

Creator's Voice

Director: Tetsuya Nomura

Took charge of character design in addition to overseeing all aspects of production. A primary creator of the compilation, he's been involved in every one of its entries. Nomura is satisfied that he's done all he could with *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*.

Interviewer: What are some highlights from the newly added and extended scenes for *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*?

Nomura: I mean, I feel like every single part is a highlight. But one of the big things I wanted to add to *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete* were scenes where the children speak with each other. That segment we inserted toward the end of the movie—the one where all the kids are heading toward the church—was the central scene in the very first (and very fleeting) 20-minute version of the story [scenario writer Kazushige] Nojima wrote. Apart from that, there's also [codirector and CG cinematics supervisor Takeshi] Nozue's extended highway battle scene. That riveting high-speed fight Cloud and others have is a definite highlight of the film.

Interviewer: Did you have a hand in modifying any of the newly added scenes?

Nomura: Not really. A great deal of what was implemented came from Nozue and Nojima. There is one new scene to which I'm particularly attached, though, and in it Rufus serves as a sort of proxy for my thoughts. Specifically there's that line about humans loving their memories. I'll leave it up to our viewers to speculate what that means.

Interviewer: There are quite a few new scenes featuring Denzel.

Nomura: It's not like we were making any particular effort to drag Denzel into the limelight. It's more than he was a part of our deliberate plan to add more children-related scenes. Speaking of which, of the children featured in *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, we had to change the voices for Denzel, Marlene, and the little girl holding the moogles doll. That's because their voice actors from last time had all either had a change of voice or left the industry. The girl who did Marlene this time was a tiny little thing you could just about fit in the palm of your hand, but she worked like a total prodigy [laughs]. Her performance felt incredibly natural. This was also Denzel's voice actor's very first role, and he really rose to the occasion.

Interviewer: Apparently Denzel's past is depicted in the bonus OVA.

Nomura: That's right. It relates the story of how Denzel became acquainted with Cloud and the others. In terms of chronology, it takes place after *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete* and leads into *Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII*. Our reason for including this bonus footage is to give viewers more insight into Denzel's character. Until now, Denzel's backstory had only been explored in Nojima's novel, and after much consideration we decided to supplement that with what you see in this OVA. Plus we thought it would make the Geostigma phenomenon easier to understand. In *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, we went ahead and left those sorts

of explanations out, but this time we took a different tack and tried to resolve a few of these questions.

Interviewer: What was your intention in leaving those explanations out last time?

Nomura: *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* isn't a video game but very much a cinematic work. To borrow something Nojima often says, games use a lot of dialogue as exposition for the story, but that approach really doesn't work for a movie. Considering the potential for visual expression now available to us, we decided to present the story more through imagery and actions while keeping dialogue to a minimum. That approach is what *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* was based upon, and consequently we thought it would be best to leave difficult-to-understand scenes as is so that viewers could enjoy figuring out their own explanations. But now it's been over 10 years since *Final Fantasy VII* came out, and in order to make the movie intelligible to a new generation, we've added dialogue and events to flesh out points of the narrative that previously were difficult to understand. I think people will now have an easier time grasping things like Geostigma.

Interviewer: Which of the new or extended scenes stuck with you after watching them?

Nomura: From a story standpoint, that scene where Denzel whacks the fire hydrant is really touching. And then there's the battle scene between Cloud and Sephiroth.

Interviewer: Their one-on-one duel saw quite a bit of reorganizing.

Nomura: We've upped the sense of tension and surprise. It's really something you have to enjoy with your own eyes. The Omnislash Version 5 Cloud used in *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* has also received some modifications. I guess you could call it Version 6 now [laughs].

Interviewer: Were there any particular criteria that had to be met when adding or extending scenes?

Nomura: We started work ahead of time on replacing scenes from *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* that members of the staff were unhappy about or forced to pare down. We figured that as long as we were going to make our audience wait for the Blu-ray market to mature, we may as well undertake a full-scale reconfiguration of the film. In aiming to make the story easier to understand, we ended up with a considerable amount of material just in terms of additional and extended scenes.

Interviewer: It looks like with Blu-ray you were able to clearly depict the dirt and other detritus clinging to characters.

