Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII

Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII (????? ?? -???????????VII- , Kuraishisu Koa -Fainaru Fantaj? Sebun-) is an action role @-@ playing game developed and published by Square Enix for the PlayStation Portable . First released in 2007 , the game is a prequel to the 1997 video game Final Fantasy VII and is a part of the metaseries Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , which includes other products related to the original game .

The game primarily focuses on Zack Fair , a young member of the paramilitary organization SOLDIER , who is assigned to look for the missing SOLDIER Genesis Rhapsodos . As he searches for Genesis , Zack discovers Genesis ' origin , Project G , and how it is related to two other high @-@ ranking SOLDIERs ; Sephiroth and Angeal Hewley . The game 's storyline takes the player from the war between the megacorporation Shinra and the people of Wutai to the events in Nibelheim , ending just before the beginning of Final Fantasy VII .

The game was directed by Hajime Tabata , with Tetsuya Nomura serving as character designer . Before development , the Square Enix staff initially planned to make a PlayStation Portable port of the mobile phone game Before Crisis : Final Fantasy VII , but after discussion , they decided to create a new game . The plot is based on a scenario Kazushige Nojima had in mind when working on Final Fantasy VII . Crisis Core enjoyed strong sales , selling over three million units worldwide . Critical reception was generally positive .

Gameplay

Crisis Core is an action role @-@ playing game in which the player controls Zack Fair . The player moves Zack through and between open areas , allowing him to talk with non @-@ player characters , interact with the environment , and engage monsters in battle . At save points , the player may opt to take one of the available side missions , and if so , Zack is moved to a special area to complete the mission , which usually involves defeating one or more monsters . If the mission is successfully completed , the player is rewarded with beneficial items , and often new missions become available . Whether the player is successful in the side mission or not , upon completion , Zack is returned to the save point in the main game .

Crisis Core uses a real @-@ time combat system in which the player can move Zack around , initiate attacks , special abilities and spells , use items , and block or dodge attacks . Zack 's abilities in battle are set by what materia he currently has equipped . Up to six materia can be equipped at any one time , which can impart special attacks , magic spells , or passive bonuses such as health increases or the ability to display the statistics of the current foe in combat . Materia are gained throughout the game through exploration , as rewards from side missions , as spoils of battle , or from shops . Materia can be fused together to make more powerful versions with improved bonuses ; for example , fusing an attack materia with an elemental magic materia can create a new attack skill materia that inflicts elemental magic damage in addition to physical damage . Special items collected in the game can also be used in materia fusion to further increase the materia 's power .

Crisis Core uses a slot machine @-@ like mechanic to affect the combat system . The " Digital Mind Wave " (DMW) features two sets of three spinning wheels ; one set with the numbers one through seven , and another with pictures of characters that Zack befriends during the game . The DMW automatically spins as long as Zack has at least 10 " Soldier Points " , which are awarded to the player by defeating foes . If the DMW stops with the same three pictures lined up , Zack will then perform an appropriate Limit Break attack that can greatly harm an enemy or significantly heal Zack . Additionally , in this case , if the number slots give two or more of the same number , the materia in that slot will power up . Should the numbers line up as " 777 " , Zack will gain an experience level , increasing his health , soldier points , and ability points . If there is no match in the pictures , matching numbers on the slots will grant temporary bonuses , such as limited invincibility or zero @-@ cost use of skills and abilities . The chance of matching pictures is tied to the current Limit level , which is raised by taking damage in battle and reduced upon successful battles , and after certain storyline events . After collecting certain items in the game , the pictures on the DMW may

also randomly change to summonable creatures , which have more destructive and beneficial Limit Breaks should the pictures match up .

Following completion of the game , the player will obtain a New Game Plus option . The North American and European releases of Crisis Core also have an added difficulty mode , which increases the power and health of enemies .

= = Plot = =

= = = Characters = = =

Crisis Core begins seven years before the events of Final Fantasy VII , and many characters from that game and other related works appear . However , the primary characters in the game are from either SOLDIER (the private army of Shinra) , or from their elite branch of operatives , the Turks .

