= Kingdom Hearts 3D : Dream Drop Distance =

 Kingdom Hearts 3D : Dream Drop Distance (????? ??? 3D [???? ???? ??????] , Kingudamu H?tsu Sur? D? [Dor?mu Doroppu Disutansu] , stylized Kingdom Hearts 3D [Dream Drop Distance]) is an action role @-@ playing game developed and published by Square Enix exclusively for the Nintendo 3DS , revealed at E3 2010 . The game is the seventh installment in the bestselling Kingdom Hearts series and was released in Japan on March 29 , 2012 . It was released outside Japan on July 20 , 2012 in Europe , July 26 , 2012 in Australia and July 31 , 2012 in North America .

 Taking place after the events of Kingdom Hearts Re : coded , the game focuses on Sora and Riku 's Mark of Mastery exam in which they have to protect parallel worlds in preparation for the return of Master Xehanort . Besides controlling the two playable characters across a single scenario , the player is able to recruit creatures known as Dream Eaters that are able to assist in fights .
 The Square Enix staff decided to develop Dream Drop Distance after being impressed by the quality of the Nintendo 3DS . Taking advantage of the console 's functions , they increased the action elements from the series based on the system previously seen in Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep . Additionally , both the gameplay and the plot are meant to give a glimpse about what the following title in the series , Kingdom Hearts III , will be like . The game has been well received in Japan and in the US , selling over 250 @,@ 000 and 180 @,@ 000 units on its debuts respectively .

 = = Gameplay = =

 The game , which largely follows the action RPG gameplay of previous games in the series , sees players alternate between the roles of Sora and Riku . Alternating between characters is done via the ' Drop ' system . During gameplay , a Drop Gauge gradually depletes over time , though it can be replenished with items . When the gauge completely empties , control will switch to the other character , though players may also opt to drop manually at any time . Drop Points , which are earned by defeating enemies and completing optional objectives , can be spent on bonuses that can be used until the next time the character drops , such as a slower Drop Gauge or increased attack or defense . The game reuses the Command Deck system from Birth by Sleep , in which players can customize a deck filled with various actions , spells , and items that can be quickly selected . There are also several new elements added to the gameplay . Flowmotion allows players to move quickly about by performing actions such as bouncing off walls , grinding on rails and spinning around poles . Reality Shift is a system the player can use on certain objects or weakened opponents involving a touch @-@ screen activated minigame unique to each world . These include dragging the screen to fling a target like a catapult , touching hidden words to take control of enemies , and playing a small rhythm @-@ based game to cause fireworks to appear .
 One of the key elements of Dream Drop Distance is the inclusion of the Dream Eaters . Whilst they generally serve as the main enemies of the game , up to three good Dream Eaters , known as Spirits , can be recruited per character to assist them in battle . Spirits can be created by combining Dream Fragments together with an item or spell , either via experimenting with combinations or using recipes found throughout the game . Characters can also link with Spirits to perform unique attacks . Along the way , the player can care for these Spirits by petting them , feeding them items , or playing mini @-@ games with them , which can unlock new abilities for the Spirits .
 The game takes place across multiple worlds based on Pinocchio , The Hunchback of Notre Dame , Tron : Legacy , Fantasia and The Three Musketeers , each having two different plots from the perspectives of Sora and Riku . These worlds need to be completed by both Sora and Riku in order to unlock new worlds and progress through the game . Upon visiting each world for the first time , each character must go through a Dive section , in which characters freefall down a tube and must clear a certain objective , such as obtaining a certain amount of points , defeating a certain amount of enemies in a time limit , or defeating a boss character . In this mode , Sora and Riku can attack opponents , slow down their descent , or dodge attacks . They can also pick up magic spells which

give them a limited supply of magical attacks to use against enemies .