Nomura: Although those details were designed back during *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, we couldn't clearly depict them till now. But with the shift to Blu-ray, we were able to be more exacting with our presentation. That dirt and blood is a result of the realism we were aiming for, and I think they make this edition worthy of the word "Complete." Additionally, I hope viewers will keep an eye out for how we've portrayed the fabric and decoration of characters' outfits. When you watch the movie, you can get a feel for their softness or firmness as if you were holding them in your own hands. Please take the time to savor each minute detail this film has to offer.

Interviewer: Were there any aspects of production that changed with the switch to Blu-ray?

Nomura: As far as resolution goes, we didn't have any problems since the original had already been created in HD. However, our in-house method for rendering CG had changed since *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, so it was difficult making new material match with our previous footage. Although things had progressed technologically, the same character models looked like totally different people when output with the new method. It felt like whenever we cranked out new footage, someone would remark on the models being different, but it was almost always due to differences in lighting or some other impact of the new rendering technique. We do change the models themselves on occasion, but it's very rare, as it makes our work considerably harder, so we didn't do that this time. Another thing to note is that the screen hue may look like it's changed, but that's also a side-effect of tweaks we made to the lighting. In addition to these broad presentational changes, we've also made plenty of nuanced revisions here and there, so I encourage viewers to investigate every nook and cranny of the film. To give a rough estimate, some sort of modifications have been made to at least 1,000 shots—roughly half the total movie.

Interviewer: It seems like you've also changed things quite a bit in terms of music.

Nomura: Nozue specified quite a few details he'd like changed about the songs. The Forgotten City got that treatment, as well as a variety of other songs including the final battle track. There were a lot of songs that got rearranged to fit the new length of the extended scenes.

Interviewer: You also changed the ending song. Can you tell us about the new one?

Nomura: It's a collaboration between Gerard Way, from the American rock band My Chemical Romance, and Kyōsuke Himuro. We've prepared it specially for *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*, so please be sure to listen to it.

Interviewer: There's a lot of juicy bonus material included with the movie, such as the *Final Fantasy XIII* demo and additional footage.

Nomura: On top of that, a novel by Nojima is slated to release on the same date [(April 16, for ¥1,470, tax included)], so please check that out as well. The bulk of the content takes place in the two years between *Final Fantasy VII* and this movie. Fans will find the novel deeply interesting and entertaining, so I hope they'll give it a read. There's a lot of stuff you won't want to miss, including a conversation between Red XIII and Vincent.

Interviewer: Is there more additional footage aside from the OVA?

Nomura: We've prepared a handful of things, one of which is a trailer that lets you explore all the titles in the compilation so far side-by-side in chronological order. We included this out of consideration for people unfamiliar with *Final Fantasy VII* and those who aren't versed in all the entries of the compilation. It's a rather elaborately made trailer that makes good use of voices from *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII*, so be sure to check it out. Actually, for the optimal viewing experience, I recommend watching that trailer first, then the OVA, and then the feature film. The OVA and the feature film contain scenes that depict the same content in different ways, so it's interesting to compare the two. Evidently the director of the OVA, who has a lot of respect for *Final Fantasy VII*, thought it would be pretty boring to present things the same way as in the main movie, so they thought of ways to link the two productions.

Interviewer: What does *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* mean to you personally?

Nomura: It's hard to boil it down to a simple sentence, but I can say it was a work that offered a brand new experience. If I'd been making games at a regular old game company, I'm pretty sure I'd never have been invited to an international film festival or anything like that. On top of that, the skills we cultivated producing this title will be channeled back into our game development efforts. So it's a movie that stands to influence various fields of work. This film is imbued with the gratitude we feel for being able to deck *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* out in Blu-ray format. It's also a symbol of our ongoing commitment to deliver beautifully polished products to the fans who've supported us for so long.

Interviewer: Last but not least, I understand there's a new or extended scene that may be rather surprising to fans.

Nomura: That's right. There's a surprise we haven't made public yet. As much as I'd like to talk about it now, it's something that's hard to put into words. But it's a segment that I personally wished to add into *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*, so please pick up the movie and see it for yourselves.

Creator's Voice

Codirector: Takeshi Nozue

Supervised CG production. Took personal charge mainly of battle scenes, but oversaw all aspects of the film's creation. Has previously worked on other projects like the *Kingdom Hearts* series, and is currently pitching in with *Final Fantasy Versus XIII*.

Interviewer: How are you feeling now that production is finished?

Nozue: The compilation has reached a stopping point for the time being, so there's this sense of relief that things are over. At the same time, I do feel somewhat sad that we won't get a chance to see Cloud again for some time.

