

## **An Interview with Tetsuya Nomura**

### **Peek behind the scenes and hear the truth surrounding *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children***

When it comes to *Final Fantasy VII*, Tetsuya Nomura is a figure who cannot be ignored. In addition to his current work as director for *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, he came up with the concept for *Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII* prior to serving as the game's character designer. To close out this feature, we also asked him some questions concerning the *Compilation of Final Fantasy VII*.

#### **Tetsuya Nomura**

**Profile:** His renown as a character designer skyrocketed after his work on *Final Fantasy VII*. Since then, he's taken charge of character design for numerous games, including the *Final Fantasy* and *Kingdom Hearts* series. He's also helped produce a wide range of games, as well as served as director for *Kingdom Hearts* and *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*. In addition to these, he's currently involved in many other titles, and claims his schedule will be full for the next three years.

#### ***Final Fantasy VII*: a forbidden box that mustn't be touched?**

**Interviewer:** Was the idea for a compilation something you proposed?

**Nomura:** I'd say it was more of an organic development. The world of *Final Fantasy VII* has a lot of depth to it, as does *Advent Children*'s, and we figured there were all sorts of possible ways to explore that wide range of content.

**Interviewer:** We've got a lot of *Final Fantasy VII*-related works popping up lately. Would you say this indicates that *Final Fantasy VII* is a special game even to those who helped develop it all those years ago?

**Nomura:** I would. Not to mention there are staff members who joined Square Enix after experiencing *Final Fantasy VII* as players, so they treat the game with a totally different sort of love than we do.

**Interviewer:** So you all had this special attachment to *Final Fantasy VII* and have constantly been hoping to build something new with it?

**Nomura:** That's right. It still comes up all the time in conversation, even among those who helped develop it way back when. But until recently, *Final Fantasy VII* had been regarded as something nobody was allowed to touch.

**Interviewer:** And why is that?

**Nomura:** Well, the game has so many fans, and if we were to make something new with it, it would create this gap between what we made and the image fans have in their heads. So the agreement was that we shouldn't touch it. But now we finally have. We've opened up the forbidden box. Actually, everyone was totally itching to do something with it. We were all just wondering who would express the urge first [laughs].

### ***Advent Children as a cinematic work***

**Interviewer:** How did you arrive at the decision to create a cinematic work?

**Nomura:** I wanted to make a film with Visual Works (Square Enix's movie production division), though at first there was no intention to make it a *Final Fantasy VII* title. We had a plot for *Advent Children*, which was really excellent, though at that time it was still pending. The story was about 20 minutes long, featuring pretty much only Cloud and Tifa, and was quite a bit different from what we have now. Then, based on that plot I asked [Kazushige] Nojima to write us a story that had more volume as a cinematic work.

**Interviewer:** So is this your first experience directing a movie?

**Nomura:** I'd say it's less like a movie and more like an elaborately directed music video with a story. Seeing as we've focused the film around engaging cinematic visuals, it also has its fair share of physics-defying action. I thought all avenues had been explored when it came to action, so this new idea took me by surprise. We went with an approach unique to CG that I'd never seen before anywhere else. With games, the climactic scene pretty much always is a battle, but since this project is basically one big cutscene, Visual Works has incorporated all sorts of ideas we've never been able to implement till now.

### **Do the Turks duo actually play a big role?**

**Nomura:** As far as the movie's characters go, I've wondered whether the amount of screen time they get varies depending on how attached Nojima is to them. Nojima is a fan of Vincent, which might explain why he appears so much [laughs].

**Interviewer:** Were there any characters you were unable to include for some reason?

**Nomura:** Yes. There were other characters we wanted to include, but we had no choice but to omit them in favor of others due to issues of length. I think there's a good chance those who didn't make the cut will play a part in *Before Crisis* [laughs]. Oh, but Reno and Rude are featured heavily. There's nothing minor about their roles this time [laughs].

**Interviewer:** Is that also thanks to Nojima?

**Nomura:** He claims Reno and Rude were easy to maneuver as characters. While the former protagonists have split up to go live their respective lives, Reno and Rude aren't subject to that constraint, which puts them in a very attractive position. Also, I should add that you get to see Rude without his sunglasses on this time.

**Interviewer:** Finally!

**Nomura:** Please look forward to getting a glimpse of his uncovered face.

### ***Before Crisis, the story leading into Final Fantasy VII***

**Interviewer:** Was it assumed that *Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII* would be a mobile game even from the project planning stage?

