# = Mana ( series ) =

The Mana series , known in Japan as Seiken Densetsu ( ???? , lit . " Legend of the Sacred Sword " ) , is a medieval @-@ fantasy action role @-@ playing game series from Square ( now Square Enix ) , created by Koichi Ishii . The series began as a handheld side story to Square 's flagship franchise Final Fantasy , though the Final Fantasy @-@ inspired elements were subsequently dropped starting with the second installment , Secret of Mana , as the games became their own series . It has since grown to include games of various genres within the fictional world of Mana , with recurring stories involving a world tree , its associated holy sword , and the fight against forces that would steal their power . Several character designs , creatures , and musical themes reappear frequently .

Four games were released in the series between 1991 and 1999 : the original Seiken Densetsu ( 1991 ) ? Final Fantasy Adventure in North America and Mystic Quest in Europe ? for the Game Boy , Secret of Mana ( 1993 ) for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System , Seiken Densetsu 3 ( 1995 ) for the Super Famicom , and Legend of Mana for the PlayStation , though Seiken Densetsu 3 was not released outside Japan . A remake of the original game , Sword of Mana ( 2003 ) , was published for the Game Boy Advance . All of the original games were action role @-@ playing games , though they included a wide variety of gameplay mechanics , and the stories of the games were connected only thematically . In 2006 and 2007 , four more games were released as part of the World of Mana subseries , an attempt by Square Enix to release games in a series over a variety of genres and consoles . These were Children of Mana ( 2006 ) , an action @-@ oriented dungeon crawler game for the Nintendo DS ; Dawn of Mana ( 2006 ) , a 3D action @-@ adventure game for the PlayStation 2 ; Friends of Mana ( 2006 ) , a Japan @-@ only multiplayer role @-@ playing game for mobile phones ; and Heroes of Mana ( 2007 ) , a real @-@ time strategy game for the DS . Children was developed by Nex Entertainment and Heroes by Brownie Brown , founded by several developers of Legends , though Ishii oversaw development of all four games . Three more games have been released since the World of Mana subseries ended : Circle of Mana ( 2013 ) , a Japan @-@ only card battle game for the GREE mobile platform , Rise of Mana ( 2014 ) , a Japan @-@ only free @-@ to @-@ play action role @-@ playing game for iOS , Android , and PlayStation Vita , and Adventures of Mana ( 2016 ) , a 3D remake of Final Fantasy Adventure for the PlayStation Vita , iOS , and Android . In addition to the games , four manga series and one novelization have been released in the Mana franchise .

The Mana series reception has been very uneven , with early games rated higher by critics than more recent titles . Secret of Mana and Seiken Densetsu 3 have been regarded as some of the best 2D action role @-@ playing games ever made , and their music has inspired several orchestral concerts , while the games from the World of Mana series have been rated considerably lower . As of March 2011 , Mana series titles have sold over 6 million units .

## = = Development = =

### = = = History = = =

Square trademarked Seiken Densetsu in 1989 , intending to use it for a game project subtitled The Emergence of Excalibur , and led by Kazuhiko Aoki for the Famicom Disk System . According to early advertisements , the game would consist of an unprecedented five floppy disks , making it one of the largest titles developed for the Famicom up until that point . Although Square solicited pre @-@ orders for the game , Kaoru Moriyama , a former Square employee , affirms that management canceled the ambitious project before it advanced beyond the early planning stages . In October 1987 , customers who had placed orders were sent a letter informing them of the cancellation and had their purchases refunded . The letter also suggested to consider placing an order on another upcoming Square role @-@ playing game in a similar vein : Final Fantasy .