Interviewer: When did production for the film begin?

Nozue: We were already fixing details here and there even before *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* was publicly released. There were parts with lighting and film grain issues that I was never able to fully sort out. But I think it wasn't until around the end of 2007 that full-scale production started. During that time, I was also juggling my development work with *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* and *Dissidia Final Fantasy*, so that made things difficult. As far as a specific catalyst goes, I recall getting the chance to see an HD version of *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* and being blown away by the jump in quality from the DVD version. I remember things like characters' faces and backgrounds looking way clearer, so much that they gave off a totally different impression. I said so to Nomura and spoke with him about whether we might be able to release a Blu-ray edition. I'm pretty sure that was the beginning of it all.

Interviewer: Did you discuss adding or extending any scenes at that time?

Nozue: No, that was totally off the radar. At that point my priority was just to present people with a more beautiful version of the film. A lot of the original details in *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* were lost when compressing the movie to fit on a DVD due to resolution constraints when rendering. Images that should have been visible wound up looking blurred and details got washed out. The footage I saw in the HD version was almost identical to what I'd view on any given day during development. I was determined to make it available for everyone else to see with their own eyes.

Interviewer: Were there any differences working on the Blu-ray version as opposed to the DVD version?

Nozue: There weren't any particularly big differences, but the rendering resolution was nearly twice that of the DVD version, so we had quite a lot of work on our plate. Parts that were blurry or indistinct in the DVD version were presented with more clarity, and there was this sense that the more work we put in, the higher quality we could achieve. It was a rewarding process because we could see our efforts reflected directly in the footage. You can really see how depictions of dirt and the texture of fabrics change according to characters' movements. I can tell

you right now that there's staggeringly more visual information on screen than in the previous version. With this, I feel like I've finally managed to depict the images I wanted to present with *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*.

Interviewer: Have modifications been made to characters' facial expressions as well?

Nozue: We've made some new tweaks, plus there are details we designed originally that can now be seen thanks to the upgrade to Blu-ray. *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* has a world that's intentionally stylized like a cartoon, and in the process of stylizing such a world, you inevitably give up some of the human realism in how characters move. However, the facial expressions featured in the film include realistic human movements, and if you look closely, you'll be able to make out the small muscles of the face in motion. These are details we couldn't convey with the resolution of the previous film, but I think viewers will now be able to appreciate them in this new footage.

Interviewer: There's no doubt that when you look at *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*, the visuals really strike you differently than they did in the last version.

Nozue: In fact, I think it would be harder to spot places where the movie looks exactly the same as the previous version [laughs]. Roughly 50% of the film—over 1,000 shots—has been revised in some way. As the person in charge of the CG, I'd love it if viewers would seek out detailed differences others might overlook. Despite the fact I helped create everything, when I see how you can make out even individual beads of blood, I can't help but marvel at how clear everything is.

Interviewer: When improving the quality of the footage, did you base your work on still images or moving video?

Nozue: Since video was the final product users would end up with, that's what we based our efforts on. While we do place importance on the impression you get from glancing at a still image, we're more concerned with whether the footage flows smoothly and there are seamless transitions from scene to scene.

Interviewer: What did you prioritize when adding or extending scenes?

Nozue: I was personally quite influenced by the novel Nojima put together. Among others, the scenes with Denzel left a strong impression, and I knew I just had to add them in. Another thing I took pains with was the little girl holding the moogles doll. She was very popular even among the development staff, and I think the added scenes have made her an even more compelling character. If you watch the new footage, you should be able to understand why she's holding onto that doll.

Interviewer: I hear there were parts of the freeway battle you wanted to add things to.

Nozue: I was in charge of battles, so I put a lot of thought into them. In the previous version, we had quite a lot of sword-based attacks in the battles, whereas this time we included a range of other offensive actions. Also, *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* had a heavy emphasis on bodily combat, so I made more of an effort to include actions that make use of the surrounding environment.

Interviewer: Was the inclusion of superhuman movements part of your plan from the outset?

Nozue: Yes, it was. After all, we based things on *Final Fantasy VII*—a video game. I think if you're going to limit movements to things that can be done in real life, you may as well depict them in live action. Seeing as we were going to the trouble of making our movie with CG technology, we made a special effort to present reality-defying movements. That's why we made sure to show a variety of awe-inspiring actions in these new and extended scenes as well. This is especially true of the motorcycle fight scene Reno and Rude play a part in.