 Outside of the main game , players can play an additional mode called Flick Rush , which can be played alone or with another player via wireless multiplayer . In this mode , players battle with a team of three Spirits and pit them against each other . Players fight against their opponent by flicking up cards from the touchscreen . Each card has a number value determining its attack strength , with multiple cards combining to increase the overall value . The player whose attack value is greater than their opponent 's gets to attack with their Spirit . A slowly replenishing meter determines how many cards the player can send out at a time , and each Spirit has a limited amount of cards that can be replenished by swapping them out with another Spirit . The first player to eliminate all of their opponent 's Spirits wins the game .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

 Dream Drop Distance features a total of seven playable worlds , most of them set in a " world submerged in sleep " , with all the Disney @-@ based worlds introduced being entirely new , (with the exception of Riku 's version of Pinocchio 's world , a.k.a Monstro) including : La Cité des Cloches from The Hunchback of Notre Dame ; The Grid from Tron : Legacy ; Prankster 's Paradise from Pinocchio ; Country of the Musketeers from Mickey , Donald , Goofy : The Three Musketeers ; and Symphony of Sorcery from Fantasia . The other two playable worlds are Traverse Town and The World That Never Was , while the worlds Twilight Town , Radiant Garden , Disney Castle , Mysterious Tower , Destiny Islands , and Castle Oblivion appear in cutscenes .

= = = Characters = = =

 The game features Sora and Riku as the two main characters of the game , taking part in a test to improve their skills with their weapon , the Keyblade . The two are depicted during gameplay as their younger selves shown in the original game while also being given new clothes ; their older selves from Kingdom Hearts II also appear during cutscenes , and Sora in this incarnation is briefly playable during the end credits . A younger incarnation of Xehanort , first introduced as the optional " Mysterious Figure " boss from the North American and European releases of Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep , returns and serves as the game 's primary antagonist together with his two revived alter @-@ egos , " Ansem " and Xemnas . Several former members of Xemnas ' Organization XIII , including Lea and some of Ansem the Wise 's apprentices , return after being restored to their human forms .

 Like previous games , Dream Drop Distance features various Disney characters , including Mickey Mouse , who is seen in the game in three different incarnations ? his original characterization in the Kingdom Hearts series as the king of Disney Castle ; a musketeer as featured in Mickey , Donald , Goofy : The Three Musketeers ; and the young apprentice of Yen Sid shown in Fantasia . Donald Duck and Goofy make similar appearances as well . Characters hailing from their respective worlds remain in their worlds and play a small role in the main story , while Maleficent and Pete reprise their roles as antagonists , and Yen Sid as a supporting character . Unlike the other major installments , which feature an extensive cast of Final Fantasy characters , only a single Moogle appears from the franchise . Dream Drop Distance features appearances of Neku Sakuraba , Joshua , Shiki , Beat and Rhyme from The World Ends with You , another game owned by Square Enix with characters designed by Tetsuya Nomura , marking the first time that non @-@ Disney , non @-@ Final Fantasy characters have appeared in the series .

 The game introduces a new type of creature called Dream Eaters , which come in two varieties ? " Nightmares " , which eat good dreams and create nightmares , and serve as enemies similar to the Heartless , Nobodies , and Unversed from previous games ; and " Spirits " , which eat nightmares and create good dreams , and also act as Sora and Riku 's party members .

= = = Story = = =

 Anticipating Master Xehanort 's return following the defeat of his Heartless Ansem and Nobody Xemnas , Yen Sid puts Sora and Riku through a Mark of Mastery exam to deem them Keyblade Masters and counter Xehanort . For the exam , they are sent to worlds that were restored at the end of Kingdom Hearts , albeit in a " sleeping " state disconnecting them from other worlds . These worlds , La Cité des Cloches from The Hunchback of Notre Dame ; The Grid from Tron : Legacy ; Prankster 's Paradise from Pinocchio ; Country of the Musketeers from Mickey , Donald , Goofy : The Three Musketeers ; and Symphony of Sorcery from Fantasia , are inhabited by Dream Eaters , creatures born from darkness that seek out the Keyholes of Sleep found there . Sora and Riku 's task is to reawaken the sleeping worlds by unlocking the seven Keyholes of Sleep , and then return to the realm of light ; they are advised to create benevolent " Spirit " Dream Eaters to guide them and battle the malevolent " Nightmare " Dream Eaters .

 Sora and Riku are separated at the start of the exam , and find themselves each in a separate version of the first sleeping world , Traverse Town , where they are able to influence one another 's journey , as evidenced by their interactions with Neku Sakuraba , Joshua , Shiki , Beat and Rhyme . Throughout the exam , Sora and Riku cross paths with a gray @-@ haired youth who is mysteriously accompanied by Xemnas and Ansem , respectively . The three issue warnings to Sora and Riku and play on their weaknesses , but the two ignore them and continue their test .

