E3 2013 , Final Fantasy XV (originally a spin @-@ off titled Versus XIII) was officially unveiled as an upcoming title for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One and currently scheduled for release in 2016 . Like XIII , XV uses the mythos of the Fabula Nova Crystallis series , although in many other respects the game stands on its own and has since been distanced from the series by its developers .

== Remakes , sequels and spin @-@ offs ==

Final Fantasy has spawned numerous spin @-@ offs and metaseries . Several are , in fact , not Final Fantasy games , but were rebranded for North American release . Examples include the SaGa series , rebranded The Final Fantasy Legend , and its two sequels , Final Fantasy Legend II and Final Fantasy Legend III . Final Fantasy Mystic Quest was specifically developed for a United States audience , and Final Fantasy Tactics is a tactical RPG that features many references and themes found in the series . The spin @-@ off Chocobo series , Crystal Chronicles series , and Kingdom Hearts series also include multiple Final Fantasy elements . In 2003 , the Final Fantasy series ' first direct sequel , Final Fantasy X @-@ 2 , was released . Final Fantasy XIII was originally intended to stand on its own , but the team wanted to explore the world , characters and mythos more , resulting in the development and release of two sequels in 2011 and 2013 respectively , creating the series ' first official trilogy . Dissidia Final Fantasy was released in 2009 , a fighting game that features heroes and villains from the first ten games of the main series . It was followed by a prequel in 2011 . Other spin @-@ offs have taken the form of subseries ? Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , Ivalice Alliance , and Fabula Nova Crystallis Final Fantasy .

== Related media ==

===== Film and television =====

Square Enix has expanded the Final Fantasy series into various media . Multiple anime and computer @-@ generated imagery (CGI) films have been produced that are based either on individual Final Fantasy games or on the series as a whole . The first was an original video animation (OVA) titled Final Fantasy : Legend of the Crystals , a sequel to Final Fantasy V. The story was set on the same world as the game , although 200 years in the future . It was released as four 30 @-@ minute episodes , first in Japan in 1994 and later in the United States by Urban Vision in 1998 . In 2001 , Square Pictures released its first feature film , Final Fantasy : The Spirits Within . The film is set on a future Earth invaded by alien life forms . The Spirits Within was the first animated feature to seriously attempt to portray photorealistic CGI humans , but was considered a box office bomb and garnered mixed reviews .

In 2005 , Final Fantasy VII : Advent Children , a theatrical CGI film , and Last Order : Final Fantasy VII , a non @-@ canon OVA , were released as part of the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII . Advent Children was animated by Visual Works , which helped the company create CG sequences for the games . The film , unlike The Spirits Within , gained mixed to positive reviews from critics and has become a commercial success . Last Order , on the other hand , was released in Japan in a special DVD bundle package with Advent Children . Last Order sold out quickly and was positively received by Western critics , though fan reaction was mixed over changes to established story scenes .

A 25 @-@ episode anime television series titled Final Fantasy : Unlimited was released in 2001 based on the common elements of the Final Fantasy series . It was broadcast in Japan by TV Tokyo and released in North America by ADV Films .

Two animated tied ins for Final Fantasy XV were announced at the Uncovered Final Fantasy XV fan and press event , forming part of a larger multimedia project dubbed the Final Fantasy XV Universe . Brotherhood : Final Fantasy XV is a series of five 10 @-@ minute @-@ long episodes developed by A @-@ 1 Pictures and Square Enix detailing the backstories of the main cast . Kingsglaive : Final Fantasy XV , a CGI movie set for release prior to the game in Summer 2016 , is set during the game 's opening and follows new and secondary characters .

===== Other media =====

Several video games have either been adapted into or have had spin @-@ offs in the form of manga and novels . The first was the novelization of Final Fantasy II in 1989 , and was followed by a manga adaptation of Final Fantasy III in 1992 . The past decade has seen an increase in the number of non @-@ video game adaptations and spin @-@ offs . Final Fantasy : The Spirits Within has been adapted into a novel , the spin @-@ off game Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles has been adapted into a manga , and Final Fantasy XI has had a novel and manga set in its continuity . Seven novellas based on the Final Fantasy VII universe have also been released . The Final Fantasy : Unlimited story was partially continued in novels and a manga after the anime series ended . The Final Fantasy X and Final Fantasy XIII series have also had novellas and audio dramas released .