In 1991 , Square reused the Seiken Densetsu trademark for an unrelated Game Boy action role @-@ playing game directed by Koichi Ishii . Originally developed under the title Gemma Knights ,

the game was renamed Seiken Densetsu : Final Fantasy Gaiden ( published in North America as Final Fantasy Adventure and in Europe as Mystic Quest ) . Beginning with the sequel , Secret of Mana , Seiken Densetsu was subsequently " spun off " into its own series of action role @-@ playing games distinct from Final Fantasy , named the Mana series outside Japan . Four titles in the series were released between 1993 and 2003 . Secret of Mana was originally intended to be a launch title for the Super NES CD @-@ ROM Adapter , but when the add @-@ on was cancelled it was cut down into a standard Super NES cartridge , with many of the cut ideas appearing in other Square titles . It was followed in 1995 by the Japan @-@ only Seiken Densetsu 3 ; the game was originally planned to be released in English as Secret of Mana 2 , but technical issues and localization costs prohibited the release . The final new game in the series ' initial run was the 1999 Legend of Mana , developed for the PlayStation . Legend was a 2D game like its predecessors , despite the PlayStation 's 3D focus , because the console could not handle the full 3D world Ishii envisioned where one could interact with natural shaped objects . 2003 saw the release of Sword of Mana , a remake of the original Seiken Densetsu for the Game Boy Advance . The remake was outsourced to Brownie Brown , which was composed of many of the Square employees who had worked on Legend .

In 2003 , Square , now Square Enix , began a drive to begin developing " polymorphic content " , a marketing and sales strategy to " [ provide ] well @-@ known properties on several platforms , allowing exposure of the products to as wide an audience as possible " . The first of these was the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , and Square Enix intended to have campaigns for other series whereby multiple games in different genres would be developed simultaneously . Although no such project for the Mana series had been announced by this point , it was announced in late 2004 that an unnamed Mana game was in development for the upcoming Nintendo DS platform . In early 2005 , Square Enix announced a " World of Mana " project , the application of this " polymorphic content " idea to the Mana franchise , which would include several games across different genres and platforms . These games , as with the rest of the series , would not be direct sequels or prequels to one another , even if appearing so at first glance , but would instead share thematic connections . The first release in this project and the sixth release in the Mana series was announced in September 2005 as Children of Mana for the DS . Four games were released in 2006 and 2007 in the World of Mana subseries : Children of Mana , Dawn of Mana , and Friends of Mana in 2006 , and Heroes of Mana in 2007 .

Each game in the World of Mana series was different , both from each other and from the previous games in the series . Children is an action @-@ oriented dungeon crawler game for the DS , developed by Nex Entertainment ; Dawn is a 3D action @-@ adventure game for the PlayStation 2 ; Friends is a Japan @-@ only multiplayer role @-@ playing game for mobile phones ; and Heroes is a real @-@ time strategy game for the DS , developed by Brownie Brown . While Ishii was the designer for all four games , he served as the director and producer for Dawn , which was considered the main game of the four and was released as Seiken Densetsu 4 in Japan . The theme of the subseries for Ishii , especially Dawn , was about exploring how to add " the feeling of touch " to a game . He had held off on designing new Mana games after Legend was unable to meet his desires , until he felt that technology had improved enough to let him create what he envisioned . A fifth game for the subseries was considered for the Wii in 2006 , but did not enter development . In April 2007 , a month after the release of the final game of the World of Mana , Ishii left Square Enix to lead his own development company , named Grezzo .

No further games were made in the Mana series until 2013 , when Square Enix released Circle of Mana , a Japan @-@ only card battle game for the GREE mobile platform . It was followed in 2014 by Rise of Mana , a Japan @-@ only free @-@ to @-@ play action role @-@ playing game for iOS , Android , and PlayStation Vita , and in 2016 by Adventures of Mana , a 3D remake of Final Fantasy Adventure for the PlayStation Vita , iOS , and Android .

= = = Creation and design = = =

The Mana series is the result of Koichi Ishii 's desire to create a fictional world . In Ishii 's opinion ,

Mana is not a series of video games , but rather a world which is illustrated by and can be explored through video games . When working on the series , Koichi Ishii draws inspiration from abstract images from his memories of childhood , as well as movies and fantasy books that captivated him as a child . Ishii takes care to avoid set conventions , and his influences are correspondingly very wide and non @-@ specific . Nonetheless , among his literary influences , he acknowledges Tove Jansson 's Moomin , Lewis Carroll 's Alice 's Adventures in Wonderland , and J. R. R. Tolkien 's Lord of the Rings .