 Upon completing the exam , Sora mysteriously arrives in the World That Never Was instead of the realm of light . Sora re @-@ encounters the youth , who is revealed to be a version of Xehanort from the past sent to gather different versions of himself throughout time to serve as vessels for fragments of Xehanort 's heart . Although Sora defeats Xemnas , his heart is swallowed by darkness and encased in Ventus ' armor . Elsewhere , Ansem reveals that Riku has been traveling through Sora 's dreams as a Dream Eater . Riku defeats Ansem and enters the Castle That Never Was , where he defeats the young Xehanort . Afterward , Master Xehanort appears alongside eleven other incarnations of himself in a new Organization XIII and attempts to turn Sora into his final vessel , intending to pit his thirteen " seekers of darkness " against seven " guardians of light " in order to recreate the ? @-@ blade . He is foiled by Lea , the revived human form of the original Organization member , Axel , as well as Mickey , Donald Duck and Goofy . Master Xehanort and his vessels return to their respective time periods , but assures that they will clash when the time comes .

 Sora 's body is brought back to Yen Sid 's tower , where Riku enters Sora 's dreams and releases his heart from Ventus ' armor , which has been possessed by a Nightmare . Riku then arrives at a digital version of the Destiny Islands , where he meets a copy of Ansem the Wise . Ansem assures that Sora is now awake , and gives Riku his research data he had left in Sora 's heart to help Sora save those connected to his heart . Upon returning to the realm of light , Riku is declared a Keyblade Master by Yen Sid for braving the realm of sleep a second time to reawaken Sora . Lea then revealed that he 's now trained to be the Keyblade Wielder and suddenly wielded his own Keyblade , much to everyone 's surprise . Sora is undaunted by his failure , and returns to the sleeping worlds where he thanks his Spirit Dream Eater companions . Meanwhile , at Castle Oblivion , Ventus spreads a smile on his face in his comatose state , indicating Sora 's happiness .

 In the game 's secret ending , Yen Sid and Mickey discuss Xehanort 's plan . Yen Sid reveals his intent to gather seven Keyblade wielders strong enough to combat the new Organization XIII in order to prevent Xehanort from using the Princesses of Heart to forge the ? @-@ blade . To this end , he has Riku bring Kairi to be trained as a Keyblade wielder .

= = Development = =

 The game was created by the same development team that worked on Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep , then part of Square Enix 's 1st Production Department . Since it contained members who worked for The World Ends with You , the group decided to use characters from said game in replacement of Final Fantasy characters . The decision to make a Kingdom Hearts game for the

Nintendo 3DS was due to the positive impression the Square Enix staff had when viewing the console 's quality . The console inspired Nomura to make the Dive Mode function where the character moves to different worlds without the use of a vehicle , while the Flowmotion was thought prior to deciding which console use . The game 's title was used to reference its various themes , with " Dream " referencing the storyline , " Drop " for the gameplay style , and " Distance " referring to the main characters ' interaction , and , while unintentionally , the system 's autostereoscopic 3D effect . Although Tetsuya Nomura admitted the English used was not grammatically correct , the team still decided to use it based on the way it sounded . Development was notably shorter than the ones from previous Kingdom Hearts games . However , co @-@ director Tai Yasue emphasized how the finished product resembled Kingdom Hearts II and Birth by Sleep but improved .

The team wished for the game to have more action than the previous games . Nomura noted the similarities with Final Fantasy Versus XIII as a result of their similar styles . The new maneuvers employed in Dream Drop Distance are also meant to give a glimpse about how the next game in the series , Kingdom Hearts III , would look like . New worlds were included in the game as a result of multiple requests by fans . The switches between player characters Sora and Riku across the game are meant to contrast the style from Kingdom Hearts Birth By Sleep , which allowed the player to use three characters in their own campaigns , as well as explain the word " Distance " in the title because the two characters never interact across their stories . The Free Flow system was made using data from Birth by Sleep , which took nearly two weeks to obtain a form similar to the one from the game . The game originally intended to use returning Heartless and Nobodies as generic enemies . However , the setting gave the staff the idea of introducing new creatures , Dream Eaters , who would also join the player in fights . They were also inspired in part by Nintendogs + Cats ? Nomura wished that his virtual dog could battle with other pets met through Streetpass and created the Dream Eaters based on this concept . They are used in the mini @-@ game Flick Rush which originally intended to allow players to use a picture . Nomura did not approve of this idea .