Two titles , Final Fantasy Tactics Advance and Final Fantasy : Unlimited , have been adapted into radio dramas .

===== Common elements =====

Although most Final Fantasy installments are independent , many gameplay elements recur throughout the series . Most titles feature recycled names often inspired from various cultures ' history , languages and mythology , including Asian , European , and Middle @-@ Eastern . Examples include weapon names like Excalibur and Masamune ? derived from Arthurian legend and the Japanese swordsmith Masamune respectively ? as well as the spell names Holy , Meteor , and Ultima . Beginning with Final Fantasy IV , the main series adopted its current logo style that features the same typeface and an emblem designed by Japanese artist Yoshitaka Amano . The

emblem relates to a title 's respective plot and typically portrays a character or object in the story . Subsequent remakes of the first three games have replaced the previous logos with ones similar to the rest of the series .

== = Plot and themes == =

The central conflict in many Final Fantasy games focuses on a group of characters battling an evil , and sometimes ancient , antagonist that dominates the game 's world . Stories frequently involve a sovereign state in rebellion , with the protagonists taking part in the rebellion . The heroes are often destined to defeat the evil , and occasionally gather as a direct result of the antagonist 's malicious actions . Another staple of the series is the existence of two villains ; the main villain is not always who it appears to be , as the primary antagonist may actually be subservient to another character or entity . The main antagonist introduced at the beginning of the game is not always the final enemy , and the characters must continue their quest beyond what appears to be the final fight .

Stories in the series frequently emphasize the internal struggles , passions , and tragedies of the characters , and the main plot often recedes into the background as the focus shifts to their personal lives . Games also explore relationships between characters , ranging from love to rivalry . Other recurring situations that drive the plot include amnesia , a hero corrupted by an evil force , mistaken identity , and self @-@ sacrifice . Magical orbs and crystals are recurring in @-@ game items that are frequently connected to the themes of the games ' plots . Crystals often play a central role in the creation of the world , and a majority of the Final Fantasy games link crystals and orbs to the planet 's life force . As such , control over these crystals drives the main conflict . The classical elements are also a recurring theme in the series related to the heroes , villains , and items . Other common plot and setting themes include the Gaia hypothesis , an apocalypse , and conflicts between advanced technology and nature .

== = Characters == =

The series features a number of recurring character archetypes . Most famously , every game since Final Fantasy II , including subsequent remakes of the original Final Fantasy , features a character named Cid . Cid 's appearance , personality , goals , and role in the game (non @-@ playable ally , party member , villain) vary dramatically . However , two characteristics many versions of Cid have in common are 1) being a scientist or engineer , and 2) being tied in some way to an airship the party eventually acquires . Every Cid has at least one of these two traits .

Biggs and Wedge , inspired by two Star Wars characters of the same name , appear in numerous titles as minor characters , sometimes as comic relief . The later titles in the series feature several males with effeminate characteristics . Recurring creatures include Chocobos and Moogles . Chocobos are large , often flightless birds that appear in several installments as a means of long @-@ distance travel for characters . Moogles , on the other hand , are white , stout creatures resembling teddy bears with wings and a single antenna . They serve different capacities in games including mail delivery , weaponsmiths , party members , and saving the game . Chocobo and Moogle appearances are often accompanied by specific musical themes that have been arranged differently for separate titles .

