

= Kameo =

Kameo : Elements of Power is a 2005 action @-@ adventure video game by Rare and Microsoft Studios released for the Xbox 360 . The player controls the title character , an elf , who journeys to recover her elemental powers and captive family from her evil sister and the troll king . Kameo 's ten elemental powers let her transform into creatures and use their varied abilities to solve combat @-@ oriented puzzles and progress through the game 's levels .

Kameo is known for its prolonged development cycle , which spanned four Nintendo and Microsoft consoles . It was conceived as a Pokémon @-@ style game of capturing and nurturing monsters , but traded its lighthearted Nintendo overtones for darker themes more befitting of Xbox audiences when Microsoft acquired the developer . In this process , Kameo was repurposed from a fairy to an elf ? a transition the game 's director later concluded was unsuccessful . While nearly finished for the original Xbox console , the title was delayed to become an exclusive launch title for the upcoming Xbox 360 . Rare used the extra time to improve the game 's audiovisuals , including Rare 's first orchestra soundtrack , and add a local cooperative multiplayer mode . Kameo released alongside the Xbox 360 launches : November 2005 in North America and several weeks later in Europe .

The game received generally favorable reviews and sales estimates ranged from subpar to par . Reviewers praised Kameo 's graphics as setting standards for the new console , and noted its vivid color palette . Their criticism focused on the gameplay , in particular its repetition , awkward controls , easy combat , disorganized introduction , and overbearing tutorial . Reviewers found the story and Kameo 's character lackluster , but largely liked the other characters and the core morphing concept . They had high praise for the orchestral score and other technical features , apart from the game 's camera . Rare released several cosmetic downloadable content packs , and a free online cooperative mode upgrade .

Retrospective reviews remembered the game for its bright and impressive graphics . Kameo was included in Rare Replay , an August 2015 compilation of 30 Rare titles for the Xbox One , alongside documentary @-@ style videos about the game 's development and its planned sequel . The latter was canceled after a few months of production due to both poor sales of the original and Microsoft 's new focus on games for its Kinect peripheral .

= = Gameplay = =

In the third @-@ person action @-@ adventure game Kameo (pronounced " cameo ") , the player controls the title character , an elf , who journeys to recover her ten elemental powers and captive family from her evil sister and the troll king . Kameo uses elemental powers to transform into creatures with different abilities , which she switches between to solve puzzles and advance through the in @-@ game world . The player controls the player @-@ character with the left analog stick , the game 's camera view with the right thumbstick , and the character attacks and abilities with the controller 's triggers . The Xbox 360 controller 's face buttons swap between three active , elemental powers .

These ten " elemental warriors " include a fire @-@ breathing creature who lights torches , a gorilla who climbs walls and throws foes , and a plant who punches opponents . There are two each of five element types (fire , ice , plant , rock , water) . Some enemies have specific weaknesses and can only be affected by specific elemental powers or hazards in the environment . The game is structured such that new character abilities unlock just as their benefits are needed to solve a puzzle . Thus the game 's puzzles depend on combat more than logic . Each of the elemental forms has several ability upgrades , which the player can redeem by collecting and delivering fruit to a sacred tome called the Wotnot book . The Kameo character , herself , can move faster than the elemental warriors but has no special ability apart from breaking crates .

The game begins as Kameo advances through a castle ? with the help of three elemental powers ? to rescue her family . As the tutorial prologue ends , Kameo loses her elemental powers and is ejected from the castle into the Enchanted Kingdom to grow stronger and try again . Kameo travels

through four themed worlds (water , ice , fire , and swamp) at the outskirts of the Badlands , the overworld that connects the areas . Each of the worlds are interspersed with townsfolk and combat @-@ oriented puzzles . Kameo can either travel to the worlds through the Badlands , where the elves and trolls skirmish , or warp from the Enchanted Kingdom . A help system built into the game provides hints or direct solutions for struggling players . Throughout the kingdom , Kameo finds and defeats the ten shadow creatures each guarding one of her elemental powers .