With Kingdom Hearts Re : coded , the staff revealed that Dream Drop Distance would revolve around Sora 's and Riku 's " Mark of Mastery " exam , but were worried about how to set it . The idea of Sora going through a dream was inspired by the subtitle of Kingdom Hearts : Birth by Sleep and served as a basis for the game . Sora and Riku were chosen as the playable characters in anticipation for the franchise 's ending of the " Xehanort arc " as well as to represent the theme of " the light and the dark sides of hearts " which the two characters represent . The former 's inclusion was also done due to the character 's popularity in Japan . Nomura has stated that the themes of the game are trust and friendship , and that like Birth by Sleep , the story is on par with that of a numbered title . As a result of the game 's plot , both Sora and Riku appear in their younger forms from the first Kingdom Hearts game . However , to avoid misconceptions that Dream Drop Distance was a remake of the original game , Nomura decided to change Sora 's and Riku 's outfits for most of the game . Despite using two protagonists , the game primarily focuses on Riku 's growth across the series . When starting production , the staff had decided to make the story as complex as possible , leading to the inclusion of several cutscenes which can be viewed by the player anytime they want . In order to make it more accessible , scenario writer Masaru Oka was in charge of the Chronicles feature , which explains events from previous games . The game 's story is also meant to connect directly with Kingdom Hearts III , although its original ending was not approved by the staff and was scrapped . Like previous titles , Dream Drop Distance has a secret ending that connects to Kingdom Hearts III although the staff found it unconventional in comparison to previous ones .

= = = Promotion and release = = =

The game was announced at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2010 as " Kingdom Hearts 3D Demo " for the Nintendo 3DS . It was formally unveiled though at the Square Enix 1st Production Department Premier event at the Toho Cinemas in Tokyo , Japan on January 18 , 2011 with its first trailer along with its official name . During the game 's development , Nomura emphasized the mystery element of the story and confirmed that the theme of the game is trust . In July 2011 , a Famitsu article included an interview with Nomura in which he revealed that the game would have

an unlockable secret movie . A playable demo released the same month also first featured the Dream Eaters as the player characters ' partners and the game 's generic enemy . A Dengeki issue featured another interview with Nomura , where he confirmed that he would be considering what he called an " HD Technical Test " in order to commemorate the series ' tenth anniversary and to entice new players to the series . This occurred on March 3 , 2012 in the form of a premiere event where footage from the game , including its full CGI introduction sequence , was showcased to celebrate the game 's release .

The game was first released in Japan on March 29 , 2012 , and in North American and Europe on July 31 , 2012 and July 20 , 2012 , respectively . In Australia , it was released on July 26 , 2012 . A limited edition titled " Mark of Mastery " was also released in North America featuring twelve art cards , AR cards able to unlock new Dream Eaters , and a protector case for the 3DS console . While this has been noted to be the shortest gaps between the Japanese and English releases in the Kingdom Hearts , the latter version does not include new features not seen in the former . However , the Mark of Mastery limited edition was made so that English gamers would be able to obtain bonus material that can only be obtained in Japan . The game is also included within the " Kingdom Hearts 10th Anniversary Box " package made in commemoration of the franchise 's 10th anniversary . The box also includes the Nintendo DS games Kingdom Hearts 358 / 2 Days and Kingdom Hearts Re : coded . Unlike Kingdom Hearts , Kingdom Hearts II and Birth by Sleep , there will not be an updated version of the game according to Tetsuya Nomura .

A guidebook , Kingdom Hearts 3D : Dream Drop Distance Ultimania (????? ??? 3D [???? ???? ??????] ???????) , was published in Japan on May 1 , 2012 . Square Enix also published a light novel by Tomoko Kanemaki based on the game on June 28 , 2012 under the title of " Side Sora " . The second volume , titled " Side Riku " , was released in Japan on September 27 , 2012 .

A HD remaster of the game for PlayStation 4 was announced in September 2015 at Tokyo Game Show to be part of the upcoming compilation Kingdom Hearts HD 2 @.@ 8 Final Chapter Prologue and will be renamed in the compilation as Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance HD .

