= Nier (video game) =

Nier (romanized as NieR in the Japanese version) is an action role @-@ playing video game developed by Cavia and published by Square Enix . It was released for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 in Australia , Europe , Japan and North America in April 2010 . In Japan , the game was released as Nier Gestalt (Japanese : ??? ?????? , Hepburn : N?a Geshutaruto) for the Xbox 360 , while an alternate version entitled Nier Replicant (Japanese : ??? ?????? , Hepburn : N?a Repuricanto) was released for PlayStation 3 with a younger main character . A version that combined elements from both releases was in development for PlayStation Vita , but was cancelled in March 2011 due to Dragon Quest X taking precedence .

The game is a spin @-@ off from the Drakengard series , and follows the fifth ending of the first game , the events of which have left the planet Earth in a state of decay . Set over one thousand years after this , the game puts the player in control of the titular protagonist Nier , as he attempts to find a cure for an illness , known as the Black Scrawl , to which his daughter Yonah has succumbed . Partnering with a talking book known as Grimoire Weiss , he journeys with two other characters , Kainé and Emil , as he attempts to find a remedy and understand the nature of the creatures known as Shades that stalk the world . The gameplay borrows elements from various video game genres , occasionally switching between them and the main RPG @-@ based gameplay .

The game was developed to appeal both to older players and to players outside Japan , where the developer was based . The music was composed by Keiichi Okabe , head of Monaca , a music composition studio , and has sparked the release of several albums . Nier was released to mixed reception ; reviewers praised the story , characters and soundtrack and were mixed in their opinions of how well the disparate gameplay elements were connected . Criticism was given for the execution of some gameplay elements , particularly the side quests , and was especially pronounced for the graphics , which were regarded as substandard . A sequel titled Nier : Automata is currently being developed by Square Enix and PlatinumGames for the PlayStation 4 , featuring many returning staff .

= = Gameplay = =

Players take control of Nier ? a middle @-@ aged man in Nier and Nier Gestalt and a teenaged boy in Nier Replicant ? though the character can be renamed by the player . The player directly controls Nier through a third @-@ person perspective to interact with people , objects , and enemies throughout the game . The player can also turn the camera around the characters , which allows for a 360 ° view of the surroundings . The three @-@ dimensional world is divided into areas separated by loading screens , and the player can move freely throughout these areas by walking , running , jumping , and climbing ladders . In specific rooms and buildings , the camera swings to the side and Nier is restricted to moving as in a two @-@ dimensional platforming environment , while during certain battles the camera pulls up to simulate a top @-@ down shoot ' em up or other video game genres .

While traveling the player is frequently attacked by monsters , which include shadowy figures called Shades , large animals , and robots . Defeating these enemies gives the player experience points that can increase Nier 's power , and money that can be used to purchase items . Nier can attack these creatures with either a one- or two @-@ handed sword , or a spear . These weapons can be customized to have greater damage and abilities using materials that can be purchased , dropped from monsters , or scavenged around the world . Multiple different varieties of each weapon type can be acquired . The player can also use magic spells , which require enough energy from a constantly regenerating amount to cast . These spells include projectiles and large shadowy fists , among others ; new spells are acquired in the first half of the game by completing specific battles . In addition to the main plotline , Nier includes numerous side @-@ quests , which give the player experience points and money , as well as fishing and farming segments .

= = Plot = =

The game opens with a prologue during the summer of 2049 in a snowstorm . In a modern , broken @-@ down grocery store , Nier fends off attacks from ethereal monsters to protect his sick young daughter , Yonah . After defeating the monsters , he checks on Yonah , who has begun to cough badly . The game then cuts to 1 @,@ 312 years later , where the player sees what appears to be the same two characters , now living in a village built upon the ruins of an old town . The low @-@ technology village is one of several , and is surrounded by more modern ruins such as the remnants of train tracks and industrial machinery . The areas between towns are filled with monsters known as Shades that attack travelers .

As Yonah 's illness , the Black Scrawl , is terminal , Nier sets out to look for a cure . As he does , Nier finds a talking book , Grimoire Weiss , which suggests that the two team up to use Weiss ' magic and to find a cure for Yonah 's disease . In their search , they encounter Kainé , a hot @-@ tempered and foul @-@ mouthed swordswoman ; and Emil , a blindfolded boy whose eyes petrify anyone they see . After journeying for a time , the village is attacked by a giant shade ; the battle culminates in Yonah being carried away by a master Shade that suddenly appears ? the Shadowlord ? who carries his own book , Grimoire Noir .