The main protagonist is Zack Fair , a young and friendly SOLDIER . His mentor and friend is Angeal Hewley , a 1st class SOLDIER who is also friends with fellow SOLDIER members Sephiroth and Genesis , who ultimately becomes the game 's primary antagonist . The SOLDIER operatives work under Director Lazard , the illegitimate son of President Shinra . Zack is also friends with the Turks , particularly their leader Tseng , and one of their female operatives , Cissnei . During the course of the game , Zack encounters and befriends Aerith , a young woman tending flowers from a ruined church in the Midgar slums . He also befriends Cloud , a Shinra infantryman .

= = = Story = = =

SOLDIERs Zack Fair and Angeal Hewley are dispatched to Wutai to support the Shinra war effort . However , during the fighting , Angeal disappears , and Zack is appointed to find both him and an already missing SOLDIER , Genesis . Zack , accompanied by Tseng , finds that Genesis and Angeal have betrayed Shinra , and , as such , Zack and Sephiroth are assigned to kill them . With help from Dr. Hollander , a scientist with a vendetta against Shinra , Genesis creates an army of clones to attack Shinra headquarters . After the forces are defeated , Zack and Sephiroth track down Hollander 's secret laboratory , and learn that Hollander had used both Genesis and Angeal as part of Project G , an attempt to create soldiers infused with Jenova cells . Sephiroth faces off against Genesis , whilst Zack pursues Hollander . However , Angeal is intent on keeping Hollander alive as he wants to find a way to return to normal , and so he prevents Zack from killing the doctor by knocking Zack into the slums of Midgar .

Zack recovers to find Aerith tending to him . After they spend some time together , Zack returns to SOLDIER headquarters which is under attack by Genesis . On his way , Zack allies with Angeal , who has developed doubts about his and Genesis ' actions . As Angeal , Zack and Sephiroth protect the headquarters , Angeal confronts Genesis , but both disappear . Zack is subsequently ordered to investigate Modeoheim , where Genesis has been spotted . En route , Zack meets Shinra infantryman Cloud , and they become friends . Near Modeoheim , Zack encounters and defeats Genesis , who appears to commit suicide by throwing himself into the depths of a reactor . Zack travels on to Modeoheim and finds both Angeal and Hollander . Angeal summons and fuses with his own clones , and mutates into a monster , forcing Zack to kill him . Before he dies , Angeal gives Zack his Buster Sword , telling him to protect his honor .

Whilst Shinra continues the pursuit of Hollander , it emerges that Genesis is still alive and still producing clones , some of which have appeared in Midgar , forcing Zack to return so as to protect Aerith . He leaves her with an Angeal clone that seems to be protecting her , and then travels with Sephiroth and Cloud to investigate a Mako reactor near Nibelheim . While checking the reactor , Sephiroth learns from Genesis that he was an experiment , implanted with cells of Jenova before he was born . Genesis explains that his body is degrading , and he needs Sephiroth 's cells to survive , but Sephiroth refuses . Overcome with the recent revelations regarding his past , Sephiroth locks himself in Nibelheim Mansion , and a week later , sets Nibelheim ablaze and goes to the Mako

reactor to take Jenova 's body . When Zack fails to stop him , Cloud throws him into the Lifestream below the reactor . Zack awakes to find that Shinra has covered @-@ up the Nibelheim incident and he and Cloud have become part of Professor Hojo 's experiments on Jenova cells and Mako exposure . However , Zack is able to escape , taking the catatonic Cloud with him . They immediately become high priority targets for Shinra . While fleeing , Zack learns that Genesis and Hollander are still trying to stabilize Genesis ' mutation , and they now plan to use Cloud 's cells , as he is the only one with Sephiroth 's genes .

