

= Tales of Vesperia : The First Strike =

Tales of Vesperia : The First Strike (Japanese : ????? ???? The First Strike ? , Hepburn : Teiruzu Obu Vesuperia ~ The First Strike ~) is a 2009 Japanese animated film by Production I.G. It is directed by Kenta Kamei and written by Reiko Yoshida , featuring the voice talents of K?suke Toriumi , Mamoru Miyano , Mai Nakahara , Rika Morinaga , and Eiji Takemoto . The film is the prequel to the Namco Tales Studio 's role @-@ playing game Tales of Vesperia and the first animated feature film in the Tales series . Tales of Vesperia : The First Strike revolves around the two knights , Yuri Lowell and Flynn Scifo , from the Niren Corps as they protect a town from monsters with their allies .

The project was led by Kenta Kamei who previously worked on the animated cutscenes from the Tales games . He expressed pressure due to First Strike being his debut as a director and also elaborated on how difficult was creating the storyboard . Yoshida was given the role of screenwriter in order to appeal to the female fanbase the series has always had . It was released in Japan on October 3 , 2009 , as a result of delays in production . Kadokawa Pictures distributed the film . It was released in North America on June 26 , 2012 , by Funimation Entertainment and in the United Kingdom on December 3 , 2012 , on DVD and Blu @-@ ray by U.K. Anime Industry .

The film grossed a total of US \$ 941 @,@ 610 in Japan . Its home media release had positive sales in Japan , with the Blu @-@ ray being one of the bestselling from the year it was released . Critical reception of the film has been generally positive for its accessibility to the non @-@ gamers of Tales of Vesperia as well as the appeal of the main cast and the production value . Nevertheless , it has also attracted criticism for its slow pace .

= = Plot = =

Using the power of a powerful substance known as aer , mankind is in an age of discovery and prosperity . The crystallized form of aer , which is known as Apatheia , is considered to be a very powerful energy source as it is essential to human life . To protect towns from attacks by monsters , large amounts of Apatheia are being produced to create barriers around towns . One day , in a forest near the town of Shizontania , Yuri Lowell and Flynn Scifo , two knights who have just joined the Niren Corps , together with two of their senior knights and fellow Corps members , Hisca and Chastel , are sent on a mission to investigate an abnormal gushing of aer in the area .

After their first assignment to help in destroying a monster infestation near the town , Yuri , Flynn , Hisca , and Chastel meet the leader of the local guild , Melzome Kaid . Niren , the captain of the knights stationed in Shizontania , was once dedicated to following the letter of the rules and regulation of the knights . However , he attributes the death of his wife and daughter to this trait , saying that if he had defied orders , he may have been able to protect them . The knights ' efforts to repel the monsters around the area prove to be in vain . Despite being called by Commandant Alexei to attend a formal gathering at the imperial capital of Zaphias , Niren sends Flynn in his stead to attend the gathering and to request aid in defending the town . Niren and Chastel leave in search of a " strange blastia expert " named Rita Mordio . Yuri and Hisca are left to care for Lambert , Niren 's personal hound , and Repede , Lambert 's son . Niren succeeds in finding Rita Mordio and obtaining a device with which to return the aer to normal . Flynn is admonished by Commandant Alexei , and his request for reinforcements to hold Shizontania is denied until the end of the gathering . Yuri and Hisca assist in defending the town against a strange monster made out of aer , and while they successfully repel the invasion , the monster takes control of Lambert along with two other wardogs . As Lambert rages out of control , Yuri is forced to kill him to protect Hisca .

When Flynn returns from Zaphias , he and Yuri come to blows , as each believes the other had an effortless assignment . Meanwhile , a platoon of high @-@ ranking knights from central are seen in the forest being slaughtered by monsters . One survives and flees to Shizontonia 's front gate , where he delivers a report to an unseen individual in the city . Niren , upon receiving the news that reinforcements would not be arriving anytime soon , decides to take the knights to investigate the source of the aer , which he believes to be a fortress at the center of a nearby lake . Flynn disagrees

with Niren 's decision , viewing it as disobedience of a direct order .

Garista , the strategist for the Niren Corps , attempts to dissuade Niren but to no avail . The investigation in the fortress turns out to be more dangerous as the aer begins to turn the fortress into a living weapon to attack the knights . The knights make their way into the center of the fortress , where a giant blastia is found to be using the aer . Niren uses the device given by Rita to stifle the gushing of aer , but a backlash is caused by the sudden ceasing of aer flow , and the blastia explodes , destroying the barrier blastia that keeps Shizontonia safe , knocking out Chastel , and causing the fortress to begin to crumble . As Niren attempts to carry Chastel to safety , the floor beneath him crumbles . Niren is able to throw Chastel to Yuri and is stranded in a sinkhole of gushing aer . Despite Yuri 's attempts to save him , due to a wound he received during the investigation , Niren is unable to pull himself to safety . Leaving his blastia with Yuri , Niren has the knights leave without him .

