

= Secret of Evermore =

Secret of Evermore is a role @-@ playing video game for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System . It was released by Square in North America on October 1 , 1995 . In February 1996 , it saw release in the PAL territories of Europe and Australia . A Japanese release was planned to follow the North American release by a few months , but was ultimately cancelled .

The story of Secret of Evermore follows a boy and his pet dog as they are inadvertently transported to a fantasy world created by an eccentric inventor . The player guides both the boy and his shapeshifting dog through Evermore , a world that is composed of separate realms , each resembling a different period of real @-@ world history . The gameplay shares many similarities with Secret of Mana , such as real @-@ time battles , a ring @-@ shaped menu system , and the ability to switch control between the two characters . Despite similar game mechanics and a similar title , it is not an entry in the Mana series .

Secret of Evermore is unique in that it is the only game developed by Square designers in North America . The game received positive reviews upon its release due to its graphics and gameplay , but was criticized for not being up to the standards of what many reviewers were used to by its developer .

= = Gameplay = =

Secret of Evermore takes many of its interface and gameplay aspects from Secret of Mana . The game mostly consists of an aerial view setting , in which the boy and his dog negotiate the terrain and fend off hostile creatures . If the boy is currently selected as the player character , his dog will be controlled by the artificial intelligence , and vice versa . Both characters can find refuge in caves or a town , where they can regain their hit points or purchase restorative items and equipment . Upon collecting enough experience points in battle , either character can increase in level with improved stats such as strength and evasion . Options including changing equipment , casting alchemy spells , or checking status can be quickly performed by rotating through the game 's Action Ring system . Combat takes place in real @-@ time . Located below the players hit points is a percentage gauge that determines the amount of damage done to an enemy , as well as how far the player can run . Swinging a weapon or running causes the gauge to fall to 0 % and then quickly recharges , allowing the character to attack at full strength or to run at full sprint once it is full . The gauge may also fill up to allowing the player to use charged attacks with equipped weapons .

The protagonist wields four different styles of weapons throughout the game : sword , spear , axe , and bazooka . Almost all swords , axes , and spears have four versions , and repeated use of them can increase their skill levels to a maximum of three , unlocking a new charged attack with each level . The range and power of each type of weapon increased the more it is used ; for instance , spears at a high enough level may be thrown at an enemy across the screen , while the swords and axes can cut swathes of destruction around the boy 's vicinity . With the exception of the Bone Crusher , all swords , axes , and spears can cut through vegetation ; some weapons are required to break rocks and other barriers .

In each of the four worlds of Secret of Evermore , the in @-@ game currency will change . The shopkeepers in Prehistoria exchange talons ; in Antiqua , gemstones ; in Gothica , gold coins ; and in Omnitopia , credits . There are individuals in each region who offer to convert the player 's money to the local currency . In either of the game 's two marketplaces (located in Antiqua and Gothica , respectively) , the storekeepers offer to trade in goods instead of money . Certain goods , such as rice , spices , and tapestries , can be bought using the local currency , but others must be exchanged for other goods . Most vendors only specialize in one type of good , and some rare items require an extensive amount of trading to obtain .

= = = Alchemy = = =

A unique element to Secret of Evermore is its system of magic . In order to cast magic , the boy

must be given an " Alchemic Formula " by one of many non @-@ playable characters called " Alchemists " . Some Alchemists make their home in out @-@ of @-@ the @-@ way areas and will dispense rare formulas if the player manages to seek them out . Unlike some role @-@ playing games , there are no magic points needed to cast spells . Alchemy Formulas require pairs of ingredients in order to be used ; Some are available throughout the game , and others are only native to certain environments . In the primitive realms , ingredients appear as such items as wax , limestone , clay , and gunpowder . In the advanced realms , however , the ingredients become more complex , such as ethanol and dry ice .