While some titles of the World of Mana series do share direct connections with other installments , the games of the series have few concrete links . There is no overall explicit in @-@ game chronological order . Further , according to Koichi Ishii in 2006 the games do not take place in exactly the same world , and characters or elements who appear in different titles are best considered alternate versions of each other . Instead , the connections between each title are more abstract than story @-@ based , linked only on the karmic level . Contradicting this assertion , Ishii has also said in an interview that Children is set ten years after Dawn , while Heroes is set one generation prior to Seiken Densetsu 3 .

= = Games = =


= = Common elements = =


A common element of the series is its seamless , real @-@ time battle system . The system was developed by Koichi Ishii and improved upon by Hiromichi Tanaka , out of a desire to create a system different from the one featured in the first few Final Fantasy titles . While action @-@ based , the Mana battle system is intended to be playable even by newcomers as well as veterans . The system is coupled with the distinctive hierarchical " Ring Command " menu system , featured prominently in Secret of Mana and Seiken Densetsu 3 , and to a lesser extent in later installments . Each ring is a set of icons with a textual infobox explanation which , upon selection , allow the player to use an item , cast a spell , look up in @-@ game statistics , or change the game 's settings . Navigation within a menu is achieved by rotating the ring through the cursor left or right , while switching to a different menu is achieved by pressing the up or down buttons . Although not part of the series , the spin @-@ off Secret of Evermore , developed by the North American Square Soft , was also built upon the " Ring Command " system .

The Mana series features several recurring characters and beings , including Final Fantasy creatures such as Chocobos in Final Fantasy Adventure and Legend of Mana , as well as Moogles in Secret of Mana and as a status ailment in Seiken Densetsu 3 and Sword of Mana . Watts is a dwarf blacksmith wearing a horned helmet who upgrades the player 's weaponry . Usually , an anthropomorphic cat merchant is found outside of town areas and allows a player to save the game and buy supplies at high prices . This role is played by Neko in Secret of Mana , and Niccolo in Legend of Mana and Sword of Mana . In the Japanese games these merchants share the name Nikita .

The Mana Tree and the Mana Sword , called Excalibur in Final Fantasy Adventure 's English version , are recurring plot devices which have been featured in every game of the series . The mystical Mana Tree is a source of magic which sustains the balance and nature of the series ' world . The Mana Sword is typically used to restore this balance when it becomes lost in the games . Final Fantasy Adventure explains that if the Mana Tree dies , a member of the Mana Family will become the " seed " of a new Tree . A sprout of the Mana Tree is called a Gemma , while protectors of the Tree , who wield the Mana Sword , are called Gemma Knights . In Seiken Densetsu 3 , a Goddess is said to have turned into the Mana Tree after creating the world with the Mana Sword . The Mana Tree is destroyed near the game ending in Final Fantasy Adventure and Secret of Mana , but a character becomes the new Mana Tree in the former game .

Elemental Spirits , also called Mana Spirits , are beings who govern the magic elements of the series ' world , and are at the core of the games ' magic system as they are used to cast magic

spells . Eight types of spirits have appeared in the series since Secret of Mana , and each embodies a different element . Their names are homonyms of mythological beings or phenomena . In Secret of Mana and Seiken Densetsu 3 , usage of their power is enabled upon the main characters ' meeting with them . In Legend of Mana , the spirits serve as factors in the Land Creation System . In Legend of Mana and Sword of Mana , multiple spirits of the same elemental type appear . In terms of storyline , in Seiken Densetsu 3 and Heroes of Mana , the spirits are charged to protect the Mana Stones in which the Mana Goddess sealed eight elemental benevodons ( God @-@ Beasts in the fan @-@ translation of SD3 ) . In Dawn of Mana 's North American version , each spirit speaks with a particular European accent , such as French or Scottish .