The player can slow time by landing successive hits and kills on enemies to fill an on @-@ screen meter . The player can return to levels to attempt a higher score . The game 's action sequences , more than half of the game , require the player to defeat groups of enemies before proceeding to the next room , and ultimately leading to a boss battle . Kameo has a two @-@ player , split @-@ screen cooperative gameplay mode in which players can fight alongside each other during the action scenes . Rare added support for online cooperative play (via Xbox Live or System Link) as a downloadable patch following the game 's release .

= = Development = =

Rare 's protracted development of Kameo spanned four consoles : Nintendo 's Nintendo 64 and GameCube , Microsoft 's Xbox , and ultimately , the Xbox 360 . The game became known for its long development cycle ? IGN wrote that the game had received more IGN editor coverage during its development than " almost any other single game " . Shortly after Rare finished work on Donkey Kong 64 , Kameo began as a game in which the player catches and evolves creatures . In lead designer George Andreas 's concept , the creatures would follow the player and act of their own volition . This version had a " Nintendo feel " and Pokémon @-@ like conceit : the player nursed little monsters into adults . Kameo spent several years in development for the GameCube and Rare shared an early version of the game at Electronic Entertainment Expo , an annual video game conference . In the meantime , Microsoft acquired Rare in 2002 for a record price of \$ 377 million . Kameo lost many of its Pokémon elements when development transferred to the Microsoft 's Xbox . Rare 's Phil Tossell liked the Pokémon @-@ style concept but ultimately felt that the platform change was a positive move for the game .

The team distilled the original concept into the core gameplay mechanics that players preferred , namely the abilities to morph into characters and to fight . In what became the core gameplay , the player would use a combination of Kameo 's elemental warriors to progress through levels . Rare later expanded the conceit to that of an adventure game , though its story was secondary to the gameplay . Kameo was designed for fluidity ? the team tried to minimize player chores and player waiting times . The team simplified the set of characters from a hundred to a dozen , and expanded the skill sets of those remaining . Tossell designed these characters , and started with a boulder @-@ like animal . These creature designs later became Kameo 's morphing forms . As the game transitioned and Rare attempted to distance itself from its mawkish reputation for " cute characters with big eyes " , the team struggled to repurpose Kameo into an elf from the fairy of the original concept . Tossell felt that this task was impossible , as Microsoft simultaneously wanted to widen its base while it did not give Rare the room to grow out of its cutesy design . The Kameo character transitioned through a " tribal " look before becoming an elf , and her own attacks were ultimately repurposed into the elemental warriors ' . Kameo became an Xbox 360 launch title (alongside Rare 's Perfect Dark Zero) and received a graphics upgrade in the process . The game had been about 80 % complete for the original Xbox , but the transition freed the game 's vision from technical constraints .

With their timeframe extended , the development team added extra attacks for the ten characters , day ? night transition interactions , in @-@ game scores and leaderboards , a cooperative multiplayer splitscreen mode , and a post @-@ release update that extends the cooperative mode over online and local network . The team revisited level ideas that did not fit on the previous console , and transitioned from synthesized music and a text @-@ based story to an orchestral soundtrack and voice acting . The cooperative mode was also added retroactively , which challenged the already finalized level design . The most pronounced improvements were in the game 's graphics

and upgrades . Levels on the Xbox 360 could hold thousands of characters on @-@ screen at once . The team playtested the feel of each elemental warrior and spent extra time refining the gradual difficulty increase in the opening level . In reflection , the project 's biggest influences were ultimately Nintendo , Pokémon , and Resident Evil .

Around the time of Kameo 's release , lead designer George Andreas felt that the original Kameo concept of finding and using monsters had evolved and carried through to the final product . He said that there were enough ideas for a sequel within the new intellectual property if players were interested . Years later , Andreas reappraised and said that the game should never have been released and remains a sore subject for him to discuss . Since the project was nearly finished , they had opted for launch title release instead of starting over . Andreas felt that the effort to conceal the fairy Kameo as an elf was unsuccessful and that the character did not match the Xbox 's first @-@ person shooter demographic .

Rare and Microsoft Studios released Kameo alongside the Xbox 360 console as a launch title : on November 15 , 2005 , in North America , and December 2 in Europe . The game was available for purchase in retail stores ahead of the console 's launch date . At release , it was sold at a lower price than other Xbox 360 games . In advance of its February 2 , 2006 , Japanese release , Microsoft Japan held a Kameo promotional press event with celebrities Yoshinari Tsuji and Kaori Manabe in late January 2006 . 1UP.com reported the event as " subdued " but appropriate for Japanese games journalists to test Kameo , as the Xbox 360 had been selling poorly in the region .