A secondary function of the dog is to " sniff out " ingredients by putting his nose to the ground and smelling for items . The player can command the dog to search the ground at any time , including in huts and cities . If all goes well , the dog will lead his human companion to a certain spot on the map , where the player can uncover the unseen ingredients . With repeated use , Alchemy Formulas will increase in level , enhancing their curative , offensive , or support effectiveness . Although there are dozens of Formulas available to be found within the game , only nine can be equipped at a time . To overcome this , there are several Alchemists scattered throughout the game who offer to manage the boy 's current Alchemy list ; any formula that has already been learned can be stored by the Alchemist for later use .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

The plot revolves around a teenage boy and his dog , to whom the player must assign names . Most of the game takes place in the fictional world of Evermore . The player explores four main areas within this world , corresponding to different historical eras : Prehistoria contains cavemen and dinosaurs ; Antiqua boasts a Colosseum and pyramid theme ; Gothica contains medieval castles and is populated by dragons ; and Omnitopia is a futuristic space station .

Throughout their travels , the boy , at the company of his dog , often quotes or mentions fictional B movies that relate to their current situation . For example , he compares himself to " Dandy " Don Carlisle in the film Sink , Boat , Sink after washing ashore at Crustacia . (For legal reasons , all references to movies and actors were fictional .) In addition , the dog 's body transforms based on the theme of the area that players are in . In the world of Prehistoria , the dog is transformed into a feral wolf , in the Antiqua region he becomes a greyhound , in Gothica he takes the form of a fancy poodle , and in Omnitopia he becomes a robotic toaster @-@ dog capable of shooting lasers .

= = = Story = = =

The story of Secret of Evermore begins with a black and white flashback to 1965 , in a small town called Podunk , USA . In a laboratory situated on the roof of a mansion , a malfunction occurs which floods the area with white flash of light . Thirty years later , the game 's young protagonist is leaving a theater when his pet dog chases after a cat in the street . The boy hurriedly follows after him , eventually reaching a large , abandoned mansion . He discovers the hidden laboratory with a large machine built in the center . When the dog begins to chew on some wires , the pair find themselves transported to the surreal world of Evermore , beginning in the space station Omnitopia . A butler dressed in a white tuxedo greets the boy when he appears , only to lock him in a room with several attack robots . The boy manages to escape in a shuttle pod , where he finds his dog holed up in the cockpit .

The shuttle crash @-@ lands in a dense jungle on top of a plateau . When the boy emerges , he finds a ferocious @-@ looking beast has replaced his dog . He decides to perform a test to see if the wolf and his pet dog are one and the same ; he tosses a stick for the wolf to fetch , only to receive a giant bone instead . The boy shrugs this off and assumes that it is the same dog .

In each of the four realms , the boy encounters a citizen of Podunk involved in the original

experiment gone awry 30 years ago . Professor Sidney Ruffleberg and his three companions were transported to Evermore , but are unable to leave . The boy quickly learns that the regions are manifestations of those citizens ' personal utopias . Each of the three companions act as the ruler of his or her world : Elizabeth , the Professor 's niece , is the tribal chief of Prehistoria ; Horace Highwater , curator of the Podunk Museum , oversees Antiqua ; Camellia Bluegarden , a portly librarian , is the Queen of Gothica ; and Professor Ruffleberg monitors everything from Omnitopia , with his android butler , Carltron , alongside him . Within Prehistoria , Antiqua , and Gothica , the boy and his canine companion aid Elizabeth , Horace , and Camellia in thwarting attempts by robotic clones of the Podunk citizens from ruling their respective areas .

The duo finally returns to Omnitopia and finds Ruffleberg , who explains everything . He and his butler Carltron once engaged in chess matches . Ruffleberg outfitted him with an intelligence chip to make him a more challenging opponent , but the upgrade backfired by making Carltron more malevolent . He sabotaged the transporter to Evermore and designed the hostile beasts roaming the game . With Ruffleberg 's help , the boy and his canine companion break into Carltron 's room . The area is guarded by android clones of the boy and his dog , along with a giant mecha version of Carltron . At the last moment , Ruffleberg appears and deactivates Carltron , who promptly freezes in place .

With Carltron 's defeat , the monsters plaguing Evermore disappear , but the world itself grows unstable . The boy returns to each of the worlds to collect Ruffleberg 's companions , taking them back to the real world . In doing so , Evermore 's destruction is averted and it continues to exist without them . After the credits roll , a final scene shows Professor Ruffleberg returning Carltron to his old task of cleaning the lab . Carltron grins and rubs his hands together , implying that he is not as docile as the professor believes .