== = Gameplay == =

In Final Fantasy games , players command a party of characters as they progress through the game 's story by exploring the game world and defeating opponents . Enemies are typically encountered randomly through exploring , a trend which changed in Final Fantasy XI and Final Fantasy XII . The player issues combat orders ? like " Fight " , " Magic " , and " Item " ? to individual characters via a menu @-@ driven interface while engaging in battles . Throughout the series , the games have used different battle systems . Prior to Final Fantasy XI , battles were turn @-@ based with the protagonists and antagonists on different sides of the battlefield . Final Fantasy IV

introduced the " Active Time Battle " (ATB) system that augmented the turn @-@ based nature with a perpetual time @-@ keeping system . Designed by Hiroyuki Ito , it injected urgency and excitement into combat by requiring the player to act before an enemy attacks , and was used until Final Fantasy X , which implemented the " Conditional Turn @-@ Based " (CTB) system . This new system returned to the previous turn @-@ based system , but added nuances to offer players more challenge . Final Fantasy XI adopted a real @-@ time battle system where characters continuously act depending on the issued command . Final Fantasy XII continued this gameplay with the " Active Dimension Battle " system . Final Fantasy XIII 's combat system , designed by the same man who worked on X , was meant to have an action @-@ oriented feel , emulating the cinematic battles in Final Fantasy VII : Advent Children .

Like most RPGs , the Final Fantasy installments use an experience level system for character advancement , in which experience points are accumulated by killing enemies . Character classes , specific jobs that enable unique abilities for characters , are another recurring theme . Introduced in the first game , character classes have been used differently in each title . Some restrict a character to a single job to integrate it into the story , while other games feature dynamic job systems that allow the player to choose from multiple classes and switch throughout the game . Though used heavily in many games , such systems have become less prevalent in favor of characters that are more versatile ; characters still match an archetype , but are able to learn skills outside their class .

Magic is another common RPG element in the series . The method by which characters gain magic varies between installments , but is generally divided into classes organized by color : " White magic " , which focuses on spells that assist teammates ; " Black magic " , which focuses on harming enemies ; " Red magic " , which is a combination of white and black magic , " Blue magic " , which mimics enemy attacks ; and " Green magic " which focuses on applying status effects to either allies or enemies . Other types of magic frequently appear such as " Time magic " , focusing on the themes of time , space , and gravity ; and " Summoning magic " , which evokes legendary creatures to aid in battle and is a feature that has persisted since Final Fantasy III . Summoned creatures are often referred to by names like " Espers " or " Eidolons " and have been inspired by mythologies from Arabic , Hindu , Norse , and Greek cultures .

Different means of transportation have appeared through the series . The most common is the airship for long range travel , accompanied by chocobos for travelling short distances , but others include sea and land vessels . Following Final Fantasy VII , more modern and futuristic vehicle designs have been included .

= = Development and history = =

= = = Origin = = =

In the mid @-@ 1980s , Square entered the Japanese video game industry with simple RPGs , racing games , and platformers for Nintendo 's Famicom Disk System . In 1987 , Square designer Hironobu Sakaguchi chose to create a new fantasy role @-@ playing game for the cartridge @-@ based NES , and drew inspiration from popular fantasy games : Enix 's Dragon Quest , Nintendo 's The Legend of Zelda , and Origin Systems 's Ultima series . Though often attributed to the company allegedly facing bankruptcy , Sakaguchi explained that the game was his personal last @-@ ditch effort in the game industry and that its title , Final Fantasy , stemmed from his feelings at the time ; had the game not sold well , he would have quit the business and gone back to university . Despite his explanation , publications have also attributed the name to the company 's hopes that the project would solve its financial troubles . In 2015 , Sakaguchi explained the name 's origin : the team wanted a title that would abbreviate to " FF " , which would sound good in Japanese . The name was originally going to be Fighting Fantasy , but due to concerns over trademark conflicts with the roleplaying gamebook series of the same name , they needed to settle for something else . As the word " Final " was a famous word in Japan , Sakaguchi settled on that . According to Sakaguchi , any title that created the " FF " abbreviation would have done .

The game indeed reversed Square 's lagging fortunes , and it became the company 's flagship franchise . Following the success , Square immediately developed a second installment . Because Sakaguchi assumed Final Fantasy would be a stand @-@ alone title , its story was not designed to be expanded by a sequel . The developers instead chose to carry over only thematic similarities from its predecessor , while some of the gameplay elements , such as the character advancement system , were overhauled . This approach has continued throughout the series ; each major Final Fantasy game features a new setting , a new cast of characters , and an upgraded battle system . Video game writer John Harris attributed the concept of reworking the game system of each installment to Nihon Falcom 's Dragon Slayer series , with which Square was previously involved as a publisher . The company regularly released new titles in the main series . However , the time between the releases of Final Fantasy XI (2002) , Final Fantasy XII (2006) , and Final Fantasy XIII (2009) were much longer than previous titles . Following Final Fantasy XIV , Square Enix stated that it intended to release Final Fantasy games either annually or biennially . This switch was to mimic the development cycles of Western games in the Call of Duty , Assassin 's Creed and Battlefield series , as well as maintain fan @-@ interest .