= = = Audio = = =

Steve Burke served as the audio lead on the Kameo project , his first at Rare , for which he composed its soundtrack and contributed to its sound effects and voiceovers . As the game was originally planned for the GameCube , the first few months of development appeared to have no support for audio above the MIDI sample @-@ style compositions characteristic of Nintendo 's previous console , the Nintendo 64 . The game 's first demo at the 2001 Electronic Entertainment Expo used this type of audio . Of the first pieces he wrote for this project in the early months of 2001 , some were scrapped . Others were re @-@ recorded as streaming audio , which plays pre @-@ recorded audio files , when the developers added support . It became Rare 's first orchestral soundtrack . Other Rare staff members contributed their talents to the recording process , such as trumpet and voice recordings .

Burke experimented with a variety of musical styles throughout the game 's development . Burke 's original compositions were lighthearted as befitting for a Nintendo game , but became darker along with other parts of the game to match the Xbox audience when Microsoft acquired Rare . The composer thought that this transition was reflected in the soundtrack , with some Nintendo @-@ style music juxtaposed against the roaring orchestral tracks . Burke estimates that he had written four hours of audio for the project and ultimately recorded 80 minutes with an orchestra and choir over four days in Prague . The team recorded the orchestra and choir separately . Sumthing Else Music Works published the soundtrack on compact disc and for download via the iTunes Store and Amazon . It was nominated for the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences Outstanding Achievement in Original Music Composition award .

= = Reception = =

A year prior to Kameo 's release , GamesRadar wrote that while they highly anticipated the title and expected it to be of high quality , they thought the game 's continual delays would likely hurt the final product . Closer to release , Tom Bramwell (Eurogamer) added that he had expected the game to be the best among the Xbox 360 launch titles . Kameo 's core gameplay concept brought his anticipation to par with that customary for The Legend of Zelda titles , and he thought the game would reap the benefits of its long development through refined audiovisuals . Xbox executive Peter Moore announced Kameo as his favorite launch title in anticipation of the Xbox 360 's launch .

The game received " generally favorable " reviews , according to video game review score

aggregator Metacritic . Market research company NPD Group reported that Kameo sold 300 @, @ 000 copies while Retro Gamer reported that the game sold over 700 @, @ 000 copies . GameSpot described the NPD Group figures as significantly below expectations and the sales of Rare 's other Xbox 360 launch title , Perfect Dark Zero . Retro Gamer described its figures as " respectable ... for a new franchise " . Rare senior software engineer Nick Burton said that while Kameo and Perfect Dark Zero had reputations for poor sales , the two games " sold phenomenally well " for launch titles . Kameo continued to sell three years after its release .

Reviewers praised the game 's graphics as setting standards for the new console . Clayman (IGN) saw Kameo as a good demonstration of the Xbox 360 's graphical possibilities , and Bramwell (Eurogamer) considered the degree of detail , even at long distances and in processor @-@ intensive scenes , " unprecedented in a console game " . Though he had few points of reference for the new console , Clayman (IGN) wrote that the extremely detailed high @-@ definition graphics appeared worthy of the Xbox 360 's " next generation " moniker . When paired with surround sound , the experience was " almost overwhelming " . Reviewers also noted the game 's vivid color palette . Kasavin (GameSpot) wrote that the developers balanced the visual elements to appeal to children and adults alike . Andrew Pfister (1UP.com) wrote that the game looked marvelous but was sometimes distracted by too much occurring onscreen .