 Hollander tries to get to Cloud , but is killed by Zack . Zack then finds Director Lazard who , now mutated into an Angeal clone , has turned against Shinra . Lazard directs Zack to the remains of Banora to find Genesis . Zack defeats Genesis , but upon returning he discovers that Shinra have located them , and killed Lazard . The Angeal clone that was left guarding Aerith also arrives , but he too is killed . Zack discovers a note he had carried from Aerith , and learns he and Cloud had been subjected to Hojo 's experiments for four years . Zack and Cloud are able to escape , heading towards Midgar , whilst Genesis ' body is collected by two soldiers .

 Shinra pursue Zack and Cloud , and catch up with them just outside Midgar . Leaving the still semi @-@ conscious Cloud hidden away , Zack fights off an enormous number of Shinra troops , but is ultimately fatally wounded . Cloud manages to crawl to Zack 's body after Shinra has left , and Zack , in his dying breath , bequeaths the Buster Sword to Cloud , as Angeal had done to him . Cloud then begins to walk to Midgar . The epilogue recreates the opening scenes of Final Fantasy VII , as Cloud , his memories confused , claims to be a former SOLDIER .

= = Development = =

 The idea of Crisis Core originated when Hajime Tabata was chosen as director for an upcoming Final Fantasy title for the PlayStation Portable . After discussion with Tetsuya Nomura and Yoshinori Kitase , Tabata decided that the game should be another installment in the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , feeling that the pressure of producing a game from a popular series would motivate both the staff and himself . The original idea was to make a PlayStation Portable port of Before Crisis : Final Fantasy VII , as it had been released for mobile @-@ phones and the staff wanted to expand it . However , after deciding Zack was going to be the protagonist of the new game , the idea of a Before Crisis port was cancelled .

 Kitase wanted to make sure the game exceeded fans ' expectations , so he made sure that rather than making it as a " tribute " to Final Fantasy VII , it shared important links with other titles from Compilation of Final Fantasy VII . Similarly , Tabata explained that he and the staff were very wary throughout production of altering the " fans ' perception of Final Fantasy VII 's iconic characters . " For example , one of the main background events from Final Fantasy VII , Nibelheim 's destruction , had been changed somewhat in the OVA Last Order : Final Fantasy VII , and due to negative fan reaction to these change , the game staff decided not to make any major changes in Crisis Core . However , they also operated on the principal that this game dealt with those characters ' " younger days , " so that new elements could be added without changing the characters too much .

 One of the primary reasons Zack was chosen as protagonist was because his fate was predetermined . Kitase stated that Zack 's story had " been cooking for 10 years " as , despite being a minor character in Final Fantasy VII , Nomura had already developed conceptual artwork , and Kazushige Nojima had already worked out a story . The game was originally meant to have more scenes depicting Zack and Cloud 's flight to Midgar , so as to expand on their friendship and unrealized plans , but these scenes were removed due to UMD limitations , and so the staff focused more on Zack 's background as a formidable warrior . The addition of the character of Genesis to the story came about after discussions between producer Hideki Imaizumi and the character 's Japanese voice actor , Gackt , as Imaizumi had been impressed with the characters ' brief appearance in the secret ending to Dirge of Cerberus : Final Fantasy VII , and felt there was great room to expand the character . Sephiroth 's role was specifically written to give him a " much more human side . " The game 's logo represents various main characters ; the blue sky symbolizes Zack ; the white feather symbolizes Angeal ; and the water symbolizes Aerith .

Crisis Core was first envisioned as an action game , but because almost all of the staff had more experience designing RPGs , they decided to modify it , making battles more similar to the ones found in standard RPGs . However , they also added more action orientated elements to the battles , resulting in the game becoming more of an action RPG than a traditional RPG . The Materia system was designed so that players could choose between " RPG @-@ oriented enhancements " and " action @-@ oriented enhancements , " as well as to help with the game 's balance . Additionally , the Digital Mind Wave system (DMW) was added to give gameplay an element of luck , as well as to prevent combat feeling repetitive . Nomura and Kitase wanted to include this in the game because of their enthusiasm for pachinko machines .