The game then jumps five years forward . Nier and the others are trying to find the parts to a key that they believe will help them locate the Shadowlord and Grimoire Noir . After defeating five Shades and assembling the key , the team go to defeat the Shadowlord . There , Devola and Popola , characters who have been guiding Nier on his quest , appear to try to stop them . They explain that over 1300 years prior , humanity faced extinction due to an incurable disease . In an attempt to survive , they separated their souls from their bodies using Grimoire Noir and Weiss . They created clones resistant to the disease , Replicants , and intended to recombine the souls , or Gestalts , with the Replicant bodies once it had died out ; Devola and Popola were androids set to oversee the project . Over time , the Replicants had begun to form their own identities ; while the Gestalts , or Shades , had grown aggressive to them .

Nier defeats the pair , with Emil sacrificing himself to ensure his friends ' progress . The remaining group then defeats the Shadowlord , and discovers that he is the Gestalt form of the Nier from the prologue . Driven to protect his Yonah , he was the first Gestalt and has combined her with the Replicant Yonah . The original Yonah , however , tells the Gestalt Nier that she can hear the new Yonah inside her , and that she loves the Replicant Nier and deserves the body just as much . She vacates the body , and Nier and Yonah are reunited .

If the player plays the game again , they start just after the five @-@ year skip . They learn about Kainé 's past , including that she is intersex , which along with the death of her parents resulted in her ostracism as a child , and that she is partially possessed by a Shade . The player gains the ability to understand what the shades are saying , including the one possessing Kainé , though in @-@ game Nier , Weiss , and Emil are still unable to . Additional cutscenes are also shown , giving the motivations and backstory behind the Shade bosses that are fought and showing them as sentient people trying to defend their friends against Nier . The ending to the second playthrough shows that Emil survives his sacrifice , and that Gestalt Nier and Yonah are reunited in the afterlife . A third playthrough presents the player with a choice in the ending to save Kainé , who is seen to be dying in agony ; Nier can either kill her to end her suffering , or sacrifice his life for her . The latter choice not only erases all memory of him from the other characters ' minds , shown in a final cutscene , but also deletes all of the player 's saved progress , as if the game had never been played . Moreover , if the player wants to start a new game , they will be unable to enter the same name chosen for the previous playthrough for the Nier character .

= = Development = =

The concept that would become Nier was first proposed following the release of Drakengard 2 and the reveal of seventh generation consoles . The original concept was for a third entry in the Drakengard series . It was intended to be for PlayStation 3 due to the lessening importance of the PlayStation 2 , which Drakengard 2 had been made for . However , as the project evolved , the

original ideas were reworked and the game eventually became a spin @-@ off from the main series . Despite this , the game 's director Taro Yoko continues to think of it as the third Drakengard game . Including concept planning , the total development time lasted three years , with two years spent actually developing the game . It was initially a small @-@ scale project , but during planning it grew into a full @-@ fledged role @-@ playing game . Development was handled by Cavia with help from Square Enix , who had previously provided development support for the Drakengard games . Square Enix had minimal input on Yoko 's vision for the game 's atmosphere and story , allowing him high creative control .

Nier is intended to be set 1000 years after the events of Drakengard 's fifth ending . In this scenario , the game 's protagonists Caim and Angelus travel across a dimensional boundary to fight a monstrous beast . After winning the battle and killing the monster , they are shot down by a fighter jet and killed ; the remnants of their bodies cause the Black Scrawl . According to Yoko , after the dark story of Drakengard , Yoko focused on more positive themes of friendship and combined effort . Much of the game was inspired by the September 11 attacks and the War on Terror . Yoko took from it the idea of a terrible event where both sides believed they were doing the right thing , and wanted to show the player multiple perspectives of the same events . The term " Replicant " was coined by Yoko from the 1982 science fiction movie Blade Runner , although Yoko did not cite a particular source for Nier 's name , passing it off as a codename that persisted through development .

The game 's characters were designed by Kimihiko Fujisaka , who had previously worked on the main Drakengard series . Two character designs for the protagonist were created for Nier . The developers believed that the Japanese audience would respond more strongly to a younger protagonist , while non @-@ Japanese audiences would prefer an adult Nier character . Other than changing Nier 's appearance and modifying a few lines of dialogue to fit with Nier being a father rather than a brother to Yonah , the developers made no changes between the two versions ; while it was initially believed that the older Nier was the character 's original design , an interview with Yoko clarified that the young Nier was the original vision . Many characters underwent changes during development , and some needed to be cut : there were originally thirteen Grimoires , with all but three being cut : those that remained were Weiss , Noir and Rubrum . Emil 's character was derived from a female character named Halua , while Kainé was originally a far more feminine type who hid her violent nature . Yonah 's original Japanese name was derived from the Biblical name Jonah : this could not be take verbatim into its localized form due to the name being associated with a man , so the name was changed to " Yonah " . Kainé 's character was made intersexual , since the team felt it fitted in with many other aspects of her gritty backstory . Kainé 's status as an intersexual caused some commotion in western territories , which is something the team did not actively intend . Yoko attributed the original suggestion to female staff members working on the game .