Critics praised the core morphing concept but criticized its repetitive gameplay , awkward controls , easy combat , disorganized introduction , and overemphasis on tutorial . Bramwell (Eurogamer) wrote that though the fundamental idea was good , the repetitious combinations of elemental attacks were rarely novel and often laborious . The excitement of realizing a puzzle 's solution , Bramwell said , was often ruined by the player 's struggle to perform the task correctly . He wrote that the game 's design constrained players and " bred apathy " . For example , tutorials followed the scenes in which they would have been useful , cutscenes left no puzzle solution to imagination , puzzle solutions were rarely revisited after their first use , and character dialogue overstated the importance of simple puzzles . Bramwell was " desperate " for the freedom to experiment without forced guidance . " The game " , he wrote , " hardly ever stops telling you what to do . " Clayman (IGN) agreed that there was too much help but alternatively appreciated the continual challenge and activity density of Kameo 's level design , with townspeople interspersed within the level 's action . He also liked to experiment in the Badlands as a break from the puzzles . Clayman found the game 's combat easy but fun . He especially enjoyed the slowed time combat . Bramwell (Eurogamer) said that the " relative pleasure " of Kameo 's combat was ultimately worth little , as the player could use basic attacks and avoid most major upgrades throughout the whole game . Phil Theobald (GameSpy) added that character upgrades were required for maintaining interest in the gameplay , but that the game does not incentivize finding such combinations . Pfister (1UP.com) too found the gameplay balance and puzzle design insipid .

Reviewers found the story and Kameo 's character lackluster , but largely liked the other characters . Andrew Reiner (Game Informer) said that the story tracked through every imaginable video game cliché and failed to build emotional attachment . Clayman (IGN) noted that he spent little time as Kameo , the character . He found the elemental warriors more useful , interesting , and original , and felt that the ten powers were balanced so as to make each worth playing . Dave Halverson agreed that the multiple character options represent a rare breadth of player choice , while Pfister (1UP.com) wrote that only a few of the characters had abilities worth regularly using and called the " terrible " character design typical for the developer . Clayman (IGN) thought that Kameo 's character was comparatively less interesting than that of the rest of the cast . Kasavin (GameSpot) agreed that Kameo visually appeared " generic " while other characters and environments had exceptional and inspired style . Alternatively , Halverson (Play) thought of the " breathtaking female lead " as the " quintessential fantasy icon " .

Reviewers made positive remarks about the game 's orchestral score and voice acting . Kasavin (GameSpot) wrote that added choral tracks during intense in @-@ game moments gave the game epic overtones , though Clayman (IGN) thought the score made the game environments feel delusively majestic . Bramwell (Eurogamer) found little joy in the verbose dialogue , which he often skipped even during important scenes , but Kasavin (GameSpot) considered the voice acting

amusing , with good quality . He also praised the level of nuance in the sound effects , such as those made as characters walked .

Clayman (IGN) reported that the game had no major technical issues , which was a major concern in the protracted run @-@ up to the game 's release . He also found that most of its levels did not appear to leverage the Xbox 360 's advances in areas apart from graphics . Bramwell (Eurogamer) , on the other hand , fought the controls and camera throughout the game . He lamented a particular issue in which the camera would spin 180 degrees when Kameo was hit , which made the path of retreat harder to see . Theobald (GameSpy) also lamented the camera . Kasavin (GameSpot) found Kameo to be technically outstanding , and praised its automatic game save features , short loading times , steady frame rates , and detailed display on both standard- and high @-@ definition televisions . Pfister (1UP.com) wrote that Kameo was technically impressive to the point of overwhelming the gameplay .

Critics noted the game 's length as shorter than expected , with about ten hours of content . Clayman (IGN) had little desire to replay the solved puzzles and Bramwell (Eurogamer) was even eager for the game to end . Halverson (Play) planned to return to the game but wrote that he would have preferred five more hours of the single @-@ player over the Xbox Live features . Reviewers were largely unimpressed with the extra Xbox Live cooperative play and score attack features . Halverson (Play) had hopes for Kameo and Psychonauts to rekindle developer interest in the 3D platforming genre , but concluded that such games were likely not to return . Clayman (IGN) did not find the game to live up to its publicity as a competitor against The Legend of Zelda series , though Theobald (GameSpy) thought Kameo 's boss battles were comparable . Pfister (1UP.com) noted several traditional Rare flourishes ? lots of color and graphics effects , puns for character names ? but ultimately wrote that Kameo was proof that Microsoft had received " exactly what they paid for " in its acquisition of Rare . Theobald (GameSpy) said that Rare had avoided its usual tropes of making players collect lots of items and poor character design , and made a " worthy " launch title . Nigel Kendall (The Times) wrote that the game was " more cerebral " than the console 's other games , which were stereotypically about driving , football , or shooting . Kasavin (GameSpot) noted that Kameo was the most accessible launch title to players of all ages . In summary , he thought the game was a suitable fit for players ' first experiences on the new Xbox 360 .