Interviewer: Next, would you mind giving us a short list of character highlights?

Nozue: Well, there's the scenes where Cloud interacts with the children. This was a part Nomura specifically wanted to feature. Cloud's maturation is depicted in a more intelligible manner with these new and added scenes, so I think that's a highlight. As for Tifa, she caused me nothing but trouble [laughs]. I remember it took a lot of work reaching a consensus with Nomura, maybe on account of her being a woman. There's that scene during Tifa's battle with Loz where all those flower petals flutter in the air. I slipped in a slight change to her appearance there as well. Denzel has a lot of screen time now, but I think the best scene is the one where he encounters Cloud at the church. The boy who voiced him was different this time, but he gave a quality performance that surprised even us adults.

Interviewer: How about Kadaj's trio?

Nozue: Yazoo plays a comparatively bigger part this time around. Some people complained he was a little lackluster in the previous version, so we augmented his role in response to those requests.

Interviewer: Lastly, could you share some remarks about Sephiroth?

Nozue: Sephiroth performs some pretty cruel actions in the last battle. I think the highlight there is that he's even more so himself—that is, he shows no hesitation in behaving so mercilessly. Maybe it's because the video is so much clearer on Blu-ray, but I feel like his features look even more intense. I hope fans will keep an eye out for him.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the depiction of blood?

Nozue: Obviously it's not a pleasurable thing to look at, but it's an essential component of the realism we were aiming for, so we decided to depict it faithfully. That said, I had a very in-depth conversation about it with Nomura beforehand. We discussed things like how much we ought to depict and how forcefully the blood should exit the body. I think we landed on a pretty provocative viewing experience.

Interviewer: Will there be depictions of blood in *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* as well?

Nozue: Really all we want is to realistically express what happens when things that can be cut are cut. When skin is cut with a blade, it's strange when it doesn't bleed like it should, you know? Also, more than simply depicting cruelty, we want viewers to be able to sympathize with the pain and suffering the character is feeling from their wounds. I think feeling a character's pain is conducive to sharing their emotions, and the implications of that connection are huge.

Interviewer: What things were you able to get a better sense of thanks to *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*?

Nozue: I became very conscious of the audience watching the film. After completing the previous movie, we invited viewers to a special screening at Roppongi Hills and also attended the Venice International Film Festival, and it was very stimulating to get first-hand feedback from so many people. Knowing that not only Japanese fans but people from foreign countries were watching our movie really helped to broaden my outlook. Until then, I'd envisioned CG production as a mostly solo struggle, but I realized there were actual people watching the footage I helped create, and that I had a responsibility to produce something that would please them as well. In that sense, *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* is a project that really changed my stance toward production work.

Interviewer: Do these new and extended scenes also reflect feedback you received from viewers?

Nozue: Quite a bit, yes. Viewer feedback came in the form of questionnaires and remarks from people close to us. It was pointed out how the story content was difficult to understand in the previous version, and we made an effort to address that and other requests from fans by implementing new and extended scenes. What resulted was over 1,000 revised shots, and I'm quite satisfied with what we came up with.

Interviewer: Do you have any ambitions going forward?

Nozue: One thing is certain: moving forward, we'll have to match the standards of the work we did this time. This movie proves that if we put in the effort and are diligent in our craft, we can achieve the high level of quality you see here. We'll have to bring that same degree of visual finesse to whatever projects we work on next. As long as we put in the hours, the sky's the limit as far as quality goes, though with production you also have deadlines, so it's important to strategize around those. For now, though, I'm devoting myself solely to *Final Fantasy Versus XIII*.

Interviewer: Would you mind sharing a message to your viewers?

Nozue: As Nomura already said, *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete* is filled with our gratitude for those who shared the experience of *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*. As such, it's a film that can be enjoyed even by those who've seen the previous version, so I'd encourage everyone to give it a watch. Also, in viewing it not just once but several times, I'm confident our audience will be able to make all-new discoveries.

Creator's Voice

Scenario Writer: Kazushige Nojima

As scenario writer, wrote the film's screenplay in addition to the novel *On the Way to a Smile: Final Fantasy VII* (on shelves April 16th). Has previously taken charge of the scenario for other projects including the *Kingdom Hearts* series.

On the Way to a Smile: Final Fantasy VII

Tells the story of events that took place between *Final Fantasy VII* and *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*. On sale for ¥1,470, tax included.