The combat and action elements of Nier were inspired by the God of War series of games , which both Taro and Saito enjoyed . While the games had not been as popular in Japan as in North America , the two felt that the idea of having boss fights with different combat styles than the regular battles was an idea that would appeal to players in both regions . The changing styles , as well as the occasional changes in camera angle and movement , were meant to " accentuate [the] gap between real , modern scenery and the fantasy world " as a tie @-@ in to the game 's story . The game was meant to appeal to older players ; it was intended as an action @-@ RPG for an older market than Square Enix 's action @-@ RPG series Kingdom Hearts . This influenced the decision to have a main character in his 30s , as well as more blood and swearing than typical in a Square Enix RPG . The fusion of different gameplay styles was included as a homage to earlier gameplay styles and genres .

Nier was originally intended to be exclusive to the Xbox 360 , but after deciding to also develop the game for PlayStation 3 , the developers decided to further divide the Japanese release of the game . Nier Gestalt would be released for the Xbox 360 , featuring the adult Nier (as in the international release for both platforms) , while Nier Replicant , for the PlayStation 3 , would feature the young Nier . The localizations for the game ? in English , French , and German ? were produced during

development so that all of the versions could be released at the same time , and so that Cavia and Square Enix could solicit feedback from North America and Europe on the game so that it would appeal to players outside Japan . Nier was officially unveiled in June 2009 at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2009 for both the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 , to be developed by Cavia and published by Square Enix . It was directed by Yoko , and produced by Yosuke Saito of Square Enix . Due to its high violence , the game was given a CERO D rating in Japan .

= = = Music = = =

  The soundtrack to Nier was composed by a collaboration of the studio MoNACA , directed by Keiichi Okabe and including Kakeru Ishihama and Keigo Hoashi , and Takafumi Nishimura from Cavia . Okabe served as the lead composer and as the director for the project as a whole . Okabe was brought onto the project when the concept for the game was first being devised , and worked intermittently on the soundtrack for the next three years until its release . The music for the game was generally composed entirely separately from the development of the game . The music was designed for different motifs to appear in various arrangements throughout the soundtrack , and also to convey a sense of sadness even during the " thrilling " tracks . Okabe was allowed a great deal of freedom regarding what the music was to sound like ; game director Yoko Taro 's main request was that he use a lot of vocal works .
  The soundtrack to Nier is largely composed of melancholy acoustic pieces which heavily feature vocals by vocalist Emi Evans (Emiko Rebecca Evans) , a singer from England living in Tokyo . She is the singer for the band freesscape , and had previously worked on video games such as Etrian Odyssey . In addition to singing , Evans was asked to write her own lyrics in futuristic languages . The composers gave her preliminary version of songs and the style they wished the language to be in , such as Gaelic or French , and she invented the words . Evans wrote songs in versions of Gaelic , Portuguese , Spanish , Italian , French , English and Japanese , where she tried to imagine what they would sound like after 1000 years of drifting .
  Square Enix released a soundtrack album of music from the game , titled Nier Gestalt & Replicant Original Soundtrack , on April 21 , 2010 . The soundtrack album reached number 24 on the Japanese Oricon music charts , and remained on the charts for 11 weeks . As preorder bonuses for Nier Gestalt and Nier Replicant , two mini @-@ albums , Nier Gestalt Mini Album and Nier Replicant Mini Album , were included . An album of arranged music , NieR Gestalt & Replicant 15 Nightmares & Arrange Tracks , was published by Square Enix on December 8 , 2010 . The arranged album reached number 59 on the Oricon music charts , a position it held for a week . Another album , NieR Tribute Album -echo- , was released on September 14 , 2011 , and an album of piano arrangements , Piano Collections Nier Gestalt & Replicant , was published on March 21 , 2012 .