The knights and the entire town mourn over Niren 's death . Flynn realizes that the blastia used in the fortress where the aer abnormality originated , along with the piece he spotted on the floor , were a specialized type used only by Garista . Yuri and Flynn confront Garista with this information , and Garista reveals that he was attempting to illegally create a new kind of blastia , but failed and decided to leave the blastia to destroy itself , therefore destroying Shizontonia and killing any and all witnesses . Yuri and Flynn attempt to arrest Garista , but a fight ensues and Yuri kills him . In the aftermath , Shizontonia is evacuated due to the failure of the barrier blastia . Yuri leaves the knights , taking Niren 's blastia as a keepsake and bringing Repede along with him , saying his goodbyes to everyone in the town . Flynn sees him off at the gates , and the two share a fond farewell , swearing to meet again one day .

= = Characters = =

Yuri Lowell

He is one of the main protagonists of the story . Yuri was born and raised in the Lower Quarter of the Imperial Capital , Zaphias . He joined the Imperial Knights because like Flynn , he wanted to change the imperial law and justice . He was voiced by Kosuke Toriumi in Japanese and Troy Baker in English .

Flynn Scifo

He is also one of the main protagonists of the story . Flynn is a childhood friend of Yuri 's , as well as a friend to Estelle . He joined the Imperial Knights in order to uphold law and justice . The two were once childhood friends , brought up in the lower parts of the Empire . He was voiced by Mamoru Miyano in Japanese and Sam Riegel in English .

Niren Fedrok

He is the commanding officer of the Niren Corps . Although he has the aura of a commanding officer , he also exudes that of a friendly middle @-@ aged man . Both Yuri and Flynn are under his command . Niren was voiced by Takashi Taniguchi in Japanese and Christopher Sabat in English .

Hisca Aiheap

She is a female knight who belongs to the Niren Corps , together with her twin sister , Chastel . She is a knight senior to Yuri and Flynn and is the little sister of the twins . She was earlier seen in the first few character arts released for the movie . She was voiced by Arisa Ogasawara in Japanese and Trina Nishimura in English .

Chastel Aiheap

She is also a female knight like her twin sister , Hisca , in the Niren Corps . She was voiced by Fumie Mizusawa in Japanese and Leah Clark in English .

Garista Luodur

He is the strategist of the Niren Corps ; he often showcases his wisdom in military affairs and especially excels those of others . He is later revealed to be the movie 's main antagonist . He was voiced by Mitsuru Miyamoto in Japanese and J. Michael Tatum in English .

Yurgis

He is the vice captain of the Niren Corps , second in command to Niren .

Lambert

He is the official wardog of the Niren Corps and is also Repede 's sire .

Repede

He is a puppy who acts as the mascot for the Niren Corps and is always carrying something in his mouth .

= = Development = =

Tales of Vesperia : The First Strike was officially announced in early 2009 with the staff confirming the return of Kousuke Toriumi and Mamoru Miyano as the protagonists . Production of the movie started when Tales of Vesperia was still in plot stage . The team discarded the idea of making an adaptation of the game due to its large length . The team was also against making a sequel or a sidestory due to the required time @-@ consuming character introductions that would make it required to play the game to enjoy . Director Kenta Kamei wanted a movie that anybody would enjoy . As a result , it was decided to make it a prequel as they could explore Yuri and Flynn 's background . Kamei was originally involved in the movie parts of the Tales series . When he was assigned as the movie 's director , he recalls feeling " honoured , surprised and a bit nervous at the same time " .

The First Strike was Kamei 's first movie , and he wanted to rely on an experienced screenwriter . He eventually requested Reiko Yoshida 's help as the Tales series had a strong female fanbase and thus needed " feminine sensitiveness " in designing the script . The film uses 2D and computer @-@ generated animation . The director was demanding with the 3DCG director , and he relied on a very skilled team . He started from the director of photography , Kazuhiro Yamada , who he personally insisted to join the production . Kamei elaborated on how blending hand @-@ drawn animation and CGI was one of the most difficult and time @-@ consuming tasks . As a result , especially in the opening scene , the film had hand @-@ drawn characters running on a 3D background . It took a while before he could get the result he was aiming for . The plot took two years and a half to produce . Originally , there were plans to release the movie before the game , but a delay in the schedule resulted in Vesperia being released first . Kamei believes that this was due to how demanding he was .