Interviewer: I understand *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* began as a roughly 20-minute story. Can you tell us a little more about that?

Nojima: It was a more mystical story—more spiritual, you might say—and it didn't have nearly as much going on. I think it centered around Cloud and Aerith and the children, with hardly any other characters appearing. There's a scene toward the end of *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete* where all the children are gathering at the church. That sequence was part of the 20-minute version of the scenario.

Interviewer: So you weren't initially dealing with terms like Geostigma?

Nojima: I don't recall that specific name being used, but I was working with the premise that some disease had spread far and wide. Basically, this disease was a new threat Cloud and his allies had to confront following the end of the so-called Jenova War. But there were none of the intense battles you see in *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*. I'd say it was more a story about Cloud healing these children who'd gathered at the church.

Interviewer: There are a lot more scenes with the children this time around.

Nojima: The truth is we didn't attach all that much importance to the children originally. What we wanted to depict was Cloud maturing through his contact with them, so we didn't do much to portray the children themselves. But when I heard we'd be able to add and extend scenes this time, I decided I may as well take the opportunity to expand their presence in the story.

Interviewer: Rather than being cheery, the scenes with the children are quite bleak.

Nojima: Yes, they are. All the children have sad or shocking stories to tell. But I think the smiles on their faces are all the more striking due to the sorrowful way in which they're depicted.

Interviewer: What are some highlights from the new and extended scenes?

Nojima: We've added many more scenes with Denzel, so viewers should keep an eye out for those. This time we've included the scene where he first meets Cloud and the others, as well as a scene where he takes a big step toward adulthood. For that scene where he faces off against the monster, I had him just pass by it in the script, but in the actual movie he confronts it head-on.

Interviewer: Is the scene where Denzel first encounters Cloud something you weren't able to include in the previous movie?

Nojima: No, it actually didn't exist at all. I came up with that scene when I was plotting out Denzel's story for the novel.

Interviewer: It seemed like Cloud already overcame his issues once in *Final Fantasy VII*, but in *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* we see him struggling yet again.

Nojima: I suppose in some sense Cloud has a kind of modernistic personality. If I had to describe him simply, I'd say he's the sort of person who drags his troubles along. He gets bogged down with this and that and gradually these concerns accumulate into one big heap. And ultimately that leads to him lamenting as usual how he can't save anyone [laughs]. Although, in a newly added scene with Marlene, he finally shows a cooler side you'd expect from a protagonist. But until that point I hope viewers will keep a close eye on him.

Interviewer: Could you tell us about the expanded roles some of the other characters have?

Nojima: Rufus is just the embodiment of cool. This time we have Rufus talking about all sorts of things and sharing his extensive knowledge, so I hope you'll lend an ear to what the good president has to say. Then there's the girl who's holding the moogles doll. She's wildly popular among the staff, who call her "Moogles Girl." The image of a small child doing everything she can to carry an even smaller sibling on her back evokes this sense of profound sadness.

Interviewer: So is Moogles Girl a favorite of yours?

Nojima: At first she was such a minor character that we didn't even have a face for her, but when I saw the footage and how much enthusiasm had gone into making her, I fell in love at first glance. Both Nozue and I were on the same page with how much we liked her, and we talked a lot about her origins and what might come next for her. "What's the significance of that doll she carries around?" "What's she going to do from here on out? Will her story intertwine with Denzel and Marlene's?" Stuff like that.

Interviewer: What, like a love triangle between Denzel, Marlene, and Moogles Girl? [laughs].

Nojima: Well, I'm not sure about that [laughs]. I suppose there could be something between Denzel and Moogles Girl. But after this, I think Denzel enters a period where he longs to be like Cloud, so I don't think he'd be sparing any attention for girls.

Interviewer: Your novel, *On the Way to a Smile: Final Fantasy VII*, is set to release on the same day as *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*. Can you tell us how you began writing it?

Nojima: The novel was originally published on the movie's website, but it didn't take long before we were talking about putting more content out there. The initial proposal was to publish it on the website as well as in a strategy guide. At the time, I was planning to write episodes for all of the main characters, but some of them ended up getting away from me for various reasons [laughs]. I've also made some revisions to the previously published "Episode Denzel" and "Episode Tifa," so I hope those who've already read them will still pick up a copy.

Interviewer: So what are some of the stories included in this collection?