= = Reception = =

  In Japan , Nier Gestalt sold over 12 @,@ 500 copies in Japan the week of its release , while Replicant sold over 60 @,@ 000 and was the top @-@ selling video game in Japan that week . Replicant sold over 121 @,@ 000 copies in Japan by the end of May 2010 , and ended the year with over 134 @,@ 000 copies sold .
  Nier received mixed reviews . Reviewers criticized the graphics , with Ryan Clements of IGN saying that " one of Nier 's greatest flaws is its visuals , " while GameSpot 's Kevin VanOrd bemoaned the " flavorless visuals " and " lifeless environments " . Dustin Quillen of 1UP.com said that the game " looks downright primitive " , while Adriaan den Ouden of RPGamer , who awarded the game a higher score than most , said that " the environments are bland and poorly rendered " . The music and voice acting , however , were praised ; Clements said that " both are quite excellent " , den Ouden called the soundtrack " absolutely fantastic " , Chris Schilling of Eurogamer said that the music was full of " memorable themes " , and one of the four reviewers for the Japanese Weekly Famitsu termed it " a cut above " .
  Reviewers were divided in their opinion on the effectiveness of the multiple styles of gameplay

presented . Seth Schiesel of The New York Times said that while " there are plenty of games that surpass it in each area , " that Nier pulled all of the styles together into a " coherent , compelling whole " instead of feeling " disjointed " ; he especially praised a section of the game that is presented entirely through text . Patrick Kolan of IGN Australia , however , said that while the different styles were " interesting " and one of the game 's biggest strengths , they suffered from poor execution and cohesion and left the game " with split @-@ personality disorder " . Clements said that " the developers ' ideas sometimes outshine the actual implementation " , while highlighting the gameplay elements as part of what made the game fun . Adriaan den Ouden called out the variety as the best part of the game , likening it to a buffet table , while also acknowledging that none of the sections were " amazing " on their own and could easily be looked upon poorly .

 The regular combat was reviewed as solid , if not exceptional , and the sidequests were seen as repetitive , with Quillen saying that " the side quests in Nier are about as numerous as they are totally mindless , " VanOrd calling them " a series of monotonous events , often connected only by long stretches of nothing , " and a Famitsu reviewer saying that they " didn 't see much purpose " to them . Clements said that the combat had " a fair amount of satisfaction " , though players should " not expect anything too extraordinary " , and Kolan termed the combat as " moderately deep " . Critics gave a generally positive review to the plot and characters ; VanOrd liked most of the characters but thought Nier was bland and the story " soggy " , while Schiesel called the story " provocative " and " profound " , saying that it " succeeds at fostering an emotional investment in its characters and in its world " . Quillen said that the plot " takes some fascinating and truly original turns " and that Nier has " a supporting cast of genuinely interesting folks , " and Schilling said that the story made the game " difficult to dislike " . The Famitsu reviewer that viewed the game the most favorably said that he was " blown away " by the multiple endings , and that " nothing like it 's been done in gaming " .

 In 2015 , Jeffrey Matulef of Eurogamer characterized Nier as " the rare game that gets better with age " . Despite " poor sales and tepid reviews " , he wrote , the game had acquired a cult following , which he attributed to its " sense of wonder " due to its cryptic storytelling , mashup assortment of game mechanics and melancholy mood .

= = Legacy = =

 On May 11 , 2010 , Square Enix released a piece of downloadable content for the game , titled " The World of Recycled Vessel " . The small expansion features a series of fifteen battles with the incarnation of Nier other than the one in the specific version of the game . Nier enters the battles in a dream world accessed through a diary in his house . The expansion offers new costumes and weapons for the game . Square Enix executive producer Yosuke Saito later commented that " a number of things " related to Nier were in progress , and that an announcement could be due in 2011 . The only announcement ended up not being for a new Nier video game , but instead for a live evening concert for Nier 's music titled " Nier Night ~ Evening of Madness " which took place on October 28 , 2011 .

 Nier was the last game that Cavia made ; the company was absorbed into its parent company , AQ Interactive , in July 2010 . In March 2011 , there were plans made between Yoko and Takuya Iwasaki , one of the original producers for Drakengard , to develop a port of Nier for the PlayStation Vita at Iwasaki 's company Orca . The port would have incorporated material from both versions of the game . When Orca was chosen to help develop Dragon Quest X , the project was shelved . A number of key staff from Nier 's development , including director Yoko and Okabe , would later reunite to work on a new entry in the Drakengard series from which Nier was spun off . A sequel titled Nier : Automata is being developed by Square Enix and PlatinumGames for the PlayStation 4 for a 2016 release . Yoko , Saito and Okabe returned to their previous roles . Other staff members include producer Atsushi Inaba and artist Akihiko Yoshida .