Much of the plot was affected by Yuri and Flynn 's youth . Niren Fedrok was created to serve as a mentor figure as well as the possible future of the two 's careers . Since Yuri was surer of his interest , the coming @-@ of @-@ age story was more focused on Flynn . This is meant to act as a counterpart to the video game , where not much of Flynn 's past and his weaknesses are exposed . The friendship between Yuri and Flynn was seen as " priceless " by Kamei due to the mutual respect they share as well as the occasion each gets angry .

The storyboard took six months to complete . Kamei struggled with several difficulties as he was under pressure due to how it would influence the entire film . The climax of the film also proved difficult to make . He also noted how the first scene had the challenge of attracting the audience 's attention . Kamei 's favorite scene is when Yuri looks up at the sky of Shizontania the night before the knights ' expedition to the old ruins . It meant to emphasize the importance of Yuri 's decision in regards to his future .

= = = Music = = =

The music of the film was composed by Akira Senju . According to Elliot Gay from Japanator Senju " brings an orchestral sound that really elevates the film in a way that veteran Tales series composer Motoi Sakuraba seems to struggle with these day " . The source game 's theme song , " Ring a Bell " (?????? , Kane o Narashite) by Bonnie Pink , was reused as the movie 's theme song . A 27 @-@ track original soundtrack , Tales of Vesperia The First Strike Original Soundtrack (???? ? ? ?????? ? The First Strike ? ?????? ? ?????????) , was released by Lantis on October 21 , 2009 .

= = Release = =

On October 3, 2009, *Tales of Vesperia: The First Strike* debuted in Japan's box office in seventh place with US \$ 230 @, @ 917. It grossed a total of US \$ 941 @, @ 610 in Japan and US \$ 4 @, @ 351 in Taiwan for a total of US \$ 945 @, @ 961. It was released on home media on May 28, 2010, in Japan. It was released on three different formats: DVD, Blu-ray Disc, and Universal Media Disc. In its first week of release, the DVD sold 14 @, @ 314 units, while the Blu-ray ranked second in the charts. In 2010, the Blu-ray sold a total of 36 @, @ 059 units.

Funimation Entertainment announced in April 2011 that they would release the movie in 2012 on Blu-ray and DVD in North America. The movie was released on June 26, 2012. In June 2011, Madman Entertainment announced they also licensed the film for an Australian release. In the United Kingdom, the film was released in December 2012 by U.K. Anime Industry. The film debuted in the sixth International Animation Film Festival of Cordoba feature film competition section.

== Critical reaction ==

Critical reception to the film has generally been positive. Rebecca Silverman of Anime News Network gave the film a positive review. Despite criticizing the film's pace, she said that "It may still appeal primarily to fans of the game, but for those who enjoy a heroic fantasy tale, this is one worth checking out." Elliot Gay from Japanator praised the development of its cast and agreed with Frith in regards to the film's accessibility. He gave the film a "Great" 8 out of 10 calling it "A well executed film that defines its genre without resorting to cliches". John Rose from the Fandom Post praised both Yuri and Flynn's characters as "neither character is simply some cardboard cutout incapable of growth or prevented from having another aspect to their personality and it is in these moments where the characters are able to show off their differences and complexities that the two really shine." He also called the film "a fantastically animated feature that may also be one of the best adaptations of an RPG world that has been created in a different medium". Carly Frith from EGMNow gave it a 9 out of 10 praising its accessibility and the work from the English voice cast. He said "The story is good and absorbing with only a few times when it feels like it's tripping up" criticizing some aspects that felt poorly translated from the video game.

The film also attracted criticism. UK Anime Network's Andy Hanley stated "It has potential in its characters and concept, but does very little with them over the course of this film to make for a disappointingly mediocre movie." Similar to Silverman, Jeffrey Kauffman from Blu-ray.com noted that the film had a slow pace in developing Yuri and Flynn's relationship. He gave high praise to the animation used in the story. He criticized its supporting cast as he believes "Tales of Vesperia: The First Strike is a standalone offering, or at least one that might have done better had it focused solely on Yuri and Flynn and left the rest of the 'cast of thousands' far in the background." Gay was saddened by the lack of appearances from the side characters such as Siren, Hisca, and Chastel.

The production value has been met with positive critical response. Silverman praised the film's animation, stating that "the movie is gorgeous, and not just for theatrical animation." Silverman also praised the cast, most notably Yuri's voice actors. EGMnow also gave high praise to the animation calling it "beautiful and rich" and said "It is top @-@ of @-@ the @-@ line in artwork, artistic style and coloring. The action sequences, though reminiscent of the game, are not repetitive nor silly. This is a very serious movie and it was treated as such." The Fandom Post agreed saying "the feature has some absolutely stunning visuals which create lush and vibrant environments for the characters to live in which adds a wonderful polish to the work." Similar praise was given by Jeffrey Kauffman from Blu-ray.com. Andy Hanley praised the distinctive character designs despite criticizing some aspects from the fight scenes.