= = = Music = = =

Unlike the previous games , the music for Kingdom Hearts 3D : Dream Drop Distance was a collaboration by Yoko Shimomura , Takeharu Ishimoto , and Tsuyoshi Sekito , containing musical compositions from all three . Among the songs included are tracks from The World Ends with You , originally composed by Ishimoto , who remixed them for Dream Drop Distance . Orchestral arrangements were provided by Kaoru Wada . The Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Original Soundtrack was released in Japan on April 18 , 2012 .

= = Reception = =

The Tokyo Game Show featured a playable demo which earned the game top honors as " Best 3DS RPG " in RPG Land 's Tokyo Game Show Awards , following a hands @-@ on report that praised the boss fights . RPG Site also praised the game upon its first impression , calling the demo " refreshing " . Reception to the game 's released trailers , demos and general information was generally positive , and the game ranked among Famitsu 's 25 " most wanted " list in October 2011 . The Official Nintendo Magazine listed it eighth in their " Games of 2012 " feature . In an IGN poll , it ranked as the most expected Nintendo 3DS game for 2012 's summer . It also won the " Most Valuable Game Award " from the Nintendo Power magazine .

In its first review , Famitsu gave Dream Drop Distance a rating of 10 / 9 / 10 / 9 , or a total of 38 / 40 , in their March 22 , 2012 issue , which made Dream Drop Distance the second highest rated game in the series for them , after Kingdom Hearts II . The game debuted at the top of Media Create 's sales charts , selling 213 @,@ 579 copies during its first week . The release was also noted to have helped boost the sales of the Nintendo 3DS console . Although the amount of pre @-@ orders surpassed that of Kingdom Hearts 358 / 2 Days for the Nintendo DS , the first week 's sales were lower . Nevertheless , Media Create noted that this was due to the comparison between the amount

of units sold between the Nintendo DS and the Nintendo 3DS during the time the games were released , with the former having sold more copies than the latter . The game continued to appear in Media Create 's polls for the next several weeks , selling a total of 311 @,@ 688 units as of May 2012 . In North America , the game sold 200 @,@ 000 units during August 2012 , with 180 @,@ 000 regular editions and 20 @,@ 000 Mark of Mastery editions .

 English publications have given Kingdom Hearts 3D moderately positive reviews , with lower scores than Japanese review outlets , generally praising the gameplay while criticizing the plot . It received an aggregated score of 78 @.@ 70 % on GameRankings and 75 / 100 on Metacritic . Game Informer writer Bryan Vore praised the new gameplay elements and , unlike other reviewers , how well the story handles the franchise 's plot , especially as it was set after that of Kingdom Hearts II , unlike many of the other newer titles in the series . Audrey Drake from IGN echoed similar comments about the gameplay , but felt that the story was sometimes not very interesting . Mark Walton from GameSpot praised the combat systems and environment design , though he wished that the game didn 't force the player through the levels linearly and dismissed the plot as " labyrinth @-@ like " with poor dialogue and confusing motivations . Bob Mackey of 1UP.com was harsher on the game than other reviewers ; while he too found the plot incomprehensible , he also felt that the numerous game mechanics combined together to form a confusing and frustrating system . The reviewer for GameTrailers had a different take , finding the combination of mechanics to form " the best battle system in the series to date " and was not a dismissive of the plot , though they did note that it required a lot of knowledge of previous games in the series to follow . Leah Jackson of G4 had one of the highest reviews for the game out of the major English review outlets ; though she had similar praises and criticisms as other reviewers , she felt that the gameplay and graphics more than made up for the sometimes confusing plot .

= = HD 2 @.@ 8 Final Chapter Prologue = =

 In the credits of Kingdom Hearts HD 2 @.@ 5 Remix , clips of Dream Drop Distance were shown as well as the inclusion of a secret ending related to the game , hinting at a possible additional collection . In September 2015 , Square Enix announced Kingdom Hearts HD 2 @.@ 8 Final Chapter Prologue . The collection features an HD remaster of Dream Drop Distance as well as Kingdom Hearts ? Back Cover , set to tell the tale of the Foretellers and revealing new parts of the series ' history in HD cinematics , and Kingdom Hearts 0 @.@ 2 : Birth by Sleep ? A Fragmentary Passage , a new part of the story taking place after the events of the original Birth by Sleep , told from the perspective of Aqua . It will be released worldwide in December 2016 .