Rabites , known as Rabi ( ?? ) in the Japanese versions of the games , are cute , fictional , rabbit @-@ like creatures appearing as a common enemy in the series since its beginning . The Rabite has become a sort of mascot for the Mana series , much the same way as the Chocobo represents Final Fantasy , and is one of its most recognizable icons . The Rabite resembles a bodiless , one @-@ toothed rabbit with large ears that curve upward and form a point at the tip , and a round , puffy pink tail that moves by hopping along the ground . It is most commonly yellow colored , but also pink , lilac , black , and white , and are variously minor enemies , " superboss " characters and even friendly units and pets . Rabites are also mentioned in Final Fantasy X @-@ 2 with an accessory comically named " Rabite 's Foot " , which increases a character 's luck statistic ; as well as Final Fantasy Tactics Advance , where they appear in the description of one of the game 's optional missions as an endangered species due to being poached for good luck charms . Rabites have appeared prevalently in several pieces of Mana merchandise , including plush dolls , cushions , lighters , mousepads , straps , telephone cards , and T @-@ shirts .

Flammie , sometimes spelled Flammy , is the name of a fictional species of flying dragons , as well as the proper name of some its members , featured in several games of the series . A Flammie 's appearance is a mixture of draconian , mammalian , and reptilian features , and its coloring has varied throughout the series . Flammies typically serve as a means of transportation in the game by allowing a player 's characters to ride on a Flammie 's back to different locations in the game 's world . In Secret of Mana and Seiken Densetsu 3 , the Super NES 's Mode 7 graphic capabilities allows the player to control a Flammie from either a " behind the back " third @-@ person or top @-@ down perspective , and fly over the landscape as it scrolls beneath them . In terms of story , the Flammies were created by the Moon Gods , and are part of an endless cycle of destruction and rebirth as the stronger versions of Flammies ? known as Mana Beasts , or God Beasts ( ?? , Shinj? ) in Japanese ? destroy the world and the Mana Sword and Tree restore the world .

= = Music = =

The Mana series has had several different composers . Final Fantasy Adventure was composed by Kenji Ito ; it was his second original score . Ito 's music is mainly inspired by images from the game rather than outside influences . The scores for Secret of Mana and Seiken Densetsu 3 were both composed by Hiroki Kikuta . Despite difficulties in dealing with the hardware limitations , Kikuta tried to express , in the music of Secret of Mana , two " contrasting styles " , namely himself and the game . This was to create an original score which would be neither pop music nor standard game music . Kikuta worked on the music for the two games mostly by himself , spending nearly 24 hours a day in his office , alternating between composing and editing to create an immersive three @-@ dimensional sound . Kikuta considers the score for Secret of Mana his favorite creation . His compositions for Secret of Mana and Seiken Densetsu 3 were partly inspired by natural landscapes . In 1995 , Kikuta released an experimental album of arranged music from the two installments , titled Secret of Mana + , which features one 50 @-@ minute long track .

Legend of Mana 's score was composed by Yoko Shimomura , and of all her compositions , she considers it the one that best expresses herself . Kenji Ito returned to the series with Sword of Mana . He also composed roughly one third of the Children of Mana soundtrack , while the rest was composed by Masaharu Iwata and Takayuki Aihara . Ito was the main composer for Dawn of Mana , assisted by Tsuyoshi Sekito , Masayoshi Soken , and Junya Nakano , as well as main theme

composer Ryuichi Sakamoto . In North America , purchasers of Dawn of Mana from participating retailers were offered a sampler disc , titled Breath of Mana , which features a selection of tracks from the game . Shimomura has returned to the series with Heroes of Mana , while also contributing one song to Rise of Mana .