= = = Design = = =

For the original Final Fantasy , Sakaguchi required a larger production team than Square 's previous titles . He began crafting the game 's story while experimenting with gameplay ideas . Once the gameplay system and game world size were established , Sakaguchi integrated his story ideas into the available resources . A different approach has been taken for subsequent titles ; the story is completed first and the game built around it . Designers have never been restricted by consistency , though most feel each title should have a minimum number of common elements . The development teams strive to create completely new worlds for each title , and avoid making new games too similar to previous ones . Game locations are conceptualized early in development and design details like building parts are fleshed out as a base for entire structures .

The first five games were directed by Sakaguchi , who also provided the original concepts . He drew inspiration for game elements from anime films by Hayao Miyazaki ; series staples like the airships and chocobos are inspired by elements in Castle in the Sky and Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind , respectively . Sakaguchi served as a producer for subsequent games until he left Square in 2001 . Yoshinori Kitase took over directing the games until Final Fantasy VIII , and has been followed by a new director for each new title . Hiroyuki Ito designed several gameplay systems , including Final Fantasy V 's " Job System " , Final Fantasy VIII 's " Junction System " and the Active Time Battle concept , which was used from Final Fantasy IV until Final Fantasy IX . In designing the Active Time Battle system , Ito drew inspiration from Formula One racing ; he thought it would be interesting if character types had different speeds after watching race cars pass each other . Ito also co @-@ directed Final Fantasy VI with Kitase . Kenji Terada was the scenario writer for the first three games ; Kitase took over as scenario writer for Final Fantasy V through Final Fantasy VII . Kazushige Nojima became the series ' primary scenario writer from Final Fantasy VII until his resignation in October 2003 ; he has since formed his own company , Stellavista . Nojima partially or completely wrote the stories for Final Fantasy VII , Final Fantasy VIII , Final Fantasy X , and Final Fantasy X @-@ 2 . He also worked as the scenario writer for the spin @-@ off series , Kingdom Hearts . Daisuke Watanabe co @-@ wrote the scenarios for Final Fantasy X and XII , and was the main writer for the XIII games .

Artistic design , including character and monster creations , was handled by Japanese artist Yoshitaka Amano from Final Fantasy through Final Fantasy VI . Amano also handled title logo designs for all of the main series and the image illustrations from Final Fantasy VII onward . Tetsuya Nomura was chosen to replace Amano because Nomura 's designs were more adaptable to 3D graphics . He worked with the series from Final Fantasy VII through Final Fantasy X ; for Final Fantasy IX , however , character designs were handled by Shuk? Murase , Toshiyuki Itahana , and Shin Nagasawa . Nomura is also the character designer of the Kingdom Hearts series , Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , and Fabula Nova Crystallis : Final Fantasy . Other designers include

Nobuyoshi Mihara and Akihiko Yoshida . Mihara was the character designer for Final Fantasy XI , and Yoshida served as character designer for Final Fantasy Tactics , the Square @-@ produced Vagrant Story , and Final Fantasy XII .

== Graphics and technology ==

Because of graphical limitations , the first titles on the NES feature small sprite representations of the leading party members on the main world screen . Battle screens use more detailed , full versions of characters in a side @-@ view perspective . This practice was used until Final Fantasy VI , which uses detailed versions for both screens . The NES sprites are 26 pixels high and use a color palette of 4 colors . 6 frames of animation are used to depict different character statuses like " healthy " and " fatigued " . The SNES installments use updated graphics and effects , as well as higher quality audio than in previous games , but are otherwise similar to their predecessors in basic design . The SNES sprites are 2 pixels shorter , but have larger palettes and feature more animation frames : 11 colors and 40 frames respectively . The upgrade allowed designers to have characters be more detailed in appearance and express more emotions . The first title includes non @-@ player characters (NPCs) the player could interact with , but they are mostly static in @-@ game objects . Beginning with the second title , Square used predetermined pathways for NPCs to create more dynamic scenes that include comedy and drama .