= = Downloadable content = =

The game released without online support for co @-@ operative play , but Rare promised to add the feature as a free patch and did so in April 2006 . The patch let two players play the story simultaneously when their consoles were connected through Xbox Live or System Link . It also added new achievements . For a fee , players could download a series of costume packs that change the visual appearance of the game 's characters . In September 2006 , Rare released the Kameo " Power Pack " , which added leaderboards , a costume pack , new achievements , and three new modes of gameplay : Expert , Time Attack , and Rune Battle . Expert Mode remasters six of the game 's levels with added difficulty . Time Attack Mode lets two co @-@ op players (local or online) attempt to finish levels as fast as possible . Rune Battle Mode pits two co @-@ op players against each other to collect the most rune items . Ben Kuchera of Ars Technica wrote that Rare " did a good job " of supporting Kameo with post @-@ release content . He liked the idea of the time @-@ based mode and thought that the Expert mode would allay criticism of the game 's easiness .

= = Legacy = =

In retrospect , Kotaku wrote that Kameo would be remembered as " that pretty Xbox 360 launch game " , which IGN confirmed a year after its release . While some games journalists reported unfavorable views towards Kameo , they also reported its fanbase to be dedicated . Other games journalists described the game as underrated . Kameo was among the first batch of games to be sold digitally with the Xbox 360 's Games on Demand service in August 2009 .

Kameo was later included in Rare Replay , a compilation of 30 Rare titles , released for the Xbox

One in August 2015 . The game runs through the Xbox One 's backward compatibility , which emulates select Xbox 360 titles on the newer console . Kameo was among the first batch of games to be supported for the feature . The Rare Replay emulated release includes all original downloadable content for free and lets players migrate their Xbox 360 cloud saves to their Xbox One . Kameo 's performance in the Xbox One 's emulator slightly improves upon its technical performance on the Xbox 360 itself . Stephen Totilo (Kotaku) was surprised at his positive response to replaying Kameo on Rare Replay , having found the introductory stage off @-@ putting when he sampled it at the Xbox 360 's launch . He planned to return to the title . Chris Carter (Destructoid) wrote that while Kameo was not worth full price at its release , it was a welcome addition worth playing in the compilation .

A sequel to Kameo was in production but was ultimately canceled . George Andreas began work on the sequel after finishing the first game . Kameo 2 was designed to be a darker take on the original . Rare redesigned Kameo to have smaller eyes and matured the other creatures . For instance , the trolls were given steampunk designs . The sequel put a heavier emphasis on the open world , as the team was influenced by Assassin 's Creed (2007) . Rare began to use Havok physics software for smoother inverse kinematics animations , and planned to incorporate assets from an unreleased game , Black Widow , which featured a giant , mechanical spider . For creature upgrades , the team planned to let Kameo fly as an eagle so the player could experience the grandeur of a bird 's @-@ eye view . Kameo composer Steve Burke said that he worked on the sequel for a year . He wrote several new audio tracks in a Celtic style and recorded voiceovers , which together were used in a concept demo pitched to Microsoft . The project was canceled after about three months of production as Rare re @-@ focused on Microsoft 's Kinect effort . At the time , Microsoft redirected its internal studios to support the project . The original 's lackluster sales also contributed to the cancelation . The public had heard reports of its cancelation during the 2009 restructure and had seen an artwork leak in 2011 , but the cancelation was not confirmed until Microsoft Studios vice president Phil Spencer did so in 2013 . 1UP.com questioned whether Kameo needed a sequel at all . Rare released a retrospective documentary of the unreleased game as part of its August 2015 Rare Replay collection . A Kameo 2 concept artist narrated the documentary , which focuses on art that would have been included in the game apart from a brief video clip . Rare later released a follow @-@ up making @-@ of Kameo video in March 2016 . The sequel 's video did not elaborate on why Microsoft canceled the project .