= = Printed adaptations = =

A five @-@ volume manga based on Legend of Mana was drawn by Shiro Amano and published in Japan by Enterbrain between 2000 and 2002 . It features a comedic story about the game 's main character , here named Toto . A German version was published by Egmont Manga & Anime in 2003 . A collection of four @-@ panel comic strips , drawn by various authors and titled Sword of Mana Yonkoma Manga Theatre , was published in Japan by Square Enix on January 16 , 2004 . It included a questionnaire that , if sent back , allowed participants to win illustrations signed by Koichi Ishii and Shinichi Kameoka , as well as special T @-@ shirts . Enterbrain also published a Sword of Mana manga adaptation in Japan on February 25 , 2004 , drawn by a collaboration of authors led by Shiro Amano . Two days later , Square Enix published a two @-@ volume novelization of Sword of Mana in Japan written by Matsui Oohama . An original manga , named Seiken Densetsu : Princess of Mana , was drawn by Satsuki Yoshino and published in the Japanese magazine Gangan Powered on February 22 , 2007 .

= = Reception = =

The Mana series has been mostly well received , though each title has seen varied levels of success . RPGFan called Final Fantasy Adventure one of the best things to happen to the Game Boy , while IGN considered it the best action RPG on the console after The Legend of Zelda : Link 's Awakening . GameSpot referred to Secret of Mana as " one of Square 's masterpieces on the SNES " . The game has appeared on several list of top games , including ranked number 97 on Famitsu 's top 100 games of all time . Seiken Densetsu 3 was called " easily one of the best RPGs to come out of the 16 @-@ bit era " by Nintendo Life . Famitsu rated Legend of Mana at 31 / 40 and Heroes of Mana at 32 / 40 . The NPD Group ranked Legend of Mana as the top seller the week of its release , and in 2006 was re @-@ released as part of the Ultimate Hits series .
Many of the World of Mana titles have not been as critically successful as the original five games in the series , and though the franchise has been praised for their attempts at trying new ways of experiencing the games ' fictional world , there have been various gameplay design flaws that have hindered the later games . 1UP.com commented that despite the game 's excellent presentation and storytelling , Dawn of Mana did not match the level of gameplay of the early Mana games . Prior to the World of Mana games , RPGamer called the series a " treasured favorite " . After the release of Heroes of Mana , they commented that the World of Mana series is " cursed " , and the future of the series looked " bleak " .
The music of the Mana series , especially Secret of Mana , has received wide acclaim and fan enthusiasm . The Secret of Mana soundtrack was one of the first official soundtracks of video games music released in the United States and thus before fully mainstream interest in RPGs . The Secret of Mana 's opening theme , " Angel 's Fear " , was rated at number 7 on IGN 's Top Ten RPG Title tracks , calling it a " magical title song that captures our hearts " . It was also featured in the third Orchestral Game Concert . Secret of Mana is also the number 6 most remixed soundtrack on the popular video game music site OverClocked ReMix , with Seiken Densetsu 3 tied at 18 . The music of the other titles have also been well received . RPGFan called the music to Final Fantasy Adventure " addictive " , despite its low , MIDI @-@ like quality . GameSpy called Children of Mana 's music some of the best Nintendo DS music yet and referred to it as " beautiful " . Game Informer complimented Dawn of Mana 's music , calling it good . IGN referred to Legend of Mana 's music as " beautiful " and stated the background music brought " intensity " , " suspense " , and " subtle nuance " to the game . Other reviewers echoed similar praise with GameSpot calling it " excellently orchestrated " and RPGFan calling the music one of the game 's good points .

The Mana series has sold well overall , and as of March 2011 , series titles have sold over 6 million units . The original Seiken Densetsu sold over 700 @,@ 000 units , and its remake Sword of Mana sold over 277 @,@ 000 copies in Japan . Secret of Mana has shipped over 1 @.@ 83 million copies worldwide , Legend of Mana sold over 400 @,@ 000 units in its first week alone as the highest @-@ selling release that week in Japan. and over 700 @,@ 000 copies in Japan by the end of the year . Children of Mana sold over 281 @,@ 000 copies in Japan , and Dawn of Mana sold over 410 @,@ 000 copies worldwide . Heroes of Mana sold over 178 @,@ 000 copies iworldwide . The PlayStation Vita version of Rise of Mana downloaded over 100 @,@ 000 times .