In 1995 , Square showed an interactive SGI technical demonstration of Final Fantasy VI for the then next generation of consoles . The demonstration used Silicon Graphics 's prototype Nintendo 64 workstations to create 3D graphics . Fans believed the demo was of a new Final Fantasy title for the Nintendo 64 console ; however , 1997 saw the release of Final Fantasy VII for the Sony PlayStation . The switch was due to a dispute with Nintendo over its use of faster but more expensive cartridges , as opposed to the slower and cheaper , but much higher capacity Compact Discs used on rival systems . Final Fantasy VII introduced 3D graphics with fully pre @-@ rendered backgrounds . It was because of this switch to 3D that a CD @-@ ROM format was chosen over a cartridge format . The switch also led to increased production costs and a greater subdivision of the creative staff for Final Fantasy VII and subsequent 3D titles in the series .

Starting with Final Fantasy VIII , the series adopted a more photo @-@ realistic look . Like Final Fantasy VII , full motion video (FMV) sequences would have video playing in the background , with the polygonal characters composited on top . Final Fantasy IX returned to the more stylized design of earlier games in the series , although it still maintained , and in many cases slightly upgraded , most of the graphical techniques used in the previous two games . Final Fantasy X was released on the PlayStation 2 , and used the more powerful hardware to render graphics in real @-@ time instead of using pre @-@ rendered material to obtain a more dynamic look ; the game features full 3D environments , rather than have 3D character models move about pre @-@ rendered backgrounds . It is also the first Final Fantasy game to introduce voice acting , occurring throughout the majority of the game , even with many minor characters . This aspect added a whole new dimension of depth to the character 's reactions , emotions , and development .

Taking a temporary divergence , Final Fantasy XI used the PlayStation 2 's online capabilities as an MMORPG . Initially released for the PlayStation 2 with a PC port arriving six months later , Final Fantasy XI was also released on the Xbox 360 nearly four years after its original release in Japan . This was the first Final Fantasy game to use a free rotating camera . Final Fantasy XII was released in 2006 for the PlayStation 2 and uses only half as many polygons as Final Fantasy X , in exchange for more advanced textures and lighting . It also retains the freely rotating camera from Final Fantasy XI . Final Fantasy XIII and Final Fantasy XIV both make use of Crystal Tools , a middleware engine developed by Square Enix .

== Music ==

The titles in the series feature a variety of music , but frequently reuse themes . Most of the games open with a piece called " Prelude " , which has evolved from a simple , 2 @-@ voice arpeggio in

the early games to a complex , melodic arrangement in recent installments . Victories in combat are often accompanied by a victory fanfare , a theme that has become one of the most recognized pieces of music in the series . The basic theme that accompanies Chocobo appearances has been rearranged in a different musical style for each installment . A piece called " Prologue " (and sometimes " Final Fantasy ") , originally featured in the first game , is often played during the ending credits . Although leitmotifs are common in the more character @-@ driven installments , theme music is typically reserved for main characters and recurring plot elements .

Nobuo Uematsu was the chief music composer of the Final Fantasy series until his resignation from Square Enix in November 2004 . Other composers include Masashi Hamauzu , Hitoshi Sakimoto and Junya Nakano . Uematsu was allowed to create much of the music with little direction from the production staff . Sakaguchi , however , would request pieces to fit specific game scenes including battles and exploring different areas of the game world . Once a game 's major scenarios were completed , Uematsu would begin writing the music based on the story , characters , and accompanying artwork . He started with a game 's main theme , and developed other pieces to match its style . In creating character themes , Uematsu read the game 's scenario to determine the characters ' personality . He would also ask the scenario writer for more details to scenes he was unsure about . Technical limitations were prevalent in earlier titles ; Sakaguchi would sometimes instruct Uematsu to only use specific notes . It was not until Final Fantasy IV on the SNES that Uematsu was able to add more subtlety to the music .