The game was first announced at the 2004 E3 , prior to the release of the PlayStation Portable . Its first trailer consisted of clips from Last Order . In an interview for Famitsu , Nomura stated that a playable demo of the game would be ready by the end of 2006 . However , there was no mention of whether the demo would be openly available to PSP owners . By May 2005 , Nomura announced that he had designed the concept art for the game , with the gameplay set to be " interesting " and " previously unseen . " In May 2007 , both Nomura and Tabata revealed that the game was 90 % complete , and that completing its story mode and all side quests would take about 100 hours of gameplay . A playable demo was made available at Jump Festa ' 06 .

= = Audio = =

The game 's soundtrack was released on October 10 , 2007 , containing fifty @-@ five songs on two discs . The music was composed by Takeharu Ishimoto , with a few tracks orchestrated by Kazuhiko Toyama . The soundtrack also included remixes of various music from Final Fantasy VII composed by Nobuo Uematsu and Last Order : Final Fantasy VII , which was also composed by Ishimoto . The game 's ending theme , " Why " , was performed by Ayaka . The addition of " Why " was revealed by Square Enix in May 2007 , with Ayaka stating that she was fascinated by Crisis Core 's story and felt she " would like to deliver " Why " alongside Zack 's fate to the hearts of many people . " The single " Why " was released in Japan on September 5 , 2007 .

= = Release = =

On September 13 , 2007 Square Enix released a special edition bundle for Crisis Core ; a special silver colored PlayStation Portable Slim and Lite with Final Fantasy VII 's 10th Anniversary insignia on the back and on one side . As with many limited edition Final Fantasy VII @-@ related releases by Square Enix , the bundle was limited to 77 @,@ 777 units .

On December 17 , 2007 it was announced that Crisis Core would be released in North America on March 25 , 2008 . If pre @-@ ordered from certain retailers , such as GameStop , the buyer may receive a Shinra UMD case , depending on how long supplies lasted ; if pre @-@ ordered from Best Buy , the buyer may receive Crisis Core with a metallic foil cover . Two versions of the game were released in Europe : a standard edition , and a limited edition , which was only available online , and then only when pre @-@ ordered . This limited edition included special slipcase packaging and a book of promotional CG artwork entitled The Art of Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII . In Europe , a bundle containing the game and the limited edition Crisis Core @-@ engraved silver PlayStation Portable was released on June 20 . As with several games from the company , Square released an Ultimania guidebook in Japan , on October 18 , 2007 .

After Crisis Core 's release , Kitase expressed surprised at the quality of the cutscenes , to the point where he felt it could almost be a PlayStation 2 game . He also enjoyed the game 's ending , surprised by how moving Zack 's story became .

= = Reception = =

Crisis Core sold 350 @,@ 000 copies in Japan on its release date , including the 77 @,@ 777 Limited Edition PSP / Crisis Core bundles . In November 2007 , Square Enix announced that Crisis

Core was its best @-@ selling game across all regions from April through September , with 710 @,@ 000 copies sold in Japan . Selling 790 @,@ 705 units as of August 2008 , it became the third best @-@ selling game for the PSP in Japan . In March 2008 , Crisis Core sold 301 @,@ 600 copies in its first month of release in the United States , behind the sales of God of War : Chains of Olympus , which sold 340 @,@ 500 copies , making Crisis Core the second best @-@ selling game for the PSP during the month of March and the sixth best @-@ selling game overall . As of March 31 , 2009 , Square Enix announced that Crisis Core had sold 3 @.@ 1 million units worldwide , with 830 @,@ 000 of those sales coming from Japan . About 840 @,@ 000 units of the game , including 550 @,@ 000 in Europe , were sold during Square Enix 's 2009 fiscal year . In response to the game 's sales , Square Enix labeled Crisis Core their best PSP game of the year , calling it " an incredible success . " Doug Bone , Square Enix 's UK sales director , called it " the must @-@ have PSP game of 2008 . "