**Nomura:** Yes, it was. I'd been in discussion with the people in charge of mobile games for quite a while, asking if it were possible to create an online game for cell phones. We also talked about basing it off *Final Fantasy VII*. We wanted to make it so that once you clear a mission in the game, you're issued another one. This sort of constant movement from one mission to the next made me think of the Turks from *Final Fantasy VII*. I thought they would be a perfect fit, so I wrote and submitted the proposal. The mobile leads told me it sounded like something they could handle, and from there I left the rest to them.

**Interviewer:** You're also serving as character designer for *Before Crisis*. Roughly how many characters are you dealing with?

**Nomura:** Tons. And I've still got more to draw [laughs]. You've got all the major characters who show up in *Final Fantasy VII*, of course, as well as plenty of new ones. Plus it's an online game, so we want to provide several player characters to choose from. That isn't something I foresaw when submitting the proposal, and I'm feeling sort of flustered now that I've realized how much work is on my plate [laughs].

**Interviewer:** Does *Before Crisis*'s scenario lead into *Final Fantasy VII*'s?

**Nomura:** I was surprised how solid the story felt despite being the first idea we came up with. We have a timeline for *Final Fantasy VII* where everything that's happened is laid out in extremely minute detail. Because we're talking pre-*Final Fantasy VII*, we know what happens next in terms of history, and it's very interesting to trace how things ended up where they did.

### ***The festival that is the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII***

**Interviewer:** So, *Advent Children*'s 2004 release date has been changed?

**Nomura:** We actually ended up having to recalibrate things due to the new tools and software we've been using, as well as the fact the movie's length has been extended past what we initially planned. The level of quality we're aiming for is also quite high, and rendering takes about four times longer than it did with any of the movies we've used in games so far. That isn't the sole cause of the delay, of course, but based on that rendering time alone, we knew we needed to reassess things.

**Interviewer:** Seeing as it's called a "compilation," I'm guessing it won't end after just two titles.

**Nomura:** I'm thinking you're right [laughs]. People might logically expect a remake of *VII* or a sequel to it, but I doubt the route we take will be that direct. We started with *Advent Children*—a movie—and then moved to *Before Crisis*—a cell phone game. So if and when the next title

comes, I think it will be another curveball like those—something people won't see coming [laughs].

**Interviewer:** Lastly, would you mind sharing a message for all the fans out there?

**Nomura:** Seven years have passed since *Final Fantasy VII* came out, so the graphics may feel a bit dated, but it's still a very entertaining game to play. I hope the festival this compilation is proving to be will encourage people to enjoy it again. Indeed, I think it's a sort of festival where you can play all these *Final Fantasy VII*-related titles, so I hope everyone will pick them up. As creators, *Final Fantasy VII* is always somewhere at the root of what we do when creating a new *Final Fantasy* game. We're constantly trying to surpass it. With this celebration, I think we're making that position very clear. The next task is to create a title that goes beyond it. Whether you're a nostalgic fan or someone new to the series, I hope you'll participate in this festival of ours and enjoy what the world of *Final Fantasy VII* has to offer.

*[Image caption:] Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII features a number of characters, both old and new. You may have noticed some of them in advertisements posted at stations throughout the Kanto region, so be sure to check the game out!*

*[Image caption:] Aerith's smiling face seems to serve as a lead-in to the opening of Advent Children. Final Fantasy VII's ending can be interpreted in a variety of ways, so one might argue there are as many versions of the game as there are people who played it.*

*[Image caption:] Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children offers an unprecedented level of realism with special attention paid to capturing a sense of atmosphere. The considerable time it took to produce the movie is evident from its visuals. Audiences are anxiously awaiting its completion.*

### **Get your hands on a *shikishi* with Nomura's signature!**

Nomura took time out of his busy schedule to share all sorts of information with us, including various inside stories. What's more, he was kind enough to draw three signed *shikishi* featuring his own illustrations. If you'd like to get your hands on one, please read the application requirements on p. 121 of this issue and apply using the attached survey card. Feel free to write a message for Nomura as well!

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*[Image caption:] Nomura said this was his first time drawing Cloud in a while, and the sketches he made are absolutely priceless! We're looking forward to reading everyone's passionate messages!*