= = Reception = =

Overall , the Final Fantasy series has been critically acclaimed and commercially successful , though each installment has seen different levels of success . The series has seen a steady increase in total sales ; it sold over 10 million units worldwide by early 1996 , 45 million by August 2003 , 63 million by December 2005 , and 85 million by July 2008 . In June 2011 , Square Enix announced that the series had sold over 100 million units , and by March 2014 , it had sold over 110 million units . Its high sales numbers have ranked it as one of the best @-@ selling video game franchises in the industry ; in January 2007 , the series was listed as number three , and later in July as number four .

Several games within the series have become best @-@ selling titles . At the end of 2007 , the seventh , eighth , and ninth best @-@ selling RPGs were Final Fantasy VII , Final Fantasy VIII , and Final Fantasy X respectively . Final Fantasy VII has sold more than 9 @.@ 5 million copies worldwide , earning it the position of the best @-@ selling Final Fantasy title . Within two days of Final Fantasy VIII 's North American release on September 9 , 1999 , it became the top @-@ selling video game in the United States , a position it held for more than three weeks . Final Fantasy X sold over 1 @.@ 4 million Japanese units in pre @-@ orders alone , which set a record for the fastest @-@ selling console RPG . The MMORPG , Final Fantasy XI , reached over 200 @,@ 000 active daily players in March 2006 and had reached over half a million subscribers by July 2007 . Final Fantasy XII sold more than 1 @.@ 7 million copies in its first week in Japan . By November 6 , 2006 ? one week after its release ? Final Fantasy XII had shipped approximately 1 @.@ 5 million copies in North America . Final Fantasy XIII became the fastest @-@ selling game in the franchise , and sold one million units on its first day of sale in Japan . Final Fantasy XIV : A Realm Reborn , in comparison to its predecessor , was a runaway success , originally suffering from servers being overcrowded , and eventually gaining over one million unique subscribers within two months of its launch .

= = Critical response = =

The series has received critical acclaim for the quality of its visuals and soundtracks . In 1996 , Next Generation ranked it as the 17th top game series of all time , speaking very highly of its graphics , music and stories . It was awarded a star on the Walk of Game in 2006 , making it the first franchise to win a star on the event (other winners were individual games , not franchises) .

WalkOfGame.com commented that the series has sought perfection as well as having been a risk taker in innovation . In 2006 , GameFAQs held a contest for the best video game series ever , with Final Fantasy finishing as the runner @-@ up to The Legend of Zelda . In a 2008 public poll held by The Game Group plc , Final Fantasy was voted the best game series , with five titles appearing in their " Greatest Games of All Time " list .

Many Final Fantasy games have been included in various lists of top games . Several games have been listed on multiple IGN " Top Games " lists . Eleven games were listed on Famitsu 's 2006 " Top 100 Favorite Games of All Time " , four of which were in the top ten , with Final Fantasy X and Final Fantasy VII coming first and second , respectively . The series holds seven Guinness World Records in the Guinness World Records Gamer 's Edition 2008 , which include the " Most Games in an RPG Series " (13 main titles , seven enhanced titles , and 32 spin @-@ off titles) , the " Longest Development Period " (the production of Final Fantasy XII took five years) , and the " Fastest @-@ Selling Console RPG in a Single Day " (Final Fantasy X) . The 2009 edition listed two titles from the series among the top 50 consoles games : Final Fantasy XII at number 8 and Final Fantasy VII at number 20 .

However , the series has garnered some criticism . IGN has commented that the menu system used by the games is a major detractor for many and is a " significant reason why they haven 't touched the series . " The site has also heavily criticized the use of random encounters in the series ' battle systems . IGN further stated the various attempts to bring the series into film and animation have either been unsuccessful , unremarkable , or did not live up to the standards of the games . In 2007 , Edge criticized the series for a number of related titles that include the phrase " Final Fantasy " in their titles , which are considered inferior to previous titles . It also commented that with the departure of Hironobu Sakaguchi , the series might be in danger of growing stale .