Crisis Core has received generally positive reviews . At Metacritic the score is that of 83 out of 100 . With individual scores of 9 / 9 / 8 / 9 , the game received an overall rating of 35 out of 40 from Japanese gaming magazine Famitsu . GameSpot awarded it an " Editor 's Choice " label , praising its storyline , the combat system and its presentation , and also stating that " Crisis Core is an exciting and poignant journey that every fan of role @-@ playing games should take . " IGN 's Ryan Clements praised its differences from other RPGs , due to its focus on Zack 's growth and his relationship with the SOLDIERs . He stated " Crisis Core is a great game and , barring a few minor issues here and there , will not disappoint . " It also received a place amongst the " Editor 's Choice " gallery of recommended games for the PSP platform . GameSpy also gave it a good review , stating it " is equal parts tribute and original , marrying classic design choices with refreshingly new techniques , harmoniously bringing together something old with something new . " Gamespy also commented that although some players may dislike Zack , " you 'll have to be pretty jaded for the character not to grow on you as you progress through the adventure . " VideoGamer.com gave an overall score of 9 , finding its fighting system " addictive " , and arguing that its CGI scenes had a similar quality to the ones from Final Fantasy VII : Advent Children . Similarly , GamePro gave it a positive review , calling it the " best looking PSP title , " and praising how it incorporated elements from the Compilation , and at the same time created new aspects . GamesRadar 's AJ Glasser stated that with the DMW system , the gameplay could be easy , causing the " rare gamer " to try to play it in Hard Mode . Glasser also found the game likeable enough so that even gamers who dislike the Final Fantasy VII series may enjoy it . Play 's Samuel Roberts called it the best game of 2008 .

Many reviews also commented on the game 's relationship with Final Fantasy VII . 1UP.com called it one of the best prequels of all time , arguing that it " does a better job of putting players in FFVII 's world than even the original game did . " While GameTrailers stated that Crisis Core " doesn 't take the easy way out and photocopy the source , " they found it , unlike Dirge of Cerberus , to be appealing . Computer and Video Games mentioned that despite the game 's main story only lasting 12 hours , the side @-@ quests helped expand the game 's length . They further praised the battle system , claiming " [it] never becomes tiresome , " and the fact that some of the weak points from Final Fantasy VII (" lengthy wandering , and an overlong center ") were not issues in this game .

The game did receive some negative reviews , however . Despite calling it the best Final Fantasy VII spin @-@ off , Eurogamer criticized that " for the twenty @-@ six , twenty @-@ eight , thirty @-@ year @-@ olds who it 's aimed at , the game has little to offer beyond polished sentimentality . " Although PALGN called the DMW system a " handy tool " , they also felt it was the game 's weakest point . X @-@ Play gave the game a 2 / 5 , complaining about the unskippable cutscenes , poor dialogue , repetitive gameplay , and a weak plot . On April Fools ' Day , in response to criticism for their original review , they " decided to give the game a second look and give it a re @-@ review , this time with a clear unbiased perspective , " sarcastically dubbing over the original and giving it an impossibly high 6 / 5 .

Crisis Core has also received a number of awards from different publications . It was nominated by GameSpot for the " Best of 2008 " awards , in the " Best Story " , " Best RPG Game " and " Best PSP Game " categories , winning " Best PSP Game " . It was also listed as the tenth best PSP game of all the time by IGN . Four IGN articles concerning the game were in " The Top 10 PSP

Stories of 2008 " , with the review article listed at number one . In IGN 's Best of 2008 , Crisis Core won in the categories " Best RPG " and " Best Story for the PSP " . Videogamer.com placed it fifteenth and fourth in their articles " Best Games of 2008 " and " Top 10 PlayStation exclusives of 2008 " , respectively . GamePro featured it as one of the five games PSP gamers should play , one of the 31 best PSP titles in 2009 , and as the seventh best video game prequel . It was also voted to third place in the Dengeki poll of most tear @-@ inducing games of all time . In 2011 , it was voted second place in the Famitsu readers ' poll on the same topic .