= = Development = =

Development on Secret of Evermore began in early 1994 at Square Soft , the Redmond , Washington office of the Japanese parent company Square . The concept of a boy traveling with his dog through a world based on cheesy B movies was dictated from overseas , whereupon Square Soft began work on the detailed storyline . This resulted in popular culture references and dialog that are distinctly American for a mainstream console RPG . The game 's associate producer and writer , George Sinfield , decided that making such references would be familiar to American players . The working title for the game was " Vex and the Mezmers . " Producer Alan Weiss originally had the concept of a group of magic users who " could tell dream stories and transport the listeners into the experience , virtually . During one of these storytelling sessions , Vex got trapped in one of these worlds and started to corrupt the dreams . The game was going to be about finding Vex and defeating him . " But when George Sinfield asked the name be changed , the studio had a naming competition which resulted in Secret of Evermore .

Many of Secret of Evermore 's elements were copied from Secret of Mana because they had been proven to be effective . The size of the game was an early issue . It was decided that the game would be single @-@ player to preserve memory because it was originally planned to be only 12 @-@ megabits . However , the game would double to 24 @-@ megabits near the end of development . Various pieces of concept art were designed by Daniel Docu . Using computer software , including SGI Indy II and Alias workstations , the game 's artwork and design were mapped out by three animators , four background artists , and a 3D rendering artist . It was put together using the company 's SAGE (Square 's Amazing Graphical Editor) program , led by programmer Brian Fehdrau . Rather than having to hand off their work to the programmers , the artists and designers were able to test their ideas directly using the SAGE program . Using another company program , SIGIL (Square Interpreted Game Intelligence Language) , Secret of Evermore was made into a final product . One of the worlds that was cut was called Romancia " where ' everything is all flowers and sweet stuff , excessively so . ' It was pink and purple . "

There is a persistent misconception that the game is , or was released in lieu of , a follow @-@ up to Secret of Mana . Other Square titles such as Final Fantasy VI and Chrono Trigger were being

localized simultaneously with the production of Secret of Evermore . Fehdrau explained in an interview that Secret of Evermore was not created in place of Seiken Densetsu 3 and that the team that developed Secret of Evermore was assembled from newly hired staff , and would otherwise never have been assembled . Several of the team members joined Humongous Entertainment , which spawned Cavedog Entertainment , while the rest of the team spread to other Seattle @-@ area game studios like Electronic Arts , Boss Game Studios , Microsoft Game Studios , and Gas Powered Games , among others .

Secret of Evermore was released on October 1 , 1995 , in North America . In 1996 , it was translated into German , French and Spanish for the non @-@ English @-@ speaking market in some PAL territories , including Australia and New Zealand . Some PAL versions were packaged in a large box and included a strategy guide .

== Music ==

The score for Secret of Evermore was composed and produced by Jeremy Soule as his first video game project . While still in high school , Soule was a large fan of video games and he felt that the scores in most games " lacked drama and intensity . " After completing high school , Soule created an experimental demo showcasing what he felt video game scores should sound like . Soule was hired by Square Soft after reviewing the demo and was promptly given the task to score Secret of Evermore . The score is described by Soule as a mix of ambient sounds and low @-@ key music . The soundtrack was released on a CD containing 29 tracks , the first eight of which are arranged versions of the original sound . The disc was published by Square and was only initially available to those who pre @-@ ordered Secret of Evermore .

== Reception ==

Secret of Evermore received positive reviews from most media outlets . Most publications praised its graphics . For instance , RPGFan called the game a " wonderful visual experience , " applauding its use of color , animation , and background . Zachary Lewis of RPGamer noted that the locales found in Secret of Evermore were detailed in a much more realistic way than other games of the genre . GamePro was complimentary of its American art @-@ style , but longed for the Japanese art found in other Square titles . Another highlight for many critics was gameplay , particularly aspects also found in Secret of Mana such as the ring menu .

Reviewers were more critical concerning the game 's sound . Although the musical score was appreciated for its overall quality , both RPGFan and RPGamer found that there were too few adequately long tracks , with mediocre ambient sound effects to fill the dead time . Critics were mixed on the issue of Secret of Evermore being the first game developed by Square in the United States . Super Play found that the game was not up to the standards held by other Square games . Others noted that Secret of Evermore was a decent first attempt by the American team . GamePro dubbed the game " worthy of a sequel , " while Game Players anticipated another game from the same development team .