Several individual Final Fantasy titles have garnered extra attention ; some for their positive reception and others for their negative reception . Final Fantasy VII topped GamePro 's " 26 Best RPGs of All Time " list , as well as GameFAQs " Best Game Ever " audience polls in 2004 and 2005 . Despite the success of Final Fantasy VII , it is sometimes criticized as being overrated . In 2003 , GameSpy listed it as the seventh most overrated game of all time , while IGN presented views from both sides . Dirge of Cerberus : Final Fantasy VII shipped 392 @,@ 000 units in its first week of release , but received review scores that were much lower than that of other Final Fantasy games . A delayed , negative review after the Japanese release of Dirge of Cerberus from Japanese gaming magazine Famitsu hinted at a controversy between the magazine and Square Enix . Though Final Fantasy : The Spirits Within was praised for its visuals , the plot was criticized and the film was considered a box office bomb . Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles for the GameCube received overall positive review scores , but reviews stated that the use of Game Boy Advances as controllers was a big detractor . The predominantly negative reception of the original version of Final Fantasy XIV caused then @-@ president Yoichi Wada to issue an official apology during a Tokyo press conference , stating that the brand had been " greatly damaged " by the game 's reception .

= = Impact and legacy = =

The Final Fantasy series and several specific games within it have been credited for introducing and popularizing many concepts that are today widely used in console RPGs . The original title is often cited as one of the most influential early console RPGs , and played a major role in legitimizing and popularizing the genre . Many console RPGs featured one @-@ on @-@ one battles against monsters from a first @-@ person perspective . Final Fantasy introduced a side view perspective with groups of monsters against a group of characters that has been frequently used . It also introduced an early evolving class change system , as well as different methods of transportation , including a ship , canoe , and flying airship . Final Fantasy II was the first sequel in the industry to omit characters and locations from the previous title . It also introduced an activity @-@ based progression system , which has been used in later RPG series such as SaGa , Grandia , and The Elder Scrolls . Final Fantasy III introduced the job system , a character progression engine allowing the player to change character classes , as well as acquire new and advanced classes and combine

class abilities , at any time during the game . Final Fantasy IV is considered a milestone for the genre , introducing a dramatic storyline with a strong emphasis on character development and personal relationships . Final Fantasy VII is credited as having the largest industry impact of the series , and with allowing console role @-@ playing games to gain mass @-@ market appeal .

The series affected Square 's business on several levels . The commercial failure of Final Fantasy : The Spirits Within resulted in hesitation and delays from Enix during merger discussions with Square . Square 's decision to produce games exclusively for the Sony PlayStation ? a move followed by Enix 's decision with the Dragon Quest series ? severed their relationship with Nintendo . Final Fantasy games were absent from Nintendo consoles , specifically the Nintendo 64 , for seven years . Critics attribute the switch of strong third @-@ party titles like the Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest games to Sony 's PlayStation , and away from the Nintendo 64 , as one of the reasons behind PlayStation being the more successful of the two consoles . The release of the Nintendo GameCube , which used optical disc media , in 2001 caught the attention of Square . To produce games for the system , Square created the shell company The Game Designers Studio and released Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles , which spawned its own metaseries within the main franchise . Final Fantasy XI 's lack of an online method of subscription cancellation prompted the creation of legislation in Illinois that requires internet gaming services to provide such a method to the state 's residents .

The series ' popularity has resulted in its appearance and reference in numerous facets of popular culture like anime , TV series , and webcomics . Music from the series has permeated into different areas of culture . Final Fantasy IV 's " Theme of Love " was integrated into the curriculum of Japanese school children and has been performed live by orchestras and metal bands . In 2003 , Uematsu became involved with The Black Mages , a rock group independent of Square that has released albums of arranged Final Fantasy tunes . Bronze medalists Alison Bartosik and Anna Kozlova performed their synchronized swimming routine at the 2004 Summer Olympics to music from Final Fantasy VIII . Many of the titles ' official soundtracks have been released for sale as well . Numerous companion books , which normally provide in @-@ depth game information , have been published . In Japan , they are published by Square and are called Ultimania books .