Nojima: "Episode Barret" is centered around the theme of atonement. In *Final Fantasy VII*, his teleological attitude ended up dragging innocent bystanders into his struggle, so now he's acting

to benefit people in what little way he can. After leaving Marlene in Cloud and Tifa's care, he sets off in search of a new way of life, encountering Cid along the way. "Episode Red XIII" [*sic*] chronicles Nanaki's journey. In *Final Fantasy VII*, Bugenhagen bequeaths him with the task of bearing witness to the unfolding life of the planet. Nanaki therefore sets out on a trip to do so, part of which is related here. Rather than leading into *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, Nanaki's story bears more of a connection to the movie's opening scene, where he gazes out at Midgar and roars. Additionally, Vincent makes an appearance in this episode.

Interviewer: Is "Episode Yuffie" also a story about setting out on a journey?

Nojima: Rather than that, I'd say it's a story about her hometown of Wutai. After she's finished fighting in *Final Fantasy VII*, Yuffie returns to Wutai anticipating a triumphant homecoming. She expects to be hailed as a hero for helping save the planet, but unfortunately things don't pan out that way. The people there have no knowledge of what Cloud and his companions have accomplished—which isn't all that surprising—and instead Yuffie finds herself singled out and alienated for being the person who brought Geostigma to Wutai. The story focuses quite a bit on the disease. I aimed to make "Episode Yuffie" somewhat cheerful, but it ended up being rather sad. Yuffie's brightness instead turned into this sense of pain.

Interviewer: Is "Episode Shinra" mainly about what the Turks have been up to?

Nojima: The Turks are a big part of it, but Rufus is also prominently featured. The two main threads are what happened to Tseng after he was nearly killed by Sephiroth and what Rufus did after he was rescued from the Weapon's assault. "Episode Shinra" is the only one that starts off partway through *Final Fantasy VII*. The story also ties in with *Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII* and *Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII*, so it was a difficult task wrapping my head around characters' actions and their place in the timeline. But it was interesting writing from Rufus's perspective, which up till now hasn't been explored much.

Interviewer: Finally, there's "Episode Lifestream." This one seems to be causing all sorts of controversy among readers.

Nojima: You can probably guess the characters and general gist of this story. In terms of mood, I think "Episode Lifestream" comes close to the relationship you get between Cloud and Sephiroth in *Kingdom Hearts II*.

Interviewer: In what sense?

Nojima: In other words, why is Sephiroth so fixated on Cloud in particular even as he plots to destroy the world? I considered that secret in my own way and took a stab at writing about it.

Interviewer: Were there any things you came to realize as you wrote the novel?

Nojima: As I expected, it was a major obstacle not being able to lean on music or visual aids like video. It fell to me to depict intense battle scenes and describe the story's backdrops. My initial knee-jerk response was to ask for illustrations to be included [laughs]. When I write scenarios for games, I don't delve into describing characters' appearances all that deeply, but with this novel I realized how difficult doing that can be. I was really hard put coming up with the words to describe how people look. But at the same time I felt this sense of freedom that I could write

whatever I wanted. For me, the excitement and tension really cranks up when I start writing the dialogue, so it's crucial that I do a good job writing out all the material leading up to it.

Interviewer: With *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* complete, the compilation has reached a stopping point. Do you have any concerns about what comes next?

Nojima: When I watched the ending of *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII*, I felt this surge of relief that things had come to a close. After this, we've got *Final Fantasy XIII* and various other titles in the pipeline, so for the time being I don't have any plans to go off and do something unexpected on my own. That said, although *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* is now complete, I don't think it marks the end of the world of *Final Fantasy VII*. It's possible I'll be struck with some new idea once the movie and novel come out and I've seen what people have to say about them.

Interviewer: Hypothetically, if you were to write some sort of sequel to *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, which characters would it involve and what might the story be like?

Nojima: I'm still concerned about what comes next for Cloud. At the time of *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, he's only in his early 20s, so he's still in a position to play a leading role. Then there's Denzel, a character whose maturation I'm still invested in. Something I found when we were in talks about the novel was that I could actually articulate sequel stories quite easily. It was pretty simple to expand on all sorts of content. I'd be like, "Right, this must be how this character's future goes." So if, for argument's sake, a sequel were to be made, I don't think I'd have any trouble coming up with material for it. As for whether that sequel would be in the form of another novel... I'd have to consider the difficulties of actually writing it [laughs].