

Staff Interview

***Final Fantasy VII* Director**

Yoshinori Kitase

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After Final Fantasy VI, Kitase moved on to direct Final Fantasy VII as well. We got to talk with him about the transition to the PlayStation, the game's grand, gut-wrenching story, and the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII.

Interviewer: How did development of *Final Fantasy VII* begin?

Yoshinori Kitase: At first we undertook the project with the intention of releasing the game on the SNES. However, assistance was needed with developing *Chrono Trigger*, and the team temporarily disbanded. So the SNES version of *Final Fantasy VII* ended up fizzling out.

Interviewer: Because you later restarted the project for the PlayStation, right?

Kitase: Actually, after the hiatus we began developing for a third, separate platform. It was a sort of experimental phase to see how the *Final Fantasy* series would fare in the 3D era. We also created a battle scene that featured *Final Fantasy VI* characters who'd been converted to polygons. By that time we'd already finished the game's main characters, such as Cloud and Barret, and development began moving after we replaced the characters in the demo clip with them. But then around the autumn of '95, [Hironobu] Sakaguchi decided that we'd be developing the game for the PlayStation.

Interviewer: Did you assume from the outset that there would be a story and cutscenes that took advantage of higher memory capacity?

Kitase: It was around that time that we were realizing we wanted to focus more energy in those areas, and I think it's for that reason we went with the PlayStation and its high-capacity CD-ROMs.

Interviewer: It's incredible that in just over one year of serious development time, you were able to achieve a work of such volume, not to mention transition platforms.

Kitase: Looking back on it now, each piece of the game was created with great energy. For instance, nowadays we have a whole department that specializes in animations, and the quality control process is very strict. But back then, we'd just made the switch to 3D, and for non-battle scenes, characters' animations were being put together by people who'd never done that kind of work. If we hadn't produced the game with that degree of spirit and momentum, we probably wouldn't have finished in time for release day.

Interviewer: *Final Fantasy VII*'s story unfolds in such a way that it stood out from the rest of the series at that time. Who's idea was it?

Kitase: The original plot came from Sakaguchi. Though it didn't include names for things like the Lifestream, it contained a concept similar to it, as well as the setting for a city of mako. [Tetsuya] Nomura and the other staff also came up with ideas, so I took those and composed everything into a plot close to what you see in *Final Fantasy VII* today.

Interviewer: Unlike previous entries in the series, *Final Fantasy VII* seems to unfold like a mystery that's gradually solved.

Kitase: The concept was to create a game that pulled players along by presenting a series of mysteries for them to pursue. [Kazushige] Nojima, who was in charge of the scenario, is skilled with writing works that have a touch of mystery (as you can tell from the previous titles he helped make, including *Glory of Heracles 3*). Nomura proposed the "chasing after Sephiroth" arc to Nojima, while I proposed the idea of giving Cloud his own mystery. We then had him sit down and write the scenario for us. *Final Fantasy VII* was the first game we made where the scenario was completed under the supervision and control of a single person. Until then, our method was to combine a variety of perspectives from multiple people.

Interviewer: What led you to undertake the task of developing a *Compilation of FFVII*?

Kitase: Timing, really. I used to feel that *Final Fantasy* games were required to abandon the premises of past titles. However, with the release of *Final Fantasy X-2*, I realized that kind of expansion was also an option. Around the same time, our CG section was feeling more and more eager about the prospect of creating a cinematic work, and so we ended up undertaking a sequel to *Final Fantasy VII*—*Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*.

Interviewer: Why was *Final Fantasy VII* the game you chose to make a sequel for?

Kitase: We didn't have very much experience with cinematic works, so we knew that in order to succeed, we'd have to pull out all the stops. For us, *Final Fantasy VII* was like a sacred work nobody was allowed to touch. But at the same time, it was precisely because it was *Final Fantasy VII* that we had to take it so seriously. So after consulting with Nojima and Nomura, we decided that was the title we were going to expand on.

Another Notable Work Yoshinori Kitase Helped Make

Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII

[Image caption:] Though Zack is a key character in the original story of *Final Fantasy VII*, his existence is only ever mentioned in Cloud's flashbacks. In this work, however, Zack stars as the protagonist. Through his eyes, we get to see a detailed picture of the Nibelheim incident and his relationship with Cloud. This is one PSP title gamers are